

# The State of the World's Children 1996

A report from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE    DECEMBER 11, 1995**

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Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, 150 school children, local children's advocates and 40 community groups released UNICEF's State of the World's Children 1996 report and celebrated UNICEF's 50th anniversary in San Francisco.

San Francisco, December 11, 1995 - Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), Wavy Gravy and chorus of 150 children from San Francisco's Buena Vista Elementary School celebrated UNICEF's 50th Anniversary and joined forces with a coalition of 40 community groups, healthcare professionals and local children's advocates to release UNICEF's State of the World's Children 1996 (SOWC 96) report. The report, which gives a global overview and country-by-country statistics on children, was given a local perspective by Francis Haskins, Program Administrator of Oakland Healthy Start, who reported on child immunization campaigns and infant mortality rates in Alameda County. Lewis Lillian, representing Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco discussed the increases in child poverty and violence perpetrated on children and by children in the United States. Dr. Larry Brilliant, who helped pioneer the successful global campaign to eradicate smallpox, spoke of how immunization has saved the lives of 20 million children since 1980.

San Francisco, which earlier this year hosted the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter, today hosted the beginning of a year-long celebration of UNICEF, which was founded on December 11, 1946 to meet the emergency needs of children in the aftermath of World War II. Today, 50 years later, UNICEF is again confronted with the need to assist children ravaged by war emergencies around the globe. The SOWC 96 reports on children in war and launches a UNICEF Anti-war Agenda which emphasizes prevention, education for peace and children as "zones of peace" ? used to negotiate temporary cease-fires to allow children in war zones to be vaccinated and to allow food supplies to pass through battle lines. The UNICEF Anti-War Agenda also addresses the issues of child soldiers, girls and women who are victimized by sexual violence and rape, and child-impact assessments of sanctions used in international diplomacy, as well as prohibiting the production and use of landmines. These and other abuses against children in wartime particularly violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child, now the most widely accepted human right treaty in history, ratified by 179 countries as of 1995.

**Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi**, speaking before the third, fourth and fifth grade classes in the Buena Vista school auditorium said "In this year of fierce and bitter debate over balancing the federal budget, a climate which produced a partisan stand-off in Washington and the literal shutdown of the federal government, Congress stood united and produce a small miracle for the world's children: the 1996 foreign aid appropriations bill contains a new \$484 million child survival and diseases account,

which includes \$100 million for UNICEF and \$300 million for international child survival programs. This will be the largest child survival budget ever, despite an overall cut to foreign aid of more than \$1.5 billion." The foreign aid appropriations bill is expected to be signed by the President as soon as the House and Senate resolve differences on family planning language. She continued, "It is now up to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department to deliver on the commitment we in Congress made to the world's children."

Nancy Pelosi also praised a child survival initiative recently announced by the White House and Congressman Tony Hall to immunize and provide basic education to the children of war-torn former Yugoslavia. The plan, supported by USAID, will be carried out by UNICEF and was agreed to by the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia during the recently completed Dayton peace talks.

Celebrated clown and children's advocate Wavy Gravy then sang his own composition "Basic Human Needs" along with the school children, who paraded with 50 helium balloons decorated as miniature planet earths, to celebrate UNICEF's birthday. The Buena Vista students made a harmonious presentation of a song they learned called "Birds Know No Borders" and recited the original poem "What Kids Want."

**Dr. Larry Brilliant, who works with Wavy Gravy on the board of SEVA**, an international service organization headquartered in San Rafael, spoke of his participation in the successful worldwide campaign to eradicate smallpox and how it pointed the way to achieving the end to polio and measles. After a 20-year effort, polio is in retreat. Worldwide, the number of cases has fallen from 400,000 in 1980 to just over 100,000 in 1993. UNICEF is optimistic about meeting the goal of eradicating polio by the year 2000. But polio cannot truly be eradicated anywhere until it is eradicated everywhere. Eradication of polio blazes a trail for bringing other major diseases under control, from measles to pneumonia. Polio eradication would save money for the United States. Polio immunization costs about \$270 million a year in the U.S. and about \$200 million a year in Western Europe. This compares with just \$130 million of external aid needed annually for the final five years of the eradication effort. The U.S. alone will save twice that much every year once the virus is gone.

UNICEF has targeted the next disease for eradication: measles, currently killing nearly one million children every year and weakening millions more. Immunization of children against measles has risen from about 25% in 1980 to almost 80% today - an effort that is now preventing about 1.5 million child deaths a year. Latin America, the first region to eradicate polio, is also leading the way toward measles elimination. Most nations have held national immunization days, and the region as a whole aims to be clear by the year 2000. According to the SOWC 96 Report, ending measles is as feasible as ending polio. The strategy is clear and the technology is available.

**Francis Haskins, Program Director of Oakland Healthy Start** said, "Just as immunization levels and infant mortality rates are vastly different in richer and poorer countries, so they are also vastly different in richer and poorer sections of Alameda County. " She said that while over 30 countries have infant mortality rates exceeding 100 per 1000 in their first year of life, there are areas of poverty throughout the world that have even more horrific statistics than this. Similarly, while the U.S. infant mortality rate is 9 per 1000, there are economically underprivileged neighborhoods in Oakland

where nearly 16 children per 1000 die before their first birthday. Similar to UNICEF, the goal of Oakland Healthy Start is to reduce infant mortality in these targeted communities by addressing not only women of childbearing age, but also the root causes of infant mortality, including poor health care and inadequate nutrition.

The report reviews progress made over the past 50 years in implementing child survival strategies. By promoting immunization campaigns, oral rehydration therapy, breast-feeding, child growth monitoring and basic education, UNICEF has led a child survival revolution. Child mortality rates have fallen over 50%, and total annual child deaths have dropped dramatically from 25 million to 12.5 million. Worldwide immunization rates have climbed from less than 10% in the 1970s to 80% in 1990. The sea-change event for the world's children was the 1990 World Summit for Children, attended by 71 Heads of State, the first of this decade's great international social summits. At this summit, the world's leaders committed allocating resources to achievable ten-year goals for our world's children: primary health care for all, raising immunization to 90% and eradicating polio, elimination of severe malnutrition, safe drinking water for all, universal primary education and access to family planning. The report details the progress in meeting these year 2000 goals, and says that more than half of the developing nations are on track to reaching mid-decade goals. The Central Messages of this report is that simple, low-cost health and education interventions for children have succeeded dramatically and are now saving 2.5 million young lives every year in the world and are preventing half a million children from being disabled from being blinded or crippled or brain damaged or from falling into a life pattern of illiteracy.

## **UNICEF**

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, was founded in 1946 to meet the emergency needs of Children in war-torn Europe and China.

By 1950, UNICEF's mandate as expanded to address the problems of children in the developing world. UNICEF now works in 128 countries throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Through its country offices, UNICEF cooperates with governments and community organizations in its efforts to meet the needs of children, with relatively greater support for the least developed nations, and with particular attention to the major causes of death and disease among children under five. In 1964, UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, linking its lifesaving work for children with World Peace. More recently UNICEF helped organize the World Summit for Children in 1990, when 71 Heads of State - the largest gathering of world leaders ever - reached agreement on major health and education goals for the year 2000.

UNICEF is an integral, semi-autonomous agency of the United Nations, with its own Executive Board. Financial support for its work is derived from voluntary contributions from governments, foundations, corporations, and individuals from around the world.

## **41 local groups co-sponsoring the press conference in San Francisco**

Action Coalition for Global Change  
Action Alliance for Children  
Association of World Citizens  
Athletes United for Peace  
Bay Area Children of War  
Camp Winnarainbow  
Children Now  
Children and Youth Policy Project, U.C. Berkeley.  
Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth  
East Africa Relief Inc.  
East Bay UN Association  
Foundation for Global Community SF Region  
International Indian Treaty Council  
Global Exchange  
HeartLink International  
International Development Exchange / IDEX  
The Hunger Project  
Institute for Food & Development Policy/Food First  
International Committee of Lawyer for Tibet  
Overseas Development Network / Bike Aid  
One World, Inc.  
Oxfam America  
Mid-Peninsula United Nations Association  
National Organization of Women / NOW  
Neighbor to Neighbor  
Northern California United Nations Association  
Middle East Children's Alliance  
Pathways to Peace  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Bay Area  
RESULTS San Francisco Bay Area  
San Francisco UN Association  
San Francisco UN50 Committee  
Seva Foundation  
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization  
UNITAS Hunger Action Center  
The United Way  
Unity Foundation  
3220 Gallery  
World Centre San Francisco  
World Federalist Association of Northern California  
World Runners

## **Endorsing and Supporting Businesses**

The Balloon Lady  
Creative Contemporary Source  
Mid-Peninsula UNICEF Store  
PlaNNet Weavers San Francisco UNICEF Store  
UNICEF Store East Bay