

**CHAPTER 6. HOLDING OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE:
MONITORING, REVIEW AND REPORTING**

Introduction

The World Summit for Children is widely recognized for the extensive processes of monitoring and review of follow-up processes it set in motion and supported as well as for the enormous effort made to ensure regular and high-quality reporting on achievements. In this, it has set an example for other global conferences over the decade and in many ways has served as a model for 'results-based' reporting on international commitments.

"In a decade spanned by a succession of United Nations development summits and conferences, the World Summit for Children stands out not only because it was the first major gathering, but because its systematic follow-up procedures and rigorous monitoring have left an indelible imprint..."

(SG EDR report "We the Children", 2001)

An important outcome of the establishment of concrete, measureable goals for children in the 1990s was the impetus given to heightened accountability through strengthened data collection, analysis, and use. The WSC Plan of Action called for each country to establish *"appropriate mechanisms for the regular and timely collection, analysis and publication of data required to monitor relevant social indicators relating to the well-being of children"* as a means of monitoring progress in each country towards the goals and commitments agreed at the Summit. It noted the need for statistics disaggregated by gender; highlighted the importance of timely information; and urged that indicators of human development be subject to the same periodic review as indicators of economic development. The United Nations was asked to assist countries to *"institute appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Action, using existing expertise of the relevant United Nations statistical offices, the specialized agencies, UNICEF and other United Nations organs."* The call for regular and timely collection, analysis and publication of appropriately disaggregated social data and its greater use at both national and sub-national levels has been echoed in a number of international conferences throughout the 1990s. It is also a key concern in monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child which calls for extensive child-focused data that reflects the full range of children's rights, that is both quantitative and qualitative, that records children's own views and that is accessible and widely available to all concerned with the well-being of children.

UNICEF has contributed significantly to data collection, analysis and dissemination over the decade, working with partners at all levels to help ensure that such data is put to use for children and women. As lead agency for follow-up to the WSC, it has contributed with its partners to the development of indicators to monitor achievements and has helped countries track and report on progress towards the WSC goals and commitments, often in relation to periodic monitoring processes established to review progress on National Programmes of Action for Children. A particular contribution has been support for the development and application of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) designed as a flexible household survey instrument to build national capacity to fill key data gaps and thus to contribute to the extensive review processes established at mid and end-decade. UNICEF has reported annually to its Executive Board on system-wide follow-up to the WSC and has prepared regular reports on the same for presentation by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. UNICEF has also used influential publications such as *The State of the World's Children* and *The Progress of Nations* – the later newly launched over the decade - to publicize data on children and women and to keep the promises and commitments of the Summit high on the national and international agendas. At country level, it has established detailed processes for the analysis of the situation of women and children as a basis for planning country programmes of cooperation and has supported countries in the preparation of their national reports reviewing progress towards the goals at mid and end-decade. Guided by the Convention the Rights of the Child, it has also helped and continues to help develop indicators and instruments to monitor additional child rights issues, and to support countries in their reporting obligations to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Data over the Decade

An essential early step in follow-up to the Summit for Children was the development of measures for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the goals. Over the course of the decade, UNICEF has collaborated with other UN agencies and global partners in a number of efforts to strengthen methodologies for the measurement and assessment of key indicators related to World Summit goals. In the process, the initiation of ongoing dialogue between the users and

producers of data has encouraged new thinking about data collection and its use. This in turn has generated heightened debate on the issues, feeding into intensified action to address key problems affecting children and women.¹

Early collaboration on measurement tools and indicators

Within UNICEF an interdivisional forum and corresponding task force on monitoring the Summit goals were established in 1991² and guidelines for country offices were developed.³ Early directives and field notes stressed the importance of working together with others to strengthen national monitoring capacity at all levels, particularly in areas where data systems were weak; highlighted the need for baseline data; drew attention to inter-relationships in the monitoring of WSC and CRC; and cited positive lessons from past experience of monitoring efforts to achieve universal child immunization (UCI). Noting that “*Experience has taught that a serious commitment to achieve development goals must be accompanied by a serious monitoring effort to keep the goal before the public consciousness and permit effective planning,*” the UCI experience was cited as an example of how effective advocacy for action could be conducted on the basis of approximate data,⁴ while simultaneously working to build up capacity to produce more reliable data, undertaking continuous quality control, and establishing independently verifiable monitoring tools to ensure internationally comparable results.⁵ The importance of developing low-cost innovative methods of monitoring the situation of children was also stressed, with UNICEF’s key contribution to be directed to national capacity-building, and its support for data collection and analysis to be built into country programmes of cooperation.⁶

From the early stages of goal development, it had been recognized that helping countries to build their own monitoring capacities must be a joint effort, not only with the country institutions, but also with international organizations.⁷ Over the next several years, UNICEF worked closely together with a wide range of partners, particularly WHO, UNESCO, and international measurement experts, to develop and agree on a basic set of indicators to recommend to countries for monitoring purposes; to delineate methods of measurement; and to expand data-related activities, including the examination of existing data and the feasibility of using new indicators. UNICEF/WHO collaboration on monitoring immunization was broadened to include diarrhoeal diseases, ARI and related health indicators. A joint UNICEF/WHO expert meeting was held on the measurement of U5MR, including by cause of death (*see box*). New breastfeeding indicators and measurement methods were developed in collaboration with WHO and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), while UNICEF and IFAD jointly conducted a technical review of indicators for household food security.

The Joint UNICEF/WHO initiative to monitor access to safe water supplies and appropriate sanitation facilities provided training and equipment to countries for the development of their own reporting systems; several countries began to apply the system, providing information to establish a baseline for the decade in a report issued in 1992. Also in 1992, UNICEF developed a preliminary set of guidelines for monitoring progress in the reduction of maternal mortality, using process indicators. Joint work with UNESCO, the World Bank and UNDP focused on filling gaps and

¹The creative tension involved in the process is captured in the following: “*The past ten years have witnessed a vigorous push and pull between policymakers and the measurement community, shaping the way data is collected and used. Policymakers have increasingly demanded up-to-date, quantitative assessments of current status for health and development indicators, presented in brief, clear formats that they can use with the press, the public, and their own officials. Programme managers have also required measures they can use to assess programme performance and take action. The daunting tasks require a balance to be struck between acceptable standards in the field and the expectations of non-specialists.*” (Simple surveys to assess progress for children: recent experience with multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) unpublished paper Leila T. Bisharat, Director, Office of Planning and Coordination, UNICEF; and Patricia H. David, Center for Population and Development Studies, Harvard University, n.d.)

² *Monitoring child goals in the 1990s: an information note for field offices* (CF/PROG/IC/91-009)

³ Including CF/PRO/1991-001 (*op cit*); *Field level monitoring of progress towards child-related goals during the 1990s* (CF/EXD/1991-004); and *Annex E to 1991 Annual reports* (CF/EXD/1991-010) of 9 July 1991.

⁴ “*The vast effort to achieve the UCI goals is unique, perhaps, in the way statistics have been used to lobby developing country and donor country governments to make available the necessary resources to reach the promised goals*” (CF/PROG/IC/91-009) (*op cit*).

⁵ CF/PROG/IC/91-009 (*ibid*)

⁶ *Programme submissions for the 1992 and 1993 ExBoards and preparation of the 1992 salesbook* (CF/PRO/1991-001)

⁷ One example of collaborative work was the Inter-Agency Monitoring Group involving UNFPA, UNICEF, and the UN Statistical Office, which was later joined by UNDP. Five country missions were carried out in 1991 to assess production and use of data related to monitoring human development. The findings of these were to contribute to the development of guidelines for assessing the monitoring situation in other countries. Other agencies, including WHO and UNESCO, have also made inputs into the work of the Inter-Agency Monitoring Group. Planned further work in goal monitoring in 1992 included clarification of national monitoring requirements and related gaps and weaknesses; substantial steps towards strengthening country capacity; improvements in reporting systems and data bases; and appropriate revision of existing procedures and outputs so as to support improved goal monitoring at all levels. (UNICEF Report of the Executive Director, 1992)

reducing weaknesses in data to monitor progress on education-related goals since available data at the time was primarily administrative in nature and particularly weak in the non-formal sectors. UNESCO and UNICEF also worked together to develop broader-based learning achievement indicators for in-country use. Meanwhile, UNDP and UNICEF initiated collaboration on the evaluation of aid flows taking place within the Development Assistance Committee of the Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development.⁸

Child Mortality: Key Global Goal and Indicator

“In the 1990s, child mortality has to be viewed as a problem that transcends the health sector alone. It must be seen as a problem of nutrition, education, water supply and sanitation, and ultimately of sustainable human development in all its dimensions”
(UNICEF, *Children and development in the 1990s*)

UNICEF had argued well before the 1990s that social indicators provide a better reflection of human development and progress than economic indicators. As part of its overall efforts to contribute to social monitoring and development, UNICEF helped establish the particular pertinence of the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) as a key measure of progress for children. This is because it reflects so many of the elements that contribute to both chances of survival and quality of life – for example the income and education of parents, the prevalence of malnutrition and disease, the availability of clean water and safe sanitation, the efficacy of health services, and the health and status of women. Reduction of U5MR – one of the over-arching goals of the World Summit – was thus considered both a primary aim and a key indicator of progress for children, with other social indicators seen as powerful pieces of the complex whole contributing to social development outcomes, which could be both measured and assessed as a springboard for strategies to improve the human condition (*from PON*). Reduction of under-five mortality is included as a key target in the *Millennium Development Goals* as well as in the *World Fit for Children*, reflecting the international consensus on and concern for this key indicator.

Arguing that a statistic like the under-five mortality rate should serve as a “*child-minder*” to governments and social policy makers, UNICEF has helped draw attention to the need to fill gaps and correct inconsistencies in the data base, asking “*who can trust a child-minder that loses well over 100,000 children in a single year?*” (*PON 1994*, 3) UNICEF has contributed significantly over the decade to the compilation and refinement of national data sets relevant to the estimation of under-five mortality as well as to the development and application of an explicit, objective and replicable methodology to derive a single consistent time series of estimates from the assembled data (see *Trends in child mortality in the development world 1960-1996*). UNICEF has also applied the concept of a ‘national performance gap’ to U5MR, measuring the difference between the actual rate of child deaths in any given country and the rates that country could reasonably be expected to have achieved based on its GNP, publishing the results in *The Progress of Nations Report* as a means of stimulating further action for children (see *PON 1993*). More recent work has included analysis of disparities within and across countries – by gender, urban/rural, geographic area and household characteristics, including wealth.

Trends over time in U5MR, reflecting the progress made by children during the last decade, have been very region-specific. The industrialized countries, with the lowest level of U5MR, made the greatest gains, while the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest level of U5MR, made the smallest gains. This slow progress has moved sub-Saharan Africa from having one-seventh of the global under-five deaths in 1960, to having nearly half of the global deaths in 2000. The recent increases in child mortality in several countries in the region are without precedent, reflecting the impact on children not only of HIV/AIDS, but also of economic factors and the many armed conflicts. Although child mortality is a relatively old indicator compared to immunization and the like, it still holds surprises – as in the case of Central Asian countries, where recent household surveys have reported child mortality a factor of two or more above previous levels – and these same surveys are also reporting other adverse situations of children.

Looking to the future, causal factors contributing to U5MR require better assessment. While around two-thirds of all child deaths are caused by diseases for which practical, low-cost interventions exist, more accurate estimates of the proportion of deaths by cause would help improve the effectiveness of child-related programmes.

Sources: *The Progress of Nations*; *Trends in Child Mortality in the Developing World:1960-1996*; *Children and development in the 1990s*

In 1993, a core set of indicators for health and nutrition goals was approved by the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP). WHO was to include those same indicators in its own periodic monitoring of progress towards health for all by the year 2000. The basic sets of indicators recommended to countries by UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO for the purpose of monitoring progress towards Summit goals were developed with a view to transparency, manageability and ease of comprehension for policy makers, programme managers and the general public. Many developing countries also set out to improve their underlying data collection systems so that reliable baseline

⁸ Information compiled from UNICEF *Report of the Executive Director* (E/ICEF/1992/2, part II); *UNICEF 1993 WSC follow-up report to the Board* (E/ICEF/1993/12); and *SG’s MDR 1996* (A/51/256).

information on mortality, morbidity, nutrition status, school enrolment and other core phenomena became available to planners and programmers.⁹

At UNICEF headquarters, a global database on Summit goals was progressively compiled, combining available statistics on target, baseline and trend data for each goal and global indicator. UNICEF country offices were asked to review, modify and update the country – level data contained therein on an annual basis and to report back with any new data sources through a standardized reporting instrument affectionately known as CRING (country report on indicators for the goals).¹⁰ These reports were, in turn, reviewed at Headquarters, where the information was assessed on the basis of objective technical criteria in order to determine the most reliable estimates for each individual indicator. The UNICEF global databases are thus not simply derived from one set of official government statistics. Instead, they are the result of a rigorous process of quality control applied to a wide range of available data and statistical information, which has been reviewed, scrutinized, and progressively refined as information-gathering and assessment procedures are continually strengthened.

Strengthening data collection for reviews at mid and end-decade

Mid-decade review

The WSC Platform of Action (para 35 iv) had foreseen a review of progress at mid-decade, and identification of intermediate targets for mid-decade had been achieved through regional consultations and regional meetings of Heads of State or Government (*see earlier chapter*). With mid-decade goals a subset of the year 2000 goals, a standard minimum set of indicators was identified to measure progress towards their achievement; this was to be an integral part of activating national strategies to reach the mid-decade goals. The indicators were incorporated into a standardized reporting form for submission to NYHQ twice yearly to facilitate tracking.¹¹ UNICEF also issued a set of *Technical Guidelines for Monitoring the Mid-decade Goals* summarizing guidance on information sources and techniques for monitoring the health goals (11 out of the 13 mid-decade goals) and the education goals.¹²

An intensive region-by-region, country-by-country review involving all UNICEF field offices was conducted in mid 1994 to assess the status of progress and the likelihood of achieving both the mid-decade goals and the global goals for the year 2000. While the prognosis was seen to be positive for a number of countries,¹³ the review of available data showed that measurement at the national level was lagging behind progress and that a number of significant data gaps persisted. The mid-decade review was thus seen as occasion to help countries fill essential data gaps and ensure accurate reporting of progress towards the achievement of the WSC goals.¹⁴

UNICEF, in collaboration with WHO, UNFPA, the UN Statistical Office, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and a number of other institutions in developing and industrialized countries, developed the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) as an agile and affordable household survey instrument for use by countries in monitoring progress and guiding the management of efforts to achieve the goals.¹⁵ Key criteria in the design of MICS included affordability; timeliness; flexibility; statistical soundness; and ability to produce internationally comparable estimates of indicators.¹⁶

The survey questionnaire was designed in modular form so that it could be easily adapted to the information needs of a particular country. Individual modules can be dropped if sufficient data already existed on the relevant indicator; alternatively, a particular module can be added on to a survey already planned. This enabled MICS to complement and reinforce existing systems of data collection – not to replace them. Guidelines on the implementation of MICS stressed the importance of working closely together from the outset with national stakeholders – ministries, NGOs, training institutions and university departments – in reviewing existing data sources, deciding upon the added-value of MICS, and designing and implementing the survey. Opportunities for intersectoral collaboration were seen to be particularly

⁹ *SG Mid-decade Review report (A/51/256)*

¹⁰ CF/EXD/1991/010, op cit.

¹¹ *1993/16 UNICEF/WHO joint committee on health policy*

¹² UNICEF CF/PROG/IC/94-003, cited in MICS manual.

¹³ UNICEF *1995 WSC follow-up report to the Board (E/ICEF/1995/15)*

¹⁴ UNICEF *MICS handbook (1995)*

¹⁵ UNICEF *1995 WSC follow-up report to the Board (E/ICEF/1995/15)*; see also UNICEF Executive Directive, “*Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys for the mid-decade goals (CF/EXD/1994-011)*, 14 November 1994

¹⁶ MICS powerpoint presentation by Tessa Wardlaw, UNICEF.

ripe for reinforcement in those countries where interministerial bodies had been established to monitor implementation of National Programmes of Action (NPAs).¹⁷

It was recognized that UNICEF engagement in national household surveys on the scale foreseen for the mid-decade review would be a new challenge for most country offices. But – as a programme directive put it: “UNICEF’s long record of successfully practicing the ‘art of the possible’ in promoting social change in the world, in the face of a legion of nay-sayers, all but ensures that we will also be successful in this ambitious monitoring initiative.”¹⁸ Based on a clear demand by countries and field offices, support for national implementation of MICS was provided on a number of levels. Clear, detailed instructions and step-by-step guidelines were issued in the form of a handbook released by UNICEF in 1995 after a global training workshop held in Bangladesh, where many elements of the approach had been pioneered in 1993 and 1994.¹⁹ This was followed by national training and experience-exchange through a series of 4 regional workshops organized by UNICEF. Follow-up field support visits and a network of technical specialists provided further assistance, including through on-line technical guidelines and a discussion forum for survey issues.²⁰ UNICEF also provided financial support for MICS, largely through country programmes as part of national capacity-building for statistical generation and the use of data. Most of the remaining costs were met by national governments, with some donors also contributing to the process.²¹

Implementation of MICS at mid-decade exceeded all expectations. By 1996, more than 60 countries had carried out a stand-alone MICS (including the most populous countries of China and India) and some 40 others had used the DHS surveys or had incorporated the MICS modules into other surveys.²² In total, over 100 countries were covered, representing the first major attempt ever made outside of censuses to obtain disaggregated data on social development. The mid-decade review process demonstrated the feasibility of filling information gaps with quality and timely data, particularly through the use of household surveys. As the Secretary-General noted in his review at mid-decade, the use of MICS helped foster intersectoral collaboration and served as an independently valuable contribution to the goals-for-children agenda.

A 1997 evaluation of the mid-decade round of MICS commissioned by UNICEF concluded that the surveys had improved countries’ capacity for data collection, analysis and reporting, thus enhancing their abilities to monitor progress on the situation of children and women: “MICS exceeded expectations in helping even the most data-poor countries monitor their progress towards achieving the goals.”²³ A high level of satisfaction was expressed with the mid-decade MICS manual and with the ability of the instrument to produce high quality data more quickly and economically than other methods of data collection. Some concern was expressed at the variability of government involvement in the MICS process and at insufficient training, particularly in data processing and analysis and report writing. Suggestions on the need for strengthening elements of the training component were subsequently applied to the development of a second round of MICS (MICS II) designed to measure progress at end-decade in achievement of the WSC goals and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The evaluation also revealed some concern at inconsistencies in results produced by MICS and other surveys. It was suggested that dissemination workshops after completion of MICS would allow discussion of comparative reliability of MICS compared to other data and would contribute to more informed decisions on the part of government officials on the use of data.²⁴

End decade review

The mid-decade MICS had measured a subset of the WSC goals. The challenge at end-decade was to develop an instrument capable of measuring the full set of year 2000 goals, including aspects related to improved child protection, while at the same time addressing emerging priority programme concerns (including malaria; the integrated

¹⁷ *Monitoring progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children: A practical handbook for multiple-indicators surveys*, UNICEF 1995; and *Multiple indicator cluster surveys for the mid-decade goals* (CF/EXD/1994-011)

¹⁸ *MICS to report on progress towards the mid-decade goals: Update executive summary* (CF/PD/PRO/95-005), 28 April 1995, signed Kul Gautam

¹⁹ *MICS Handbook 1995*

²⁰ *Simple surveys to assess progress for children: recent experience with multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS)* unpublished paper Leila T. Bisharat, Director, Office of Planning and Coordination, UNICEF; and Patricia H. David, Center for Population and Development Studies, Harvard University, n.d.

²¹ From UNICEF 1997 WSC follow-up report to the Board (E/ICEF/1997/14).

²² UNICEF. *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: a survey tool for social change* (March 1999).

²³ *SG 1998 WSC progress report* (A/53/186); *UNICEF End-decade multiple indicator survey manual* (2000); and *Evaluation of multiple indicator cluster surveys*, 1999.

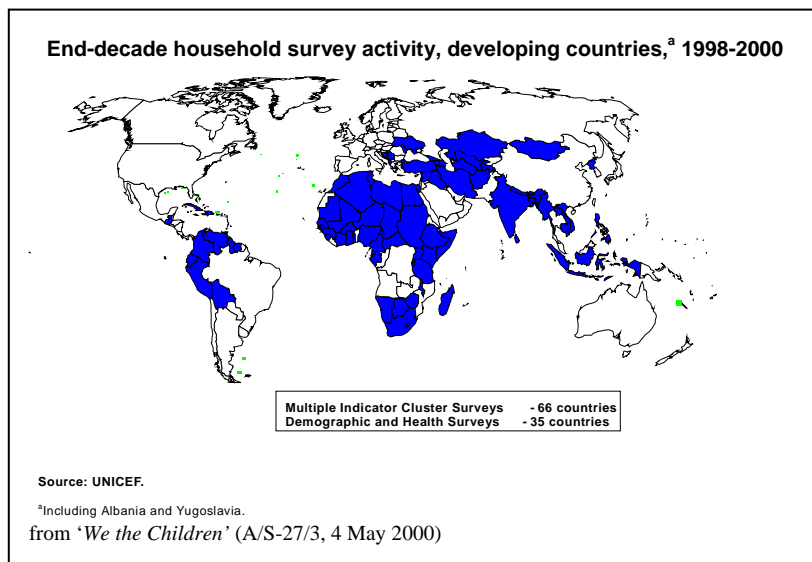
²⁴ *Evaluation of multiple indicator cluster surveys*. Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning, UNICEF, January 1999. (conducted in 1997)

management of childhood illness (IMCI); and HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitude and behaviour); and additional child rights indicators.²⁵ The need for trend evaluation added an additional challenge to the end-decade exercise, which aimed to ensure that the assessment of progress and constraints would be grounded in data that truly reflected the situation of the world's children and women and would provide the knowledge base upon which the future global agenda for children in the 21st century could be built.²⁶

Through a process of extensive consultation, both within UNICEF and particularly with WHO, UNESCO, and ILO, the initial core set of indicators adopted in 1993 was revised to reflect the new needs for measurement. Coordination was pursued with global assessment processes related to Education for All and Water Supply and Sanitation in order to minimize duplication and to develop more consistent estimates of common indicators. Selected end-decade indicators on education, for example, were consistent with those developed for the core group of 18 indicators for the EFA assessment and included preschool development, while in water and sanitation, agreement was reached on the need for indicators to capture to shift from a provider's perspective on 'access' as measured by number of installations, to a user's perspective as measured by actual use of such installations.²⁷ The choice of focus on other indicators reflected heightened understanding of measurement limitations and parameters (for example the increasing agreement among UNICEF, WHO and UNFA on the use of process indicators - such as the percentage of births attended by skilled health workers - as a proxy to monitor trends in reduction of maternal mortality, which is notoriously difficult to measure (see panel below). Development of the additional child rights indicators drew on accumulated experience and inputs from a number of consultative processes, including an early project with ChildWatch, efforts of UNICEF's Innocenti Child Research Centre, and the results of an international expert meeting sponsored by UNICEF in 1998 on indicators for global monitoring of child rights.²⁸ The additional indicators were designed to fill critical gaps related to areas of child rights and protection including birth registration, orphans/alternative family care, child work; and childhood disabilities.

The resulting set of indicators for assessing progress for children and women at end-decade was issued to UNICEF field offices in 1999²⁹ and the revised end-decade MICS questionnaire and manual (MICS II) produced the following year.³⁰ MICS II was designed specifically to obtain data for 63 of the 75 end-decade indicators. It drew heavily on experiences gained through the mid-decade review and the subsequent MICS I evaluation. Its development involved an even wider set of partners than was the case for MICS I. These include WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNAIDS, the United Nations Statistical Division, CDC, MEASURE (USAID), Johns Hopkins University, Columbia University, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and others. A technical advisory group helped coordinate and advise on inputs from many technical experts and researchers. In particular, close working relations with the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) programme not only improved the commonality and consistency of indicators and measurement methods between the MICS and DHS surveys - it also involved an agreement to work together at country level so as to maximize the usefulness of the two organizations' survey activities.³¹

Capacity-building efforts were strengthened for implementation of MICSII, in response to the evaluation of MICS I. UNICEF supported a series of three workshops in six regions for training in survey design and sampling; data processing; analysis and report writing.



²⁵ *End-decade multiple indicator survey manual (MICS II manual)*, 2000.

²⁶ See UNICEF 1999 *Report of the Executive Director* (E/ICEF/1999/4), Part II for useful discussion of this

²⁷ See discussion and write-up in *SG EDR report, We the Children* (A/S-27/3), 2001

²⁸ *Indicators for global monitoring of child rights. International meeting sponsored by UNICEF, 9-12 February 1998, Geneva Switzerland.* UNICEF, NY (EPP) November 1998.

²⁹ *End-decade assessment - Indicators for assessing progress globally* (EXD/1999-03), 23 April 1999

³⁰ *End-decade multiple indicator survey manual* (op cit).

³¹ *End-decade multiple indicator survey manual.*

Thereafter, with UNICEF support, MICSII were conducted in 66 countries, covering over half of the developing world's population, representing the largest single data collection effort in history for monitoring children's rights and well-being. Demographic and Health Surveys were conducted in another 35 countries, while other special surveys covered most of the remaining developing countries. After the surveys were completed, a 4th workshop was conducted on data quality and data archiving to make the information collected through MICS surveys more readily available for further analysis.

While many of the national end-decade review reports incorporated data from MICSII, much of the data had not been received by the time of preparation of the Secretary-General's report on results at end-decade. Therefore, UNICEF prepared an updated *Statistical Review on Progress Since the World Summit for Children* in preparation for the Special Session on Children.

In order to make such information more readily accessible, UNICEF has also begun to post its global statistical databases on a special website. The website covers cross-sectoral and/or trend data for more than 50 indicators, with global and regional summary analyses and graphic presentations of key results of progress over the decade, as well as detailed, country-specific data. This encourages a wider use of the wealth of information generated through the end-decade review processes and contributes to the transparency of the data.³²

Collaboration on related global monitoring and assessment processes

As mentioned above, UNICEF participated actively in a number of global monitoring and assessment processes in follow-up to related international conferences, the results of which fed into efforts to assess progress towards the WSC goals. As a key member of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, for example, UNICEF collaborated with WHO on the Joint Monitoring Programme, contributing to periodic assessments of water supply and sanitation, including at mid- and end decade. For the latter, the Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 gathered country-by country data on the coverage status and use of water supply and sanitation based on improved methodologies incorporating household surveys.³³ (for further details, see chapter 4 on WES)

As one of the original convenors of the World Conference on Education for All, UNICEF remained a leader in the EFA Forum, and joined with UNESCO and the World Bank in mobilizing the international effort to assess EFA for the year 2000 review. At global level, UNICEF contributed to the assessment exercise through three key thematic studies, on early childhood development, girls' education and education for the excluded. UNICEF also played a major role in support of EFA assessments at country level, building capacity, financing data collection and analysis, facilitating drafting of the country report, participating in parallel efforts to monitor learning achievements (MLA), and mobilizing support for regional EFA syntheses and meetings. More than 150 national assessment reports were produced through the EFA exercise, which provided a good basis for basic education strategies and resource mobilization in the new decade. In all regions, UNICEF promoted a systematic and participatory approach to these exercises. Considerably more effort was involved in the completion of the reports than at mid-decade, and the initiative helped to strengthen the capacity of national assessment teams, at least in the short term, and to produce usefully disaggregated baseline data on the basis of which future progress can be measured and areas for improvement identified.³⁴ At the same time, it is recognized that considerably more work is still needed to strengthen the educational data base still further – to incorporate more fully accurate assessments of educational quality and learning achievement with even more refined assessment of educational enrolment and retention.³⁵

UNICEF has also contributed significantly to efforts to improve measurement of maternal mortality – reduction of which was a shared goal of the World Summit for Children, the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Beijing Conference on Women (see box).

Other efforts to strengthen the analytical data base

In addition to the specific goal-monitoring efforts which UNICEF helped set in motion and support over the decade, strengthened data collection and analysis served as a key strategy for improved programme planning for children and

³² See www.childinfo.org as well as links to this website on www.unicef.org

³³ See, for example: *Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Monitoring Report*, 1996, WHO, WSSCC, UNICEF; *Progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s, Report of the Secretary-General* (E/CN.17/2000/13), 14 March 2000; and *Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 Report (Summary)* WHO and UNICEF.

³⁴ See UNICEF *Report of the Executive Director* (E/ICEF/2000/4) (Part I); other sources

³⁵ "The EFA 2000 assessment: What did we learn?" Article by Peter Buckland, in *UNICEF Education Update*, vol. 3, issue 2, July 2000 (EFA beyond Dakar).

women and as a springboard for the application of knowledge-based advocacy. Successive medium term plans (MTPs) noted the importance of improving the availability and use of data in critical areas - with this featured as one of the four main organizational priorities in the MTP of 1998-2001. Progress in all areas was seen to require improvements in the

Maternal mortality: the complexity of measurement

Measuring maternal mortality is notoriously difficult and complex, and reliable estimates of the dimensions of the problem are not generally available. In order to strengthen the information base, WHO and UNICEF, with the participation of UNFPA, developed an approach to estimating maternal mortality that seeks both to adjust the available data for under-reporting and misclassification, and to generate estimates for countries with no data. The approach was first used to develop estimates for maternal mortality in 1990, the baseline year for the Summit goal, with the results published in 1996. This revealed higher estimates than previously thought and helped create a new momentum around the issue of maternal mortality and stimulated greater awareness of and conceptual clarity on the complex challenges involved in its measurement. A number of countries undertook special studies to assess the completeness and adequacy of their vital registration and health information systems, following which a systematic review and analysis of country concerns in relation to the 1990 estimates was undertaken and a series of interregional and interagency consultations was organized. All of this fed into processes by which new estimates for 1995 were developed. While these provide the best available indication of the current levels of maternal mortality, it is recognized that they represent orders of magnitude rather than precise figures and cannot be used to assess trends over time. For this reason, there is increasing agreement on the use of process indicators - such as the percentage of births attended by skilled health workers - as a proxy to monitor trends in reduction of maternal mortality. UNICEF developed the indicators, which were later published jointly with WHO and UNFPA and guidelines have been issued for monitoring the availability and use of obstetric services both as an indicator of service coverage and as a proxy to track maternal mortality

Compiled from WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA 2001; PON 1996; and ChildInfo website.

collection, analysis and use of data, which are vital for understanding the nature and magnitude of problems facing children and formulating appropriate programme responses.

The UNICEF country programme cycle itself begins with an analysis of the situation of children and women which helps identify key programme intervention areas and is conducted in with national partners, usually as part of a capacity building exercise. While no in-depth historical or cross-regional analysis of the evolution in approaches to situation analysis have been

conducted, annual reports make clear that such analyses are increasingly integrating a rights-based focus and incorporating other emerging concerns as well (as per new guidelines developed for situation analysis). In 1999, for example, in addition to incorporating analysis of the factors affecting the realization of children's and women's rights, as well as of the priority actions at different levels of society to secure them, several of the situation analyses, such as those in Bangladesh and Viet Nam, focused specifically on children and women at different stages of the life cycle. UNICEF and its partners in Ghana held a series of consultations with highly vulnerable children and rural women in order to understand their concerns and perspectives. The analysis process in Liberia, which contributed to planning for post-conflict recovery, involved local key informants and focus groups, while in Nicaragua the process involved special examinations of the situation of working children and of the marginalized regions of the Atlantic coast. In the case of Viet Nam, sections were also included on access to essential supplies, while vulnerability analysis was incorporated more prominently in the examples from the West and Central Africa region.³⁶

In the evolving context of UN development assistance and the move to greater coordination, a number of UNICEF situation analyses and other exercises related to indicator development have contributed to the Common Country Assessment within the UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), with particular concern to ensure adequate attention to child rights issues. In 1999, the UN selected its first set of 40 indicators to guide common country assessments, including: income poverty; food security and nutrition; health and mortality; reproductive health; child health and welfare; education; employment and sustainable livelihoods; housing and basic household amenities; environment; drug control and crime prevention; gender equality and women's empowerment. This has fed into agency-wide efforts - in response to ECOSOC resolutions - to ensure integrated implementation and follow-up to UN conferences. UNICEF is also participating in current efforts focused on the formulation of appropriate indicators to monitor common progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Much effort has gone into the development of social databases in a number of regions. The UNICEF Innocenti Centre in Florence, has compiled the TransMONEE database - a unique compilation of data on trends in 27 countries in transition in the Central and Eastern Europe, Community of Independent States and Baltic States region, while continuing to improve the capacity of statistical offices in the region to disaggregate as well as monitor and analyse data on children and women. Annual publications of the regional monitoring report of the MONEE project help bring to focus key issues affecting women, children and youth in this region. The project is backed by UNICEF, the World Bank and the

³⁶UNICEF *Report of the Executive Director 2000* (E/ICEF/2000/4 (Part II), 12 April 2000.

Government of Italy. Building on the MONEE experience, the Mediterranean Initiative for Child Rights (MEDIN) is a sub-regional initiative which aims to improve the availability of data and strengthen national capacity to address measurement challenges and information needs associated with emerging child rights issues in nine countries of the southern Mediterranean basin, building networks among key users and producers of data at the country level. A 'MEDINFO' database has been developed to cover a wide range of issues related to children's rights. In the Americas and Caribbean region, as Governments continue the decentralization process, UNICEF has supported efforts to upgrade local statistical units, integrate their work with central levels and employ the data for programming. In the Dominican Republic, for example, by 1999, this work had been initiated in 24 of 30 provinces. Database development in this region also includes production of a data base in Costa Rica on children's and adolescent rights, with over 200 indicators used in the first national production of a publication on those issues. In the West and Central Africa region, a geographic information system package – HealthMap - developed jointly with WHO, has been used to develop country- and local-level databases with both programme monitoring and advocacy results.

Parallel to efforts to enhance the evidence base, UNICEF has invested significantly over the decade in the development of software to store and present data in the most effective way. Early software systems included the regional and field office child information systems (ROCIS/FOCIS) and DEEDs (Development of data entry enhancement and display system). More recently, Child-Info - a project based on database and mapping software – has been used to map progress and report on disparities within countries in the regions of Eastern and Southern Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia.³⁷

It is clearly recognized that national averages often mask disparities of all sorts – including those based on gender, urban/rural or regional locality; ethnic or cultural group; and socio-economic status. Heightened efforts have been made in social monitoring over the decade to gather disaggregated data to identify disparities as a basis for improved programme planning for disparity reduction. As one example, a number of UNICEF country office in the Middle East and North Africa region have supported national capacity building in gender-disaggregated statistics, as part of a regional project supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). As another example, both DHS and MICS gather information on household assets as part of a wealth index methodology developed by the World Bank and MACRO to facilitate analysis of survey results by wealth quintile. Work is currently underway in conducting such an analysis based on information of both the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and MICS in order to track disparities in achievement of selected WSC goals.³⁸

A number of regions have given particular attention to strengthening data on young people, including through studies of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) and through other child-focused surveys and opinion polls undertaken in an effort to expand avenues for expression and participation, in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Such surveys promote avenues for participation of children and youth in decision-making by giving them the opportunity to have their views and concerns heard and widely shared with governments and the public. Information gathered from such exercises can complement and contextualize data drawn from more robust exercises such as MICS. In connection with end-decade review and preparation of the Special Session for Children, UNICEF supported national opinion polls among young people and children in three regions around the world, covering some 37,000 children and adolescents. The results of such polls fed into the different regional consultations, ministerial meetings, and intergovernmental conferences held in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific which were organized as part of global efforts to shape a future agenda for and with children (*see further details in chapter 8*).³⁹

Many other activities on improving data availability and use have been carried out as part of the assessment and evaluation of programmes at the country level which, over the decade, have added to data, information and knowledge related to children and women. The UNICEF Evaluation Office compiles and regularly updates an evaluation data base with key findings from UNICEF-supported studies and evaluations, available in electronic form.

³⁷ UNICEF *Report of the Executive Director* (E/ICEF/2000/4 (Part II), LAC RAR draft segment 2000; other region-specific information gathered for the end-decade review

³⁸ Draft write-up on Disparities in WSC Goal Achievement (UNICEF, DPP)

³⁹ See SG EDR *We the Children*, 2001, Box 14 for further details; also *Voices of Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean*, UNICEF LAC Regional Office, May 2000; *Young Voices: Opinion Survey of Children and Young People in Europe and Central Asia*, UNICEF Geneva, August 2001; *Speaking Out! Voices of Children and Adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific. A Regional opinion survey*. UNICEF EAPRO, September 2001.

Despite such clear progress over the decade, a number of national reports and other contributions to the end-decade review identify the need for further strengthening of data collection and analysis. Several reports pointed out the difficulties of monitoring progress towards the goals and setting priorities for the future in the absence of a sound baseline of information. The demand for reliable sub-national data continues unmet in a number of countries, with the potential such data offer to sub-national planning exercises unrealized. This becomes particularly important in support of evolving policies toward decentralization in many regions. Consistent disaggregation of key indicators remains a key challenge, with weaknesses in this area hindering efforts to identify the most vulnerable children and women and overcome disparities. 'Breaking the silence' on particularly sensitive child rights issues has also been identified as an ongoing priority and a prerequisite for further efforts to collect information needed to strengthen planning and policy formulation. Further data and research are urgently needed, for example, on such issues as the impact of armed conflict and HIV/AIDS on children, economic and sexual exploitation, child trafficking, violence and abuse. National capacity building remains a further challenge, with technical assistance and resources called for in a number of areas. And finally, continued efforts to integrate qualitative exercises into assessments could help foster greater stakeholder participation in data production and definition while contributing vital information on knowledge, attitudes and perceptions that is particularly important for efforts aimed at promoting positive behavioral change.

Reviewing progress and reporting on results

Periodic monitoring, assessment and reporting

In response to the follow-up actions detailed in the WSC Plan of Action, UNICEF's responsibilities and support for monitoring and reporting over the decade spanned a number of levels.⁴⁰ Both the processes of assessment required for reporting and the reports themselves provided scope for continual discussion and scrutiny of progress and constraints among a broad array of stakeholders, contributing to efforts to hold ourselves accountable and to collectively move forward.

National level

UNICEF supported periodic reviews of National Programmes of Action and progress towards the goals. In some country offices, such reviews were integrated into annual or mid-term reviews of programme cooperation. Moreover, as we have seen, country reports on indicators towards the goals were integrated into the internal UNICEF annual reporting system. Towards the end of the decade, in a final thrust to accelerate and monitor progress towards the goals, Country Offices were required to submit half-yearly reports on implementation of the 1998-2000 programme priorities which had been selected especially for their likelihood of bringing about real changes for children and women.⁴¹

Regional-level

Regional level follow-up and reporting on the Summit Goals was similarly well organized. In some regions, ministerial consultations were organized every two years to review progress, revise targets, and accelerate action – with regional reports prepared, often with UNICEF support.

World Summit follow-up: regional manifestations

In **Africa**, the principal point of reference for follow-up to the WSC was the "*Consensus of Dakar*", outcome of the 1992 International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC) signed by the delegates of 44 countries, together with donor partners from 18 industrialized countries and representatives of international financial institutions. A continental follow-up mechanism was established under the auspices of the OAU to monitor overall formulation and implementation of NPAs and submit progress reports to the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. In line with its priority focus on Africa, UNICEF also prepared annual follow-up reports on progress in ensuring child survival, protection and development and child rights in Africa (*see chapter 5*).

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, consistent, high-level follow-up to the WSC was organized through a series of five inter-ministerial conferences in the region beginning in Mexico City in 1992; and continuing in 1994; 1996; 1998; and 2000. The 1994 *Narino Accord* set mid-decade goals for the region and was endorsed by Heads of State/Government at the 4th Ibero-American Summit in Colombia in 1994. An inter-agency coordinating committee was established in 1992 to help coordinate follow-up activities in the region, with regular technical meetings on summit follow-up involving an expanding set of partners, including the

⁴⁰ See UNICEF's reporting obligations regarding summit follow-up actions (CF/EXD/1991-011); also *Suggested guidelines for the preparation of the progress report on the implementation of the World Declaration...adopted by the World Summit for Children* (E/ICEF/1991/17).

⁴¹ See, for example, *Half-year report on programme priorities* (PRO/98/003); *Reporting on progress towards World Summit goals* (CF/ED/1998-007); and *Reporting and review of progress on implementation of 1998-2000 programme priorities* (CF/EXD/1998-008).

Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, UNESCO, ILO, FAO, the World Bank and USAID. Technical follow-up in this region evolved from an initial focus on health sector goals to a broader focus on the whole spectrum of the goals and rights for children, particularly following the Third Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas held in Santiago Chile in 1996 which expanded the regional goals to include rights.

In South Asia, Heads of State/Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) met in Male, Maldives, soon after the WSC, calling for a regional plan of action and declaring the period 1991-2000 as the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child. This plan of action was endorsed in December 1991 by the SAARC Summit in Colombo, Sri Lanka, which requested its Council of Ministers to ensure an annual review of implementation. The “*Colombo Resolution*”, endorsed in April 1993 at the seventh SAARC summit of Heads of State/Government in Dhaka, Bangladesh, served thereafter as the touchstone for Summit follow-up in South Asia, linking such efforts to a collective commitment to eradicate poverty within 10 years.

In East Asia and the Pacific, four ministerial consultations on children and development were held over the decade, with the “*Manila Consensus*” serving as the principal point of reference for Summit follow-up and review. The “Manila Consensus” is the product of the September 1993 Regional Ministerial Consultation, in which 17 countries reaffirmed their commitment to the goals of their respective National Plans of Action and pledged to adopt policies, programmes and strategies to achieve the mid-decade goals. Important links between WSC goals and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were also affirmed at regional consultations, including in Beijing in 1993 involving 13 countries in the region, 11 of whom had already ratified the Convention.

In the **Middle East and North Africa**, in addition to participation by North African countries at the ICAAC in Dakar, the League of Arab States held a high-level meeting on child welfare, protection and development in Tunis in November 1992, at which 21 countries adopted the “*Pan-Arab Plan for Child Survival, Protection and Development*”, calling for further major improvements in the situation of children over the coming decade. The plan, which was reaffirmed at the March 1995 meeting of Arab Health ministers in Cairo, set targets for the year 1995; called for effective monitoring systems in every Arab state; and established a permanent committee for follow-up to the implementation. Representatives of the Gulf states also met in UAE in December 1992 with representatives of UNDP, WHO, UNICEF and regional institutions to review the status and progress of NPAs.

In the region of **Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and Baltic states**, a central and eastern European seminar on ‘*Strategies for Children during the Transition*’ held in Budapest, Hungary in April 1993 helped confirm commitment for finalization of NPAs and implementation of the CRC. New heads of state/government of Baltic states as well as Tajikistan signed the WSC in 1993 and subsequently attended a seminar in NPA development. Other states followed suit.

Sources: UNICEF WSC follow-up papers and other sources

Global level

Beginning in 1992 and continuing through the year 2000, UNICEF prepared a total of nine annual progress reports to its Executive Board on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Between 1992 and 2001, it also assisted in the preparation of six reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on implementation of the WSC Declaration and Plan of Action.⁴² The two categories of global reports were broadly similar in subject matter, though with slight differences in accent/focus, or variations due to the different time frames for reporting. In general, one can note a marked contrast between the two earliest global reports – 1992 and 1993 – which focus primarily on the processes set in place for follow-up, and the later reports, when results begin to be reported.⁴³ Moreover, while NPAs serve as a key focus of reporting up through mid-decade (1995), they begin to fade from view from 1996 onwards. Specific regional overviews of progress towards the goals (including in the industrialized world) are most clearly presented in global reports through the first half of the decade – up to and including the report on the mid-decade review. These are less consistently summarized in the later reports, where specific or regional or national examples of progress towards a particular goal are more often integrated as examples within the general goal write-ups. In addition to reporting on progress towards goals, all reports include sections on the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the early ones focussing on processes of ratification, the later ones including information on processes of implementation. From 1996 onward, discussions of the goals and Convention were more often more integrated within the reports, reflecting – perhaps – the higher degree of integration of the Convention as a guiding framework into UNICEF’s mandate, as per its 1996 Mission Statement. Partnerships and actions undertaken by a variety of stakeholders at different levels are highlighted in most reports.⁴⁴

⁴² At the 47th (1992); 48th (1993); 49th (1994); 51st (1996, mid-decade review) and 53rd (1998) sessions of the General Assembly and in 2001 (end-decade review) presented at the 3rd preparatory committee meeting for the Special Session on Children in 2002)

⁴³ The general pattern is slightly altered in the report for the year 2000 where an overview of results is given, but the focus is on the processes set in motion for the end-decade review which would yield fuller results the following year.

⁴⁴ A key exception is the Board report of 1998, where the emphasis is more on the actions of UNICEF in relation to its programmatic focus on accelerated progress towards the goals for the period 1998-2000. This was remarked upon by the Board, which requested fuller attention to the contributions of other actors.

The discussions and decisions adopted by its Executive Board on consideration of the annual progress reports helped guide UNICEF's efforts in support of Summit follow-up, while the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on consideration of the periodic reports submitted by the Secretary-General helped mobilize international efforts still further. Key issues and trends, including areas requiring increased attention, have also been highlighted in UNICEF flagship publication, *The State of the World's Children*, and *The Progress of Nations*, launched in 1993 as a means of tracking progress towards the commitments of the World Summit declaration and plan of action.

The Progress of Nations –social statistics for social change

“The day will come when the progress of nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings, but by the well-being of their peoples: by their levels of health, nutrition and education; by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children. The Progress of Nations, to be published annually by the United Nations Children's Fund, is a contribution towards that day.” (PON 1993)

Each year, from its launch in 1993 to the last issue in 2000, *The Progress of Nations* brought together statistics on progress made in each country towards basic human goals and social development. With its lucid prose, vivid examples, impassioned advocacy, and clear presentation of data, PON did much to make issues related to indicators and measurement more widely accessible to policy makers and the general reader alike and to heighten appreciation for data as an essential element of the debate about and struggle for development and progress for women and children.⁴⁵ By documenting progress and constraints in achievement of the WSC goals and the fulfillment of rights, it helped keep these issues high on the national and international agendas – providing clear contextual background so that the reasons for success and shortfalls would be more evident and the way forward clearer. In well-publicized global and national launches each year from 1993 through 2000, PON both stimulated and encouraged public debate and discussion on the key commitments made to children and women in the 1990s. A spirit of healthy competition was introduced into WSC follow-up through the development of 'league tables' that ranked the nations of the world according to their achievements in health, nutrition, education, family planning, and progress for women. *“The closer monitoring of social indicators allows nations to see their achievements and rates of progress and to compare them with the record of other nations...Internally, monitoring informs policy, introduces accountability, galvanizes and rewards efforts, and is a means by which sustained pressure can be brought to bear for the fulfillment of political progress.”(PON 1993)*

It readily admitted at the outset that the statistics by which social improvements are measured are inadequate and repeatedly pointed out within its pages some of the key examples of such inadequacy. *“The Progress of Nations is a flawed publication”* it announced in its 1994 issue, speaking tellingly about difficulty of basing analysis on statistics that are frequently out of date, incomplete, or based on extrapolations or mathematical models rather than on vital registration systems or on the systematic collection of representative data. Decrying the *“statistical arthritis”* affecting *“almost every bone in the body of social development”*, it notes that *“A statistic like the under-five mortality rate should serve as a child-minder to governments and policy makers”*, but then poses the question: *“who can trust a child-minder that loses well over 100,000 children in a single year?”* It thus makes the urgent case for improved and timely social statistics, both as an indispensable management tool *“for any government committed to extracting maximum social development mileage from every economic gallon”* and as a vital underpinning for enlightened participation in social development processes by constituencies ranging from opposition parties, to the media, academic institutions, NGOs and the public at large, arguing thus:

“Accountability is at the heart of democracy. And the collection and dissemination of up-to-date information on progress and problems in complex modern societies is essential to that accountability. If democracy and social development are to reinforce each other, then social statistics should become a part of the mainstream of political and public debate. Changes in annual rates of economic growth are grist to media and political mills; changes in the proportion of children who are malnourished, or who drop out of school, or who die or become disabled from preventable illnesses, should also now become the stuff of political debate, media coverage, and public concern. More sensitive statistics on social trends are also required by the United Nations agencies, by aid ministries in the industrialized nations, and by non-governmental organizations. If mounting debt in the developing world causes child malnutrition to rise, then at least the world ought to know about it. If economic adjustment policies are causing schools and health clinics to be shut down....then it ought not to happen quietly, without the world noticing.UNICEF and many other organizations have tried to draw the world's attention to the real human consequences of debt and adjustment policies over the last decade. How much more effective would that message have been if those consequences had been measurable, systematically documented, rather than being suspected, guessed at, pieced together from the inadequate scraps of information that happened to be available?....This principle of 'first call for children' is the great ideal at the heart of social development. But it is a principle which cannot be upheld without strong statistical support” (PON 1994)

⁴⁵ Peter Adamson, as advisor to UNICEF Executive Director James Grant, was responsible for preparing both *The State of the World's Children* report and *The Progress of Nations*. Founder of *The New Internationalist* magazine, he initiated the 'State of the World' series of annual reports issued by United Nations agencies and was responsible for putting together the initial version of *Facts for Life*.

While each issue included discussion of a broad array of subjects, lead articles evoked key themes for particular emphasis. The 1993 inaugural edition of PON fittingly drew together data for a discussion of issues related to child survival as the lead article. In 1994, the lead focus was on social statistics and nutrition; in 1995 on health issues and the World Summit for Social Development. The 1996 edition presented a powerful and hard-hitting indictment of the unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality, presenting the results of new estimates by WHO and UNICEF that showed this to be higher than previously accepted - the ensuing discussion and debate helped create a new momentum around this issue. The same edition of PON also made the case for an increasing emphasis on monitoring for disparity reduction - shifting away from aggregate national figures towards the kind of disaggregated monitoring that will help to identify those who have been excluded from the progress that has been made. Water and sanitation served as the focus of PON in 1997, with data dilemmas in sanitation access raised. This was followed by discussion of children's civil rights in the 1998 edition which led with an article and indicators on birth registration, considered as 'the first right'. The 1998 edition also included an article urging 'a reality check' on immunization statistics, demonstrating the wide discrepancies in data drawn from routine reports and special surveys. In 1999, the 'child risk measure' was introduced to launch debate on efforts to develop a composite index of risk factors with greatest impact on a child's well-being. HIV/AIDS was the central topic in the 2000 edition, citing surveys revealing the alarming lack of knowledge on the part of young people of HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention.

The value of such a publication and its lofty endeavour of imbuing social statistics with new life to strengthen accountability was well recognized, with PON garnering praise at the highest level of the UN. In his preface to the 1995 edition, with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed PON as "*a contribution to the cause of social development. This valuable publication records the practical progress being made by many States toward the goals that were established at the WSC.....In providing a detailed account of the deeds that have followed words, these pages provide an effective response to those who rightly ask for practical results from the convening of conferences and the setting of goals. They also show an aspect of the developing world - and of the work of the United Nations - which both needs and deserves wider acknowledgement*". Such praise was echoed in Secretary General Kofi Annan's foreword to the 1999 edition which highlights the concerted follow-up to the WSC and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, noting how "*The Progress of Nations* plays an essential role in monitoring global advances towards the goals set in 1990 as well as in recording setbacks".

Review of progress and lessons learned at mid-decade

The two most significant processes of review and reporting took place at mid-decade (1995/1996) and end-decade (2000/2001). Para 35 (iv) of the World Summit Plan of Action had requested the Secretary General to arrange for a mid-decade review, at all appropriate levels, of the progress made towards fulfillment of the Declaration and Plan of Action. UNICEF Executive Board (*in decision 1994/2*) WSC reiterated the request for a mid-decade review and (*in decision 1995/14*) urged UNICEF to prepare a comprehensive report by mid 1996. In February 1996, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali invited all heads of government to give their personal support to a national mid-decade review; the same request was made to heads of United Nations agencies. He emphasized the importance of a truly participatory reviews, with lessons learned to inform efforts to achieve the year 2000 goals.⁴⁶

In response to the Secretary-General's call, national mid decade reviews were carried out in some 98 countries, among which 35 organized formal reviews and another 63 incorporated the reviews into the annual or mid-term reviews of UNICEF programmes of cooperation. A number of regional reviews were also conducted - many as a part of periodic follow-up to the WSC. These included the Third East Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation on the Goals for Children and Development to the Year 2000, Hanoi, Viet Nam, November 1995; the Third Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, Santiago de Chile, August 1996; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Conference on Children, Rawalpindi, India, August 1996. At global level, the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy met in May 1996 to assess progress on the mid-decade health and nutrition goals, while the Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All met in Amman Jordan in June 1996 to assess progress in education.⁴⁷

Although data from the mid-decade reviews were still in the process of compilation and interpretation at the time of the Secretary-General's report on results, "*preliminary information suggested an encouraging trend towards the achievement of the majority of goals for children in most countries,*"⁴⁸ albeit with considerable variation within and across countries, as well as by goal. The area of most progress had been in control of preventable diseases, specifically through immunization, control of IDD, efforts to eradicate polio and guinea worm disease, and to protect breastfeeding. There was also marked progress in creating an environment for the protection of childhood by the near universal ratification of the CRC. Access to safe water also improved. Some advances were registered in education, but these were slower than desirable. The weakest areas were in reducing protein-energy malnutrition, maternal mortality, and

⁴⁶ From SG's Mid-decade review report (A/51/256) 26 July 1996; and UNICEF/WHO joint review (JCHPSS/96.3)

⁴⁷ From UNICEF 1997 WSC follow-up report to the Board (E/ICEF/1997/14).

⁴⁸ SG Mid-decade review report

adult illiteracy, and in expanding sanitation services. It was clear that more needed to be done to achieve the overarching goal of reducing U5MR.⁴⁹

On September 30, marking the 6th anniversary of the World Summit, a commemorative meeting was organized by UNICEF for a “*Review of progress on the goals set at the World Summit for Children,*” with ministerial-level participation by representatives of the six Summit initiator countries (Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden). The meeting, which was open to all delegations and special guests, took place in the Trusteeship Council Chamber of the UN in New York and was presided over by the President of the General Assembly (Razali Ismail, Malaysia). In his address to the meeting, the Secretary-General of the UN (Boutros Boutros Ghali), hailed the “*widespread and significant*” progress made for children since 1990, noting in particular achievements towards the goals of U5MR reduction, immunization, polio eradication, guinea worm elimination, and expansion of access to safe water. At the same time, the Secretary-General pointed to lags in sanitation, slower than expected gains in education, and continuing problems of poverty, with “*cutbacks in basic social services, crushing debt burdens, proliferating armed conflicts and reductions in development assistance*”. He called for a redoubling of efforts to eradicate poverty and to sustain and accelerate progress through bold moves designed to establish “*an environment in which the positive momentum for children can continue to grow*”. Calling the achievements recorded at mid-decade “*a victory for the very concept and practice of summitry*”, he urged further integration of global commitments into national plans, strategies and programmes; continued commitment and support from the donor community, and expanded and strengthened partnerships between governments, NGOs, the private sector and UN agencies, including Bretton Woods institutions, noting that with near universal ratification of the CRC, the goals of the WSC were now legally binding.⁵⁰

In *resolution A/51/186* of 16 December 1996 on the mid-decade review, the General Assembly called upon governments and their partners, taking into account lessons learned during the mid-decade reviews, to adjust, refine, and prioritize, where necessary, their goals and strategies within the framework of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Summit and in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It emphasized the importance of setting measurable indicators and targets and of improving data collection and assessment on implementation of the Summit goals for survival, protection and development, including the goal of improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. The Assembly also stressed the need for greater efforts to involve children themselves, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention in all matters affecting them.

A number of key lessons emerging from the review at mid-decade were summarized by UNICEF in its 1997 annual report to the Executive Board on follow-up to the WSC, and next steps identified in its efforts to carry the process forward.⁵¹ These essentially set its agenda for WSC follow-up through end-decade.

Mid-decade review: lessons learned and next steps

Lessons learned

- ◆ The establishment of time-bound and measurable goals by the WSC was a pioneering endeavour, designed not only to mobilize resources and commitment, but to help shape programmes of activity and give them clear aims and direction.
- ◆ The goals have had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating a renewed level of activity on behalf of children around the world and creating new partnerships between Governments, international organizations, the private sector, donors, the media, NGOs and other actors in civil society in pursuit of a common purpose.
- ◆ Broad ownership of the children’s agenda, which evolved through a process of extensive consultations and consensus-building, was an important element of its acceptance and translation into action. Of particular importance was the process whereby the agenda was taken up by Governments, especially in the developing world, and given expression in NPAs and subnational programmes of action at state, provincial, district and municipal levels in many countries.
- ◆ Analysis of the data highlighted regional, national and local diversity in progress. Countries and regions face very different challenges in meeting the goals set at the global level, given their historical backgrounds, different levels of development, existing capacities and other initial conditions. There is clearly a need for prioritization of the goals to suit local realities.
- ◆ Community participation has been vital to achieving progress. In many contexts, the mobilization of communities behind a goal and the strategy for implementing a programme to reach the goal has been the critical ingredient of success. This lessons was amply demonstrated during the push for UCI in the late 1980s and has been reinforced during the 1990s through efforts on a wider range of social fronts, such as the control of dracunculiasis, the eradication of polio, and the promotion of breastfeeding.

⁴⁹ *SG Mid-decade review report, 1996.*

⁵⁰ Note to Correspondents: *SG to present is review of progress achieved*; and Press release SG/SM/6069 ICEF/1833, 30 September 1996 “*Secretary-General hails widespread progress in efforts to reach goals set by 1990 world declaration on welfare of children*”; The SG’s speech also reproduced in the UNICEF version of the mid-decade review report.

⁵¹ From UNICEF *1997 WSC follow-up report to the Board* (E/ICEF/1997/14).

- ◆ One of the important achievements associated with the follow-up to the WSC has been the work generated in connection with measurement of progress. Setting measurable goals demanded a commensurate effort to establish effective systems of data collection and use, especially on children, presented in a disaggregated manner. The past 5 years have revealed shortcomings in these areas. Through the MICS methodology and other efforts to improve data collection and analysis, national governments and the international community are now in a better position to establish baseline data and monitor progress.
- ◆ In sum, the mid-decade review shows that when political commitment is present, adequate resources are allocated, communities are mobilized and sound policies and programmes are implemented, notable progress can be achieved.

Next steps

- ◆ Strengthen linkages between the Convention and the Summit goals, including through the development of indicators that will allow monitoring of progress on the realization of children's rights – covering all areas identified by the convention
- ◆ Prioritize goals and strategies more closely to local realities
- ◆ Build national capacity to sustain progress and meet the remaining challenges, including through enhanced capacity for effective service delivery, formulation of integrated sectoral plans, and development of systems for routine data collection and analysis
- ◆ Mobilize additional resources, particularly through 20/20
- ◆ Increase inter-agency coordination, including through follow-up to international conferences
- ◆ Modify the UNICEF system for allocation of general resources
- ◆ Follow-up to GA res. 51/186 of 16 Dec. 1996 on convening of special session in 2001 and on SG report on progress in 1998.)
from UNICEF 1997 WSC follow-up report (E/ICEF/1997/14), 17 March 1997

The Secretary-General's report of 1998 also identified a number of lessons derived from the mid-decade review which were of relevance for follow-up to other global conferences.⁵² These indicate, in particular, that:

- ◆ Through global agendas for action, the world conferences have influenced national leaders, policy makers and planners at the highest levels to commit their countries to achieving specific national goals
- ◆ The goals have been instrumental in fostering a greater consensus in development thinking, centred around specific social outcomes
- ◆ Regular follow-up to the agendas is required to maintain the momentum of the conferences
- ◆ The international agendas need to be adapted to each national situation, because while global goals are important, country-specific targets and target-dates need to be adapted to each country's needs in a realistic but ambitious manner
- ◆ Government decision-making needs to be strengthened through the collection and use of relevant, timely and disaggregated data, in order to address country- and area-specific needs and priorities
- ◆ Periodic reviews and reports on progress, or lack of progress, at the national and sub-national levels need to be undertaken to increase the level of transparency and accountability in improving the situation of children.

Review of progress and lessons learned at end-decade

In adopting resolution 51/186 on the mid-decade review, the General Assembly decided “to convene a special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children” and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at that time “a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action, including appropriate recommendations for further action.”. GA resolution 54/93 reiterated the call for an end decade review process, stressing the importance of broad participation, and further elaborating on the request to the SG to submit to the special session “a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, including appropriate recommendations for further action, which also elaborates on the best practices noted and obstacles encountered in the implementation as well as on measures to overcome those obstacles.” The UNICEF Executive Board (decision 1999/9) requested UNICEF to continue to assist governments in their efforts to achieve the end-decade goals and to monitor results and to support the Secretary General in the preparation of the end-decade review “including an overall assessment of the progress achieved and lessons learned during the decade, an analysis of the main factors that have inhibited progress, an overview of the remaining challenges and issues, and specific recommendations for the future”.

In January 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan wrote to all permanent representatives of UN Member States and Observers, calling on them to undertake reviews of progress achieved in their countries since the World Summit. In March 2000, the UNICEF Executive Director followed-up with further guidance on national level reviews and reports thereon. In order to promote the mainstreaming of children's issues, it was suggested that national reviews should, as far as possible, build upon existing processes, mechanisms, and sources of data collection and analysis, with countries urged to assess the current situation of children and women on a goal-by-goal basis; analyze factors preventing or enhancing progress; devise strategies and identify resources required to deal with these factors; and consider capacity-

⁵² *Progress on the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children, Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/186), 22 July 1998.*

building measures to ensure sustainability. A suggested set of indicators for monitoring progress at end-decade was annexed to the Executive Director's letter in an effort to promote comparisons across countries and regions and, in September 2000, a set of technical guidelines for the Statistical Annexes of the national reports was prepared and distributed.⁵³ In March 2000, the Executive Director also wrote to the heads of all members of the United Nations' Administrative Committee on Coordination reminding them of the important role foreseen for all members of the UN system in the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action and requesting their inputs into the preparation of the report to the Special Session. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography were also invited to contribute to the process.⁵⁴

Thereafter, extensive end-decade review and reporting processes were established at national, regional and international levels. Top-level political commitment was seen in a number of national review processes by direct involvement of the offices of heads of State or Government. The reviews gained additional visibility through linkages with high-level regional events. Participants in the reviews included intersectoral government bodies, parliamentarians, national and international NGOs and community-based organizations, religious groups, academic institutions, the media, United Nations agencies and donors. This helped ensure broad ownership of review findings and consensus on priorities for future action. Various efforts were also made to encourage participation by children, notably through children's and youth parliaments, forums and opinion polls. A number of countries extended the review to subnational levels through local surveys and consultations.

A wide range of information sources was drawn upon for the national reviews, including qualitative and quantitative studies, assessments and surveys, and the results of other recent international reviews. Many countries made specific reference to the close links between the end-decade review process for the Summit and reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies. One of the most encouraging aspects of many national reviews has been the extent to which they have gone beyond a retrospective analysis to set priorities for future policies on children. In a number of countries, this has involved preparations for, or even completion of, a new generation of NPAs for children.

By the time of the Special Session, some 158 national reports had been received from Governments from all regions of the world, including industrialized countries,⁵⁵ and fifteen reports were submitted by United Nations agencies and others.⁵⁶ The number and high quality of the reports were encouraging indicators of the commitment of member states and members of the United Nations system to the continued implementation of the Summit Plan of Action, and the successful outcome of the Special Session on Children. UNICEF participated in the technical and consultative processes of reviews in all regions and supported efforts to achieve the widest possible involvement of all stakeholders. UNICEF offices at both country and regional levels have further contributed their own perspectives through specific end-decade review analyses submitted as annexes to the *Country Office Annual Reports* and *Regional Analysis Reports*.⁵⁷

An analysis of both the national reports and UNICEF regional and country office contributions highlighted a number of key issues, lessons learned and challenges for the future.⁵⁸ These pointed to the importance of the following as essential ingredients for sustained progress for children and women:

⁵³ *National –level follow-up to WSC* (CF/EXD/2000-001), with copies of letters to permanent representatives to the UN from the Secretary-General and UNICEF on the end-decade review and reporting processes.

⁵⁴ *End-decade review* (CF/EXD/MEM/2000-14/E), with copy of UNICEF letter to heads of agency of ACC

⁵⁵ National reports are posted on the UNICEF website. A total of 158 reports were received as of 8 May 2002, with regional breakdown as follows: Africa: 45; Asia: 37; Eastern Europe: 22; Latin America and the Caribbean: 26; Western Europe and others: 25; Observers: 3.

⁵⁶ *Contributions from the United Nations agencies, programmes, funds and bodies on their follow-up to the World Summit for Children*, (A/AC.256/CRP.8), 22 January 2000 (Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, second substantive session, 29 January – 7 February). A Compilation of reports from CRC; ESCAP; FAO; ILO; OHCHR; UNDCP; UNEP; UNESCO; UNFPA; UNHCR; UNV; WHO, WIPO; and WB submitted as part of the process of end-decade review and preparation of the Special Session on Children. An additional report by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAE) was submitted on 19 January, 2001.

⁵⁷ These are on UNICEF Intranet

⁵⁸ UNICEF Staff Working Papers. *End-Decade Review: Key issues, lessons learned and challenges for the future* (UNICEF NY, EPP, June 2001 ([Draft version](#)), to be finalized and issued by the Office of Evaluation Unit)

End-decade reports: key issues, lessons learned and challenges for the future

- ◆ Comprehensive, multi-dimensional poverty reduction strategies linked to support for productive enterprises at household level; international action to establish more favourable terms of trade; and intensified resources mobilization including through increased allocation of ODA and effective debt relief;
- ◆ Greater efforts to combat chronic conditions of armed conflict and war, insecurity, and social unrest which usurp the very foundations for the realization of rights, with particular attention to the root causes of war;
- ◆ Intensified action against HIV/AIDS through mobilization of all sectors of society, including young people, with a focus on prevention and increased attention to community structures of care for children orphaned by AIDS;
- ◆ Sustained political will, leadership and good governance, with capacity-building and institution-strengthening to support processes of transition, reform, democratization and decentralization;
- ◆ Social policy, planning and goal-setting adapted to local realities, based on clear and 'actionable' data, and carefully monitored for necessary adjustments;
- ◆ A concerted focus on disparity-reduction targeting both the causes and consequences of social exclusion as a key strategy in achieving both the unfinished agenda of the WSC and the emerging issues of the future. Such a strategy will be undergirded by disaggregated data and analysis ;
- ◆ Continued efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, build capacities, and create enabling administrative structures to support an 'era' of application of law and social justice;
- ◆ Mobilization and engagement of all actors in the creation of a child-friendly world through participatory processes involving local governments and communities, civil society, the private sector, and children themselves;
- ◆ Support for families as the primary caregivers of children and support for community-based initiatives and local associations;
- ◆ Gender equity throughout the life-cycle and the promotion of women as key to a number of positive processes;
- ◆ Environmental protection as a key factor in sustaining child welfare;
- ◆ Heightened international cooperation and coordination to complement and support national-level action for women and children and build the enabling environment for sustainability

From UNICEF Staff Working Papers. *End-Decade Review: Key issues, lessons learned and challenges for the future* (draft) UNICEF NY, EPP, 2001

Informed by the available data and the rich insights drawn from review processes at all levels, the Secretary – General's report on the end decade review was presented in June 2001 at the 3rd substantive session of the preparatory committee for the Special Session on Children.⁵⁹ Predictably, the picture that emerged from the available data was one of mixed results, with real and significant progress in a number of areas, but setbacks, slippage and in some cases real retrogression, some of it serious enough to threaten earlier gains. As summarized by the Deputy Secretary General in her introduction to the report at the prepcom, key gains were as follows:⁶⁰

Some 63 countries had achieved the targeted one-third reduction in mortality among children under the age of five; while over 100 others had cut it by one fifth. Deaths of young children from diarrhoeal diseases were reduced by 50% over the decade, saving as many as a million young lives. High and sustained levels of child immunization in most regions of the world also continued to save millions of children. Polio was seen to be on the brink of eradication, with a 99% reduction in the number of reported cases in the world compared to a decade ago, and there was dramatic progress in preventing iodine deficiency disorders, the world's major cause of mental retardation, against which 90 million newborn children are now protected every year. Worldwide, there are more children in school than ever before, with one result a rise in the adult literacy rate, from 75% to 79%. Moreover, thanks to the heightened awareness of child rights stirred by the almost universally ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child, egregious violations of children's rights are being ever more systematically exposed, with action being taken to overcome them. The review showed clearly that children have achieved a much higher profile on the national and global political agendas. The Security Council itself has taken up children's issues, particularly that of children and armed conflict, and NGOs and the mass media are playing an increasingly active role in drawing public attention to the need for children to be protected.

At the same time, as pointed out by the Under-Secretary-General, the end-decade review showed that much more needs to be done.⁶¹ Over 10 million children still die each year, often from readily preventable causes. An estimated 150 million suffer from malnutrition. Over 100 million children are still not in school, and 60 per cent of them are girls. Conflicts killed 2 million children in the past decade and left many other millions disabled and psychologically traumatized. Over 10,000 children are killed or maimed by mines every year. Of some 35 million internally displaced

⁵⁹ *We the Children: End-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children*. Report of the Secretary-General (A/S-27/3), 4 May, 2001.

⁶⁰ The Deputy Secretary-General, Remarks at the Third Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special session on Children, 11 June 200 (*Presentation of the report of the secretary-general "We the children": End-decade review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children*). Note: as new data came in and was analyzed, some figures were subsequently updated (see glossy version of SG report and updated statistical annex as well as UNICEF child info website.)

⁶¹ *ibid*.

persons and refugees worldwide, about 80 per cent are children and women. Children are also the victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation in rising numbers, while some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are economically active, and some 50 to 60 million of them are engaged in intolerable forms of labour, according to the International Labour Organization. And the scale of the HIV/AIDS epidemic - which exceeds the worst-case projections of 1990 - now threatens decades of gains in child survival and development, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In the most affected countries, it was estimated that from half to more than two-thirds of the 15-years-olds currently alive would eventually die of the disease. Already, it was estimated that AIDS had orphaned more than 13 million children, and that figure may reach 30 million before the end of the decade. The epidemic both exacerbates and deepens many other problems that affect much of the developing world, including poverty, discrimination, malnutrition, poor access to basic social services, armed conflict and the sexual exploitation of girls and women, with strong action needed to halt and begin to reverse its spread.

All in all, the Secretary-General's end-decade review revealed very mixed trends conditioning children's experiences around the world (*see box*). Major barriers to progress were identified as lack of investment in basic social services; misplaced priorities reflecting lack of commitment; and persistent patterns of discrimination – on the basis of ethnicity, gender, religion and on the basis of childhood itself, with children coming low on the list of priorities.

A number of key lessons were identified as pivotal in guiding future actions. These included the need to bridge the gap between consensus and action and to address challenges confronting children by enlisting a broad range of actors, with a focus on leadership and accountability throughout society. It had become clear that children's rights and specific child-related development goals are best pursued within the broader framework of human rights. Policies need to focus not only on the immediate factors affecting children, but on the broader reasons for their exclusion. We must learn to see children differently and act accordingly – approaching children not as harbingers of problems, but as contributors to solutions in their own lives. More generally, sustained development and poverty reduction require the strong participation of children, women and men in the decisions that affect them – within the family and at the local and national levels. There is an increasingly compelling case for investing in children's progress- and for special efforts for the most disadvantaged. Evidence over the 1990s had clearly shown that the education and healthy growth of children are crucial for future economic progress and to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Investing in children from the earliest years stands at the core of the long-term development of societies. Time-bound, well-specified goals and targets have shown great power to motivate and provide a platform for partnerships and a basis for monitoring and reporting on progress: the challenge is to pursue such goals in ways that help advance children's rights. Overall - broad public-private-community coalitions and attention to the poorest and most vulnerable, together with clear and effective policies, child-friendly legislation, and systems for accountability are central to reducing the gap between promises and action – and to making rapid progress for children.

Mixed trends over the decade

- ◆ Unprecedented global prosperity – coupled with persistent poverty and rising disparities between rich and poor countries and within them as the poor are left behind;
- ◆ Growing international partnerships and successful action to eradicate major childhood diseases – but rapid social devastation from the HIV/AIDS pandemic in large parts of sub-Saharan Africa and spread of the disease in other parts of the world;
- ◆ Some gains for women -- but continuing gender discrimination and violence;
- ◆ A rising awareness of child rights and of violations of these rights coupled with continued widespread exploitation of their bodies and labour and the persistence of violence against children, including through armed conflicts;
- ◆ Some progress in the reduction of the burden of debt faced by poor countries, but a serious decline in international development assistance and a continued lack of investment in basic social services in both aid and public spending;
- ◆ A spread of democratic governance, increased decentralization and an expanding development role for civil society, NGOS and the private sector, but continuing local and global environmental degradation.

"We the Children" Report of the Secretary General (A/S-27/3)

The Secretary-General's report received broad acclaim by delegates at the prepcom session for its comprehensive scope, factual detail and depth of analysis, as well as for the evidence-based approach adopted on the basis of a wide range of data and information.⁶² A number of delegates commended the report for its frank, open and candid appraisal of both progress and constraints for children over the decade, with excellent insights into the key challenges ahead. Delegates concurred with the identification of poverty, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, discrimination, abuse and exploitation as key obstacles impeding progress; expressed concern with the issue of widening disparities highlighted throughout the report, with particular reference to Africa; and called for sustained political will and commitment as well as increased mobilization of resources at both national and international level. Delegates also agreed that strengthened partnerships

⁶² Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children – resumed third session (draft report) (A/AC.256/L.16), 17 September 2001.

are essential at all levels, with many pointing in particular to the participation of young people and children as stakeholders in processes that affect them. In this, they agreed with the observation in the SG's report that "*Recognition of the right of children to participate... is one of the most significant advances made during the last decade.*"⁶³

Many delegates highlighted the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in providing the framework and basis for action for children, commenting favorably on this aspect of the report. Some pointed to the articulation of the rights-based approach in the WSC Plan of Action itself, which called for universal ratification and implementation of the Convention and established goals for children as vehicles for the realization of rights: the end-decade review showed clearly how the Conventions has inspired and guided national policies, plans of action, legislation and other measures and has entailed basic changes in the approach to children which the Special Session must support and strengthen. One delegate stressed that in this era of rights, we are no longer called upon to pledge commitments to children, but to fulfill obligations: "*The Special Session for Children is therefore not the 'Second World Summit for Children'. Rather it is the first Session on the Realization of the Rights of the Child*" (Egypt). It was clear by these comments that the vision of 'a new global ethic' for children envisioned by the shapers of the World Summit and its follow-up had come full circle.⁶⁴

Partners within the UN system took the occasion provided by the 3rd preparatory committee session to highlight particular points in their own follow-up to the WSC and identify future priorities for children falling within their individual mandates – making visible in this way just how many stakeholders are involved in global efforts on behalf of children and how very inter-sectoral are both the challenges and the strategies for addressing them (*see chapter 8*).

As the preparatory committee considered the results of the 1990s, the Under-Secretary stressed that the Special Session on Children must aim to regenerate political will and commitment in order to address the remaining challenges and emerging issues affecting the well being of children into the next century, with a recommitment to make the needs and rights of children a priority in all development efforts, and a decisive shift in national investments to favour the well being of children: "*We must ensure that every child gets the best possible start in life; that every child receives a quality basic education; and that adolescents have every opportunity to develop their capacities and participate meaningfully in society*". Echoing the Secretary-General's report, four priorities were identified: to promote healthy lives; provide quality education; protect children from abuse; and combat HIV/AIDS and the risks it poses to children. Improvement in the well-being of children was seen to constitute a significant leap in human development as a whole, for: "*It is children who will shape the world's future, and it is through them that entrenched cycles of poverty, exclusion, intolerance and discrimination can be broken for succeeding generations.*"⁶⁵

The following section will examine in detail UNICEF's efforts with its partners to regenerate the political will, commitment and resources needed to rally the global community around efforts to work towards a world fit for children in the 21st century.

⁶³ SG EDR report, para 415

⁶⁴ *Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children – resumed third session* (draft report) (A/AC.256/L.16), 17 September 2001.

⁶⁵ United Nations Under-secretary's presentation of SG's EDR report to the preparatory committee.