

FOR EVERY CHILD

UNICEF Canada Magazine
Spring/Summer 2011

Reaching the Hardest to Reach

Child mortality drops, but gaps widen
Field diaries from Afghanistan
Protecting children's rights in Canada
Emergency response in Haiti and Pakistan

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A message from Chairman of the Board Christopher Fong

With the departure of Nigel Fisher, former President and CEO, the Board of Directors of UNICEF Canada undertook an extensive search for a new leader for our Canadian operations. Strategic vision, strong leadership and a commitment to the advancement of children's rights were key attributes guiding our search. It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce you to



Christopher Fong

David Morley, incoming President and CEO for UNICEF Canada.

As the former Executive Director of the Canadian section of Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders and most recently as President and CEO of Save the Children Canada, David brings with him a lifelong dedication and expertise in international development. Currently he is a member of the Board of Directors of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Brazilian-based Abrinq Foundation for the Rights of Children, and is on the Advisory Board of McGill University's Institute for the Study of International Development.

I know that David takes on this role with passion and conviction for the impact that UNICEF is making around the world to protect and improve the lives of children and women. Leading a team of enthusiastic and committed staff, under David's guidance UNICEF Canada will continue to engage Canadians and advance the innovative programs and advocacy work that is instrumental in shaping a world fit for children.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to extend a warm welcome to David and wish him success in his new role.

Christopher Fong
Chairman of the Board
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UNICEF is the world's leading child-focused humanitarian and development agency. Through innovative programs and advocacy work, we save children's lives and secure their rights in virtually every country. Our global reach, unparalleled influence on policymakers, and diverse partnerships make us an instrumental force in shaping a world in which no child dies of a preventable cause. UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary donations and helps all children, regardless of race, religion or politics.

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Congo, Democratic Republic of the, 2010
A girl carrying a brush and a bucket stands in the village of Mabala, DRC.

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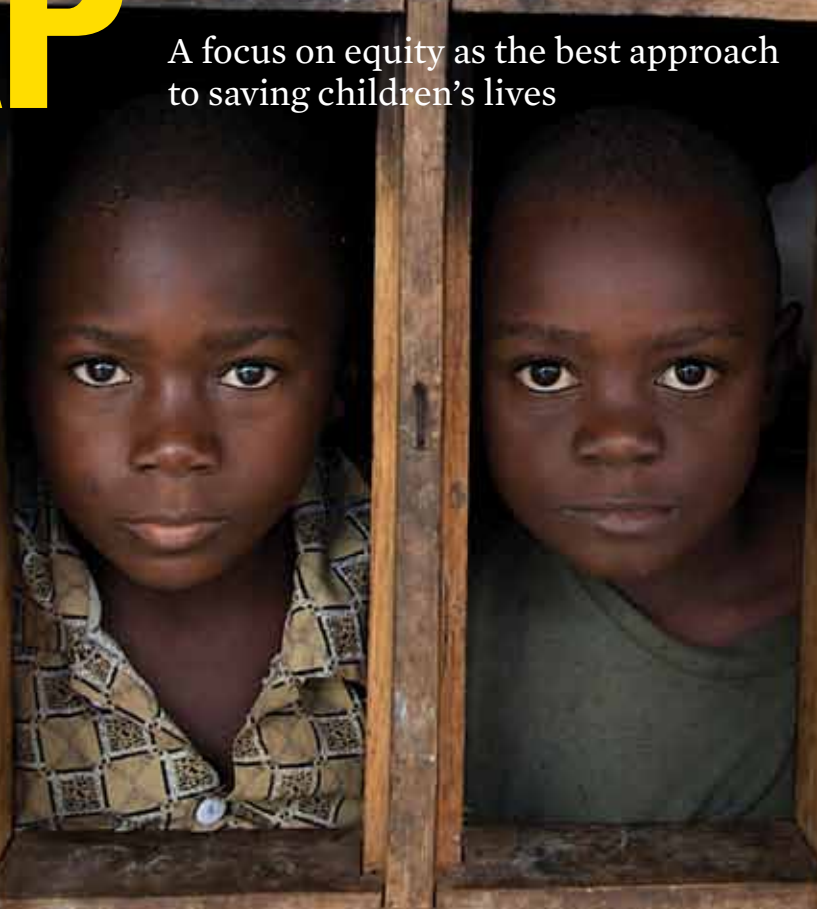


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NARROWING THE GAP

A focus on equity as the best approach to saving children's lives



Two boys peer through the window of their home in the western district of Bundibugyo, Uganda.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2010-1463/Shehzad Noorani



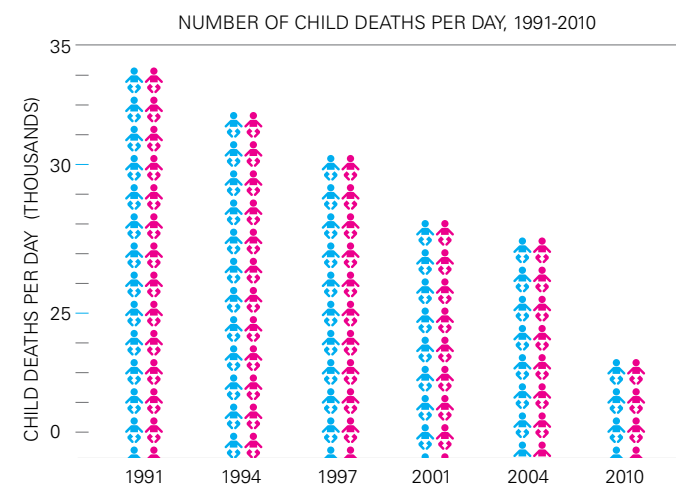
UNICEF HAS ANNOUNCED SOME MAJOR NEWS: the global under-five child mortality rate has fallen significantly yet again, dropping from about 24,000 deaths every day to about 22,000.

That number is down from about 25,500 four years ago, and represents a reduction of one-third since 1990. This ongoing progress means that UNICEF's efforts, and the generosity of our supporters, continue to produce life-saving results, year after year. Millions of children are thriving today who otherwise would not be.

UNICEF's mission has always been to aid the most vulnerable children throughout the world. And although UNICEF and its partners have made many major inroads against grave threats to children, disturbing new information calls for a redoubling of efforts to better aid those in greatest need. In many countries that are making overall progress on cutting child deaths, a child mortality gap is actually widening between poor children and those from well-off families. In fact, children from the poorest 20 percent of households in the developing world are more than twice as likely to die before age five than those from the richest 20 percent.

Poverty should not be a death sentence for children. We must find a way to lessen the disparities. A report released by UNICEF in September 2010, "Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals," offers a cost-effective way to achieve this goal. The report notes that an "equity-focussed" approach that makes the most disadvantaged communities the highest priority can bridge disparities and accelerate progress toward the Millennium Development Goals set in 2000. UNICEF specialists and international experts estimate that each \$1-million investment in a low-income, high-mortality country using an equity approach could potentially prevent 60 percent more deaths.

The findings of one study are not going to change the world, but it is far more than a first step. It shows that what we know to be right in principle turns out to be right



Poliana da Silva, 7, smiles as she embraces her brother, Gabriel, 4, outside their home in a slum area on the outskirts of the city of Olinda, Brazil.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2006-1355/Claudio Versiani

Poverty should not be a death sentence for children.

in practice. UNICEF and its partners are working to reach the excluded—to make sure they get the lifesaving services, protection and education that all children deserve. Our strategies have already yielded significant gains; what's planned now is an extra push to reach as many of the most deprived families as possible.

Measures for carrying out the new approach include upgrading health facilities, expanding outreach initiatives, advocating for the elimination of user fees for healthcare, extending cash transfers to the poorest families, and recruiting and training more community healthcare workers.

In the years ahead, we have a real opportunity to save the most children by focussing our efforts on the ones who need the most help. This is a great moment in time—it offers an opportunity that must be seized. To read the complete report, please go to unicef.ca/equity.

Did you know?

About half of global under-five deaths occurred in just five countries in 2009: China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.



Interview with Dr. Susan Bissell, Ph.D, UNICEF's Chief of Child Protection

A native of Canada, Susan Bissell is Chief of Child Protection at UNICEF in New York. Susan first joined UNICEF in 1989. After leaving to complete a master's degree in law, economics and international relations and a doctorate in public health and medical anthropology, Susan returned to UNICEF in 2001.



You've dedicated much of the last 25 years to helping protect the world's children. How have you seen UNICEF evolve in that time?

—
It's been great to see UNICEF's evolution, particularly in how we take a much more holistic and nuanced view of children. When I started out, we were focussed on child survival, on ways to keep children alive to age five. Now, helping children and youth in especially difficult circumstances—children in brothels and battlefields, child labourers—is a central piece of our work. We have moved beyond mere survival to helping children survive into a life of dignity.

Every day you focus your efforts on the world's most vulnerable. What situations touched you the most personally?

—
My time in Bangladesh was a turning point in my career. This was when the world really started to pay attention to the issue of child labour. I was fortunate enough to be at the centre of UNICEF's work on this. We worked with the government of Bangladesh to provide education to poor children in urban settings, transformed the ways teachers were trained and developed curriculum. UNICEF effectively set the bar for the entire development community on the issue of child labour, and the global community began to see that while these issues are complex, they can be addressed.

I was so moved by my experiences at this time that I took a break to do a doctorate on the complexities of child labour. It had become clear to me that some deep reflection would help me to be a stronger advocate for the rights of children. But I always knew I would come back!

Your work on child labour led you to produce *A Kind of Childhood*—a well-known documentary on child labour in Bangladesh. What impact did making the documentary have on you and your work?

—
When the issue of boycotts arose, UNICEF commissioned a short film called *Voices of Children*. Shortly after, we were approached by Trudie Styler, wife of musician Sting and an activist and filmmaker herself, who wanted to get involved. At the time she was trying to make a documentary in India but couldn't get the permits.

I suggested we make a documentary together, a longer and more complex piece. TVO agreed in advance to broadcast it. It then went on to win an award at the Human Rights Film Festival. We were—and still are—thrilled by its success.

Making the film deepened and broadened my understanding of the complexity of children's realities. It also deepened my commitment to having quality evidence, to really understand situations we're trying to address, if we are committed to the principle of doing no harm.



Fatema Begum weaves a bamboo basket in her yard in Jamalpur, Bangladesh. The little money she makes selling her baskets at the market is her sole means of income, and is not enough to adequately feed her family.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2009-2306/Jithi Akter Joshua

UNICEF effectively set the bar for the entire development community on the issue of child labour.

What global trends regarding child protection give you hope? Which ones concern you most?

—
In 2008, UNICEF adopted a new child protection strategy with more emphasis on prevention. We're seeing results already—the strengthening of child protection systems, juvenile justice structures and educational programs, and the development of social protection and supports for families.

On a different note, I am heartened by the declines in female genital mutilation. We have been working with religious and community leaders to address social norms, to figure out what the practice means to communities, and figure out how to substitute this “rite of passage” with others that are not harmful. These changes, to last, need to be led and internalized by the community.

My main worry? We live in an extremely violent world. Violence knows no boundaries. Gang violence is on the rise, billions of children live in territories in armed conflict. Children are surrounded daily by images of violence and

are at risk for cyberbullying and child pornography. I've been thinking a lot lately about this trend and how it relates to our work in the future.

How do you manage to keep your spirits up when every day you are immersed in stories of human suffering?

—
It may sound clichéd, but UNICEF is a great organization to work for, and I have the longevity behind me to see that we've made so many advances. UNICEF is one of the most respected names in the development-humanitarian community. I am buoyed by that.

Of all you've done, what has made you most proud?

—
I am most proud of my involvement in amplifying UNICEF's focus on disadvantaged children and children's rights. Our commitment to children in especially difficult circumstances went from an add-on to a pillar of our work. That has given me a great sense of accomplishment.

Did you know?

There are an estimated 150 million children 5-14 years old who are engaged in child labour.



STEP BACK, **LEAP FORWARD**



Manual well drilling in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Early every morning Louis Wambo and his wife, Mary, fetch water from the pump at the local primary school in Mabala, a remote village in the western province of Bandundu. Louis, Mary and other villagers gather their water in the early hours or in the evening, so that during the day the pump can be used for the students—whose lives have been transformed by it.

Currently in the DRC, less than three out of ten children have access to safe drinking water.

Before the well was dug, the schoolchildren had to take a few hours of every day from their studies to travel to the traditional water source over a kilometre away. One simple, manually dug well has meant more time for their education, safe water for drinking and handwashing, and a dramatically reduced risk of waterborne illness for themselves and the three hundred families in the village.

Currently in the DRC, less than three out of ten children have access to safe drinking water. War and internal conflict have left the country's water and sanitation systems in a shambles. As a result, only one in ten children under three years of age drinks safe water. Diarrhea is the cause of death for 14 percent of children under age five. Lack of access to fresh water here, like in many parts of the world, is a predominantly rural problem. In a country that is 65 percent rural, 71 percent of rural residents lack fresh water.

In crisis is opportunity, and here on the western edge of the third largest country in Africa there is an urgent need to address some of the lowest clean water access rates on the planet. Driven by the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people without access to safe water by 2015, UNICEF and community partners here decided to take a step back in order to take a huge leap forward: enter, manual well drilling.

Though mechanical drills get the job done faster, there are a number of barriers to using them effectively here: few drills means a lack of competition and very high cost, there is difficulty in acquiring spare parts, and inadequate roads and bridges make moving the equipment arduous. These are among a long list of reasons why manual drilling became worth a look. Though manual drilling doesn't work for all ground types, it does for this corner of the



Ten-year-old Mpoko Kitondo and another student carry pails of water at their primary school in Mabala, DRC. The containers of water will serve as basic handwashing stations.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2010-1545/Olivier Asselin

DRC—a fortunate coincidence since the western provinces of Bandundu, Bas-Congo, Équateur and Kinshasa have the lowest rates of access to potable water in the DRC (in Équateur, only one in four people has access to safe water).

The cost alone is a great incentive. In Africa, UNICEF estimates that concrete-lined manually dug wells and hand pumps cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000, a substantial savings compared to medium-depth mechanically drilled wells that run anywhere from \$12,000 to \$25,000.

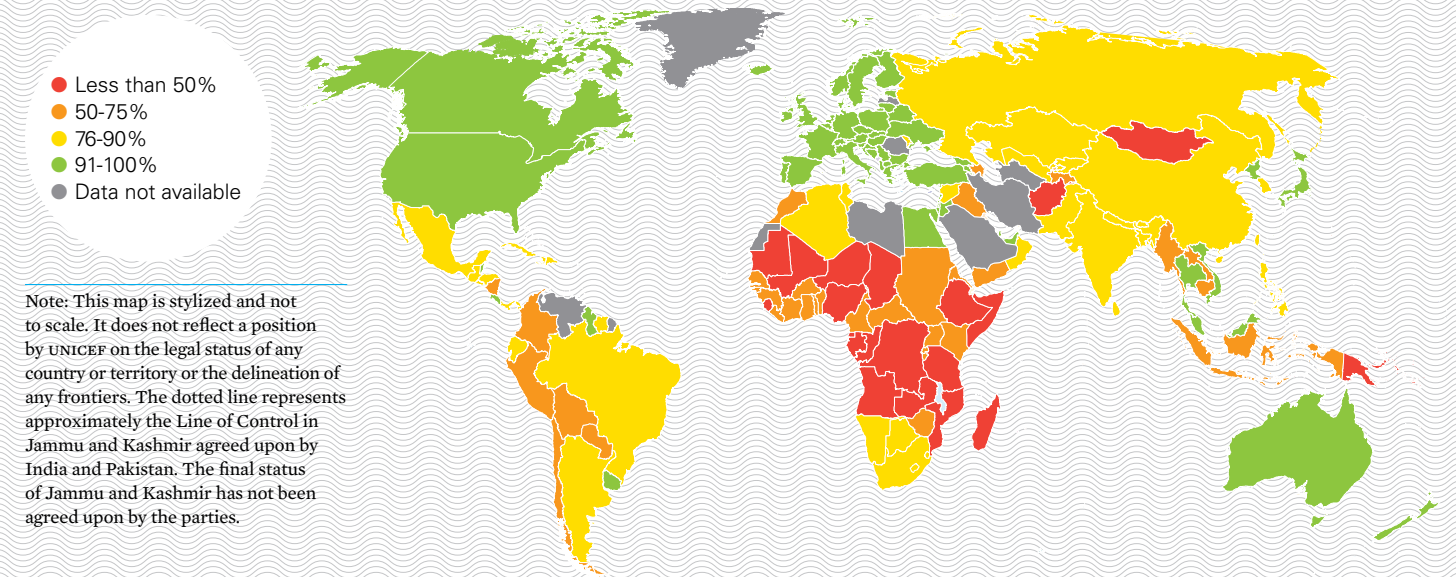
Since a reinvestment in manual drilling has yielded

Did you know?

In much of rural Africa, less than half the population uses improved drinking water sources.

In much of rural Africa, less than half the population uses improved drinking water sources.

Use of drinking water sources, rural, 2008:



The truly amazing thing about the DRC project is that the results will be greater than fresh water—it will improve the quality of education and strengthen the local economy.

positive results in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it made sense for UNICEF to explore whether the same success could be found here. And, thanks to donor support, the past two years have seen 40 manual water supply wells drilled in the western DRC, with an equal number still to come.

But the story doesn't end here. UNICEF's innovative program in the DRC is designed to create a thriving and

self-sustaining well-drilling industry, to give the region the capacity and the skills to continue this work far into the future. So, in addition to the 40 more wells on the way, the team is doing something altogether more magical: developing the capacity of eight new private sector well-drilling enterprises, and creating the right conditions to enable them to thrive.

The manual drilling programs in the DRC and in other countries around the world are part of UNICEF's WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) program, an initiative to ensure that all schools have child-friendly water and sanitation facilities, and a hygiene education program.

The truly amazing thing about the DRC project is that the results will be greater than fresh water—it will improve the quality of education and strengthen the local economy. The schoolchildren in the village of Mabala could see their lives transform from hiking miles every week for unsafe water to employing other villagers in a well-drilling business all their own. And fresh water can be made available to neighbouring schools and villages. That kind of hopeful ending is only possible because of the generous support of UNICEF donors like you.



A boy fills containers with water at a manually drilled hand pump. The pump was built through a UNICEF-supported program.

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Protecting orphans and vulnerable children in Georgia

UNICEF helps the Government of Georgia find alternatives to residential institutions



Nino, 20, holds her four-month-old daughter, Mariam, at the Mother and Children's Shelter in Tbilisi, Georgia.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2010-1627/Olivier Asselin

IMAGINE WAKING UP ONE MORNING and having to make an unimaginable decision: you must give up caring for your child because you are unable to provide for his or her health and well-being. It seems unfathomable. Yet, across many Central Eastern European countries, this is the heartbreaking decision that some parents make every day. Institutionalizing vulnerable children—those with disabilities or from HIV-affected households, for example—is a far too common practice.

In 2005, some 5,000 children in Georgia alone were living in such institutions, despite the fact that 90 percent of them had a living parent. The conditions in these homes are often deplorable: children are residing in crumbling and dilapidated buildings, and access to proper health and nutritional care is nonexistent.

The necessity of these institutions is just one indication of a greater problem. Children in Georgia are struggling to thrive—28 percent live in poverty and many carry emotional and physical scars from the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. (There are still 250,000 internally displaced people as a result of this armed conflict.) Also, it is estimated that one child in five experiences repeated physical abuse.

UNICEF works tirelessly to advocate for the rights of every child and to influence policymakers who set the laws

to protect those rights. So, in 2005, when the Government of Georgia declared deinstitutionalization a policy priority, UNICEF began to help the government find alternatives to residential institutions, and to re-integrate children into their own families wherever possible. Such alternatives include foster care, community-based group homes, and a national network of daycare centres that provide support to vulnerable children and their families to prevent unnecessary separation. In partnership with local municipalities, UNICEF has helped to jump-start five such centres, all of which were operational in 2009.

As a direct result of UNICEF's intervention, the number of children in institutions has dropped from approximately 5,000 in 2005 to 1,400 in 2009, and the number of institutions has decreased from 46 to 22. By partnering with the government and local organizations, UNICEF is helping

the most disadvantaged in Georgia thrive and survive.

Your support provides a brighter future for children like Artur

Fourteen-year-old Artur is typical of many of the children living in orphanages in Georgia: he is not actually an orphan. In fact, both of his parents are alive and living in the same city that he is. He is one of Georgia's "social orphans"—children whose parents have made the heartbreaking decision to send them to live in an institution, almost always because of poverty or a disability.

Artur now lives in a small group home with seven other children, overseen by a live-in couple and supported by professional staff. This home, like many others, was established and is supported through UNICEF and its partners.



Is Canada letting the poorest children fall further behind?

Canada's Chief Advisor of Advocacy, Marv Bernstein, discusses how to reduce disparities among Canadian children



© Rhienna Cutler - iStockphoto

WOULD IT SURPRISE YOU TO KNOW that out of 24 affluent countries, Canada ranks 17th in material well-being? This troubling finding was recently published in "The Children Left Behind," a UNICEF report that looks at child well-being by measuring, for the very first time, the gap between the average child and the most disadvantaged children.

In Canada, one in ten children lives in poverty. This statistic increases to one in three when considering recent child immigrants, and one in four for children in First Nations communities.

In addition to material well-being, the study also measured educational achievement and physical health. Canada fared much better in these areas, ranking third in educational achievement and ninth in physical health.

The study points out that family income is a key factor influencing overall child well-being. UNICEF Canada believes that shifts in public policy can reduce inequality. For example, promoting fairly paid and highly skilled employment along with equitable taxation would help to close the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. Services like health and education must also work to reduce, rather than widen, the disparities among our children.

Through supporters like you, UNICEF Canada has been lobbying the Canadian government to institute a number of practical and affordable steps that will help to ensure the rights of every Canadian child. To this end, UNICEF Canada has been campaigning for a National Children's

Commissioner—a crucial step needed to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Canada and to raise awareness about children's rights.

Children themselves pay the heaviest cost of inequality, and society also pays through increased strain on health and hospital services, remedial schooling, welfare and the justice system.

Through ongoing advocacy work, UNICEF Canada is working to ensure that Canadian laws, policies and institutions guarantee rights for all children and address, in particular, those most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Thank you for supporting this important work.

You can help Canada's children so no one is left behind. Demand a National Children's Commissioner

It's time to appoint a defender of children's rights on Parliament Hill! You can take action. Sign our online petition at unicef.ca/irc9 and learn more about the report.

UNICEF volunteer Madeleine King leaves a lifelong legacy

A Calgary resident fuels her desire to help children who struggle against famine, disaster and poverty



UNICEF volunteer Madeleine King.

© Madeleine King

LONGTIME UNICEF VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORTER Madeleine King has had a lifelong desire to help people who are struggling to survive against famine, disaster and abject poverty—especially children.

“Giving back is something that I’ve thought about a lot in my career in law, as a city councillor and as a longtime volunteer with UNICEF,” says Ms. King. “It has driven me to want to make a difference. Not just for now, but for generations to come. That includes making a long-term impact in helping to change this world.”

It is important to Madeleine to support the issues that matter to her now and after she is gone. That’s why she decided to name UNICEF as a beneficiary in her will. “It was the natural thing to do. It was the right thing to do. And I’m proud to have done it.”

Having been a part of the UNICEF family for many years as a volunteer, Madeleine feels confident in her decision to leave a legacy. She has seen first-hand just how unique UNICEF is in improving the lives of the world’s least fortunate children.

Working with local groups in countries literally across the entire world, UNICEF has put in place tremendous

I have full confidence that UNICEF will still be here, continuing to do the work that I so admire now.

programs that are giving children everywhere equality, education, health and a better future. It is an organization that is sensitive to the differing needs of the peoples of various countries. With that sensitivity, UNICEF has developed exceptional solutions to the issues affecting children.

“These qualities are so important to me because I believe that leaving a bequest is making a long-term commitment. While it may be years before my commitment comes into effect, I have full confidence that UNICEF will still be here, continuing to do the work that I so admire now.”

UNICEF would like to thank Madeleine for her commitment to the world’s children. She is part of a group of dedicated individuals who have chosen to make a lasting commitment to the world’s most vulnerable children through their estate plans. Their generosity will provide future generations of children the lasting support they need to live healthier, safer lives.

How would you like to be remembered?

May is National LEAVE A LEGACY™ month. Choosing to leave a gift in your will or estate plans gives you the opportunity to support causes meaningful to you long into the future. To learn more about legacy giving in Canada visit leavealegacy.ca or email bequests@unicef.ca.



© Fondation Trudeau Foundation

A message from David Morley, incoming President and CEO for UNICEF Canada

David Morley, newly appointed CEO of UNICEF Canada.

GEOVANI WAS TEN YEARS OLD, with red hair and freckles. He had an infectious laugh and a winning smile.

It was over thirty years ago. I was a summer volunteer at a project for street children in Costa Rica. For two years before I met him, Geovani had been caring for his younger brother and sister on the city streets—begging, scrounging, doing whatever it took to keep the family alive.

He taught me how to pick pockets. We would be doing extra homework, and suddenly my wallet would be in his hand.

“David,” he would chide me. “You have to be more careful. You never know who you’re going to run into around here.”

He tried to get my skill level up to his, but my fingers were never as nimble. But then, I’d never had to do it for a living. For a *real* living—to stay alive.

One day, after another unsuccessful pick-pocketing lesson, I asked him, “Geo, what was it like to sleep on the streets?”

This time he didn’t laugh. He looked at me steadily, and his voice grew hard. “We never slept on the streets. Every night I’d find newspapers and spread them over a bench to be our sheets. That bench was our bed. Nobody can ever say I couldn’t give my brother and sister a bed when they needed one. Nobody.”

Geovani—with his dignity, grace, humour and steadfast work ethic—changed my life. I didn’t come back to Canada that summer, but stayed in Costa Rica for almost two years. What had begun as summer volunteer work turned into a lifelong career. I spent subsequent years working on community development and humanitarian projects in

I have seen UNICEF at work in every continent, in every place in the world where children are at risk.

the Congo, Zambia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Mexico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Brazil. Since that summer it has been my good fortune to be a part of organizations that strive to build a better world.

I have seen UNICEF at work in every continent, in every place in the world where children are at risk. No other agency has such an impact on children’s lives. I am humbled and excited by the challenge of leading UNICEF Canada. I hope to build on the tremendous progress that UNICEF has made for children worldwide, and to make our efforts go even further. While things have improved for the world’s children over the past generation, there are still too many Geovanis living on the edge of society and struggling to find dignity. Through your support of UNICEF’s global efforts, we can make a difference in the life of every child.



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RECOVERY in the aftermath of disaster

Emergency response in Haiti and Pakistan

A woman helps her toddler drink a solution of oral rehydration salts in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

AT TIMES IT SEEMS THAT NOT A WEEK GOES BY without news of yet another crisis striking families somewhere in the world.

We saw such tragedies amplified in 2010—most notably in the extraordinary destruction caused by the Haiti earthquake, the survivors of which have since faced a deadly cholera outbreak, and in Pakistan’s devastating flood emergency last August, where the crisis is far from over.

Many natural disasters in low-income countries like these are compounded by vulnerabilities that existed beforehand: lack of basic infrastructure and services, high-density populations, urbanization in high-risk areas and long-standing political instability, to name a few.

Reaching children with life-saving aid and restoring basic services is vital in the aftermath of a disaster. But how do you restore health services when there may not have been an adequate system in place previously? How do you get

children back to school when so many were missing out on an education before disaster struck?

These are the challenges that UNICEF and other organizations are working to overcome with the support of donors like you. Supporting countries on the road to recovery is as much about meeting immediate needs as it is about helping establish and strengthen crucial systems that will support long-term, sustainable recovery.

Did you know?

Recorded disasters have doubled over the past 20 years, and the frequency and destructiveness of flooding has spiked dramatically. Earthquake deaths have also increased fourfold over the past decade.



A facilitator holds a football during a game at a UNICEF-supported Child Friendly Space in Pakistan.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2010-1678/Marta Ramoneda



A toddler receives packets of oral rehydration salts at a health centre in Grand Dessalines, Haiti.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2010-2149/Marco Dormino

Despite the unimaginable circumstances faced by survivors in Haiti and Pakistan, there have been many positive results for children, and much reason for hope. Life-saving immunizations, clean water supplies, children returning to school—these are but a few success stories amid the most daunting challenges. All are made possible through your generous support.

In Haiti, in addition to urgent cholera response, UNICEF and its partners continue planning efforts to rehabilitate, upgrade and extend water piping systems, boreholes and hand pumps—clean, sustainable water sources are critical to stemming and averting disease outbreaks like cholera.

And, after a large-scale immunization campaign reaching over 2 million quake-affected children, UNICEF is now working to re-establish and strengthen systems to support routine immunization services for children long into the future.

In Pakistan, UNICEF is reaching nearly 3.5 million people with clean water every day, and tens of thousands of children are benefitting from temporary learning centres and psychosocial support. Over 9 million children have been vaccinated against polio, Pakistan being one of only four countries left in the world where this crippling virus remains endemic.

Francina’s Story: Haiti



Francina survives cholera’s heavy blow thanks to donors like you.

Three-year-old Francina is one of more than 18,000 people affected by the cholera outbreak in Haiti. She received intravenous fluids to keep her protected against the deadly dehydration levels that can accompany the disease. While earthquake recovery efforts have made significant progress in providing safe water and sanitation to survivors, infectious diseases like cholera have remained a persistent threat.

UNICEF quickly responded to the urgent needs caused by the cholera outbreak by providing medical teams to assist overwhelmed hospitals like Dessalines Hospital, where Francina was treated. UNICEF continues to distribute water purification chemicals, antibiotics, diarrheal disease kits, oral rehydration salts and therapeutic foods to children and families in affected regions.

Zulifgar’s Story: Pakistan



Your support restores a sense of normalcy for children like Zulifgar.

Four-year-old Zulifgar is bouncing back after the devastating flooding that forced him to flee his home. He now attends a UNICEF-supported temporary learning centre in a displacement camp.

More than 1,500 centres like this have been established across the country, reaching more than 180,000 children in flood-affected areas. Each temporary learning centre is equipped with a UNICEF School-in-a-Box kit, which provides all the teaching supplies needed to re-establish learning in the aftermath of crisis. Caregivers encourage artistic expression, which helps traumatized children heal.

Getting children back to school helps re-establish a sense of normalcy in their lives, and it is one of UNICEF’s greatest priorities after an emergency. Thank you for helping to reach children like Zulifgar with these crucial programs.



A boy smiles for the camera after being immunized against polio in Mazar, Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Diaries: An Excerpt

In the field with Cornelia Walther, a German national who works as an Emergency Communication Officer for UNICEF. She spent three years in Eastern Chad, one year in Afghanistan and is now on mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



I SPENT JUNE 1-3 IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN observing the polio vaccination campaign in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, a special effort of the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) in response to the recent polio outbreak in neighbouring Tajikistan.

The goal was to set up a protective line between Tajikistan, where 185 cases of polio had been detected, and its neighbours Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The target? To vaccinate 1.2 million children under age five in Afghanistan's four northeastern border provinces—Balkh, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar.

I arrived in Mazar with a colleague to monitor the campaign. Arriving on Saturday, we first took a short stroll around the famous Blue Mosque, where women, men and children sit, chat and play while pigeons fly across the bright blue sky and over the abundance of colourful roses—a scene so different from the usual images of violence and war.

Sunday began with a meeting of over 500 people, including mullahs, chiefs, village elders, teachers and health experts. The participants, who had travelled to Mazar from 14 districts, spent three hours hearing specialists from the Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF explain the importance of the polio vaccine and why all children under five must take it orally. Seven mullahs also presented, explaining the issue from an Islamic perspective—the angle most likely to convince even the hardest opponent in a remote village. “To protect our children is part of the tasks enshrined in Koran. Parents toward children, teachers toward students, leaders toward community; all of us have a role to play, here and now,” stressed Mr. Abdel Ahat, an imposing figure with long black beard and sparkling eyes under grim black eyebrows.

On Monday we travelled to Hairatan, the last city before the border to Uzbekistan. When we reached the border

The target? To vaccinate 1.2 million children under age five in Afghanistan's four northeastern border provinces.



Cornelia with children from Laghman Province, Afghanistan.

station, a family had just arrived. Two of their six children were under age six. Building on a cross-border mechanism that had been introduced two years ago in order to prevent H1N1 importation, children coming from neighbouring countries would be screened at all border checkpoints and administered the polio vaccine before entering Afghanistan.

On Tuesday we visited checkpoints that had been set up on both sides of the major road entering Mazar. Two teams



After administering the vaccine, a volunteer marks a little girl's finger.

screened each passing vehicle to see whether it had small children. From 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., 82 children received the oral polio vaccine at one checkpoint.

Next came a visit to one of the 27 local wedding halls. Since every day an average of 15 weddings are celebrated during summer, special teams had been dispatched to avoid the parties bringing risk to children. From 8 a.m. to 12 a.m., 26 children received the vaccine.

At 3 p.m. we reached the Blue Mosque. Every day thousands of worshippers and tourists come here. To benefit from this circulation of target children, vaccination teams had been set up at the four entries. From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. they covered 220 children at just one door.

At 3:30 p.m. I followed the mobile teams during their house tours. They walked from door to door, knocking and asking for the number of eligible children. They then wrote the number on the door with chalk, and if they could not vaccinate all of the children, they noted it and came back the next day.

Usually the vaccination teams gather at the end of the day to discuss problems, share results and make improvements. Our 5 p.m. meeting covered a series of difficulties. The challenges were numerous but addressable.

At 7 p.m. we were back in the UN guesthouse after a long and fruitful day.

To read more about Cornelia's blog, go to UNICEF.ca/inthefield.

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