
EDITORS' FOREWORD

Eleven years ago, the international community ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a watershed event for international human rights and for children. It is the most ratified human rights treaty in history. It signaled a need to provide for children's basic rights and brought these issues to the attention of the international community. However, despite medical, technological and communications advances, as well as an increasing cooperation among nations, children still face myriad tragedies ranging from displacement, discrimination and violence to lack of access to food, education and healthcare. The HIV/AIDS crisis, for example, is a complex emergency that is destroying more lives than all of the armed conflicts today. As we begin the first years of the millennium the *Journal* identifies the challenges and obstacles that affect children around the world and examines strategic alternatives to address these problems.

Our objectives for this issue are threefold. First, with the insights of our distinguished authors, we drive at thorough, fact-based analyses of the more critical and complex issues facing children around the globe. Second, we want to continue to generate alternatives and propel the debate forward toward the most effective solutions. Third, we hope to emphasize that the solutions to these challenges are within our reach; that children must become and remain a priority; that we must seek to include their voices and experiences to attain a more inclusive, equitable and just approach to development.

In our first article, international human rights lawyer Ilene Cohn tackles the tough question of whether child soldiers in Sierra Leone should face criminal proceedings in an international court. An article by Beverlee Bruce also deals with the impact of warfare, violence and forced migration on

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children. On the labor front, author and economics professor Luis F. Lopez-Calva attempts to dispel myths surrounding child labor, while expounding on his own insights and theories. The Andrew Wellington Cordier Essay also deals with questions surrounding child labor legislation. Dr. Judith Evans writes on the importance of early childhood education, while Fabian Koss examines the digital divide and the impact it is having on education, and hence, the economies of the developing world. We also included articles on child abuse, pedophilia and international adoption. Two compelling interviews round out the issue. The first is with Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS; and the second is with Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF.

Focusing primarily on the problems of children may seem pessimistic, and the multiple and concurrent challenges of HIV/AIDS, child soldiers, development, education, child labor and legal rights may seem daunting, but we are confident that these problems can be addressed and tackled over the next few decades. As a society, we possess the technologies and the treatments. Now we just need the political will, prioritization and resource allocation. In addition, we must realize that these complex crises outstrip the capacity of any one agency or nation. Thus, we must look at these issues not only with a relentless bias toward improving the lives of children, but as an opportunity for interagency and international cooperation and coordination.

As we go to press with this issue, a record number of world leaders are preparing to attend a landmark Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children. This Special Session in New York will review progress made since the 1990 World Summit for Children, where governments committed to specific goals within agreed upon timeframes on child-survival, protection and development. The Special Session will also examine the long-standing obstacles to children's well being, and emerging threats to child health and universal access to quality basic education. It is imperative that we continue to put the interests of children at the forefront of national development policies, as investing in children results in real dividends. We hope that the

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international community in all its ranks, organizations, and agencies, in concerted effort, strives to identify strategic solutions to children's issues and commits the critical human and material resources needed to turn those solutions into reality. That would be a fitting legacy for our millennium. ♔