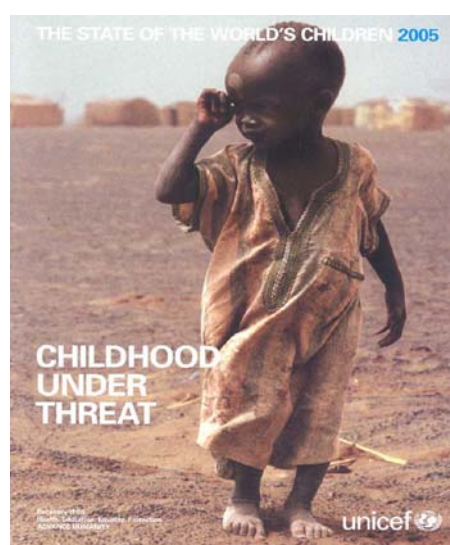


Publication of the Month Review: The State of the World's Children Report 2005

The **State of the World's Children Report** (SOWC) is UNICEF's flagship report, prepared since 1979, with the central purpose of informing the world on the situation of its children. The 2005 SOWC report highlights the tremendously negative effects that, either collectively or individually, poverty, armed conflict and HIV/AIDS, have on children. The passage that best describes the 2005 report is on page 1: "The gap between the reality (what is actually happening to children) and the ideal of childhood (what we would really like to see happen to children) is the focus of this year's report: what childhood means for children, what childhood means for countries, and what must be done if the rights of all children are to be protected, if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met, and if we are to be successful in building a world fit for children and for all of us."



The report is divided into five chapters, each replete with data, key messages, special panels, as well as powerful photographs capturing the positive and the negative, the despair and the hope in the lives of children. Chapter One – Childhood Under Threat – reminds us that despite the many historical landmarks for children, more efforts, resources and commitments are required for countries to be able to report positively on the achievement of those Millennium Development Goals that have direct implications and opportunities for children. The chapter reminds the reader that failure to meet goals for children is indeed a failure to reach global peace and human development.

Chapter Two is entitled Children Living in Poverty and tells us that more than 1 billion children in the world are born in poverty, live in poverty and will most likely live their adult lives in poverty. These children face deprivation of their rights to health, education, participation and protection. It does not have to be this way. The chapter concludes that increased investments and political commitments to reaching all Millennium Development Goals will go a long way to bringing children out of the nightmare of poverty.

Chapter Three is about children caught up in military conflict. Untold thousands of children lose their lives in conflict and those that survive are very likely to lose limbs to landmines; be sexually abused – and not just by regular or irregular armies; get displaced; lose critical education years; be illegally conscripted to fight the war of adults; and witness friends and family members being killed.

Chapter Four focuses on children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS which is, of course, a topic close to the hearts of many stakeholders and partners in Botswana. The chapter notes the staggering number of children – approximately 15 million worldwide – who by the end of 2003 were estimated to have lost one or both parents. The numbers increase on a yearly basis. The report highlights the very urgent need for highly affected countries, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, to accelerate national access to prevention of mother to child transmission programmes, as well as the provision of anti-retrovirals to both parents and children. No other country in sub-Saharan Africa enjoys the track record of Botswana, but it is important to be reminded that HIV/AIDS accounts for close to 58% of all child mortality, and that infant and under-five mortality rates have been steadily increasing since 1991. There should be no greater priority in Botswana's child survival agenda than reducing these rates to their pre-1991 levels.

Chapter Five brings the report to an end with an appeal to all governments, development partners, civil society organisations, and movements of children and young people to join forces to ensure that every child is given his or her right to, firstly, have a childhood; secondly, to enjoy this childhood; and, thirdly, to use childhood as a springboard to become a productive and healthy adult.