

20 November 2014



On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Convention on The Rights of the Child: Stepping up the global effort to advance the rights of every child

When the international community adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child twenty-five years ago, we made this commitment to the **world's** children: that we would do everything in our power to promote and protect their rights.

The commitment was not only to some children, but to **all** children. It was not only to advance some of their rights, but **all** their rights – including their right to survive and to thrive, to grow and to learn, to have their voices heard and heeded, and to be protected from discrimination and violence in all its manifestations.

It was a commitment to be honored not only in times of peace and prosperity, but also, and especially, in times of conflict, crisis, and catastrophe.

The commitment to realize the rights of all children was grounded in the conviction that it was both the right thing to do and the strategic thing to do. For by advancing the rights of children today, we help them become adults who will be able to assume responsibility for future generations – in turn, helping build a more prosperous, peaceful, and just world.

From this commitment and conviction, a global movement was born. With the Convention as its framework and foundation, and the best interests of children as its focus, it has brought together organizations and individuals, activists and governments, the private sector and private donors, religious and cultural leaders, communities and families, individuals and children themselves. Visionaries and pragmatists alike - including Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi, the two child rights champions who share this **year's** Nobel Peace Prize - they have helped change the world.

Twenty-five years since the Convention was adopted, progress is apparent in every region of the world. Infant mortality rates have declined, while school enrollment has risen. Today, the world is winning the battle against extreme poverty; and more than 2.1 billion people now have access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities.

What once was a shared value -- making sure children are cared for – is now a legal obligation to act always in the best interests of children, considering child rights in every context and holding ourselves accountable for advancing those rights for every child. Where once eyes took no notice or turned away when violence scarred or took the life of a child, now voices are raised around the world to demand an end to violence against children whenever and wherever it occurs.

Celebrating this 25th anniversary today, we are inspired by the children who are growing up healthy, strong, and ready to realize the aspirations of the Convention. At the same moment, we are engaged in global discussions on a new development agenda for the post-2015 years. These discussions are driven by a recognition of how much more must be done to reduce the inequities that endanger children today and threaten their hopes for the future.

For even as we celebrate the progress, we cannot ignore the millions of children, in every country of the world, who are being left out and left behind. Trafficked, forced into early marriage, exploited, abducted, terrorized; having babies when they are still children; dying in pregnancies and childbirths; unregistered and unvaccinated; without access to health services, adequate nutrition, and learning opportunities; discriminated against because of their gender or their religion, their ethnicity or disabilities, their color or their sexuality; living in poverty; living without parental care; living on **society's** margins. Their capabilities diminished and their choices limited. Their rights to survival, protection, freedom and identity violated.

We simply cannot – and will not leave these children behind. Because of what is at stake – the lives and futures of the **world's** children, and thus, the future of the world – we must find new ways to reach the children we have not yet reached.

There is hope to be found and nurtured, we are certain, in the human spirit that crosses and defies all divisions in its search for transformation. This is the spirit that speaks to us as we recommit our efforts to make the world a just and better place for all children.

The world has not stood still these past 25 years. There is new science to inform our interventions and our programs. New technologies that offer new opportunities for young people to know their world. Other innovations that change how we communicate and at what speed. A new accountability to children and young people and new expectations for transparency by governments and civil society.

But there are also new challenges – from the impact of climate change, to the ravages of conflict and crises, to the effects of population growth.

It is time for the international community to recommit itself to the immutable rights enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child – and to act, with urgency, to advance those rights, for every child.

Moving forward, we will challenge ourselves in country by country, city by city, village by village, to do even more for children through sustained political commitment, strategic investments, and actions that match our words.

Thus our celebration on this anniversary day is a call -- to those who have already done so much and those who have yet to join the cause: to speed up our efforts and expand our sphere of influence and our circle of activists. It is, most urgently, a call for innovation in what we do, how we do it, with whom and how quickly - so that, soon, all children everywhere will finally and fully enjoy their innate and inalienable rights.