

Unicef calls for \$80-billion a year to help children [INT] ^[1]

Author: Gray, John

Source: Globe and Mail

Format: Article

Publication Date: 13 Dec 2000

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The massive prescription for spending was set out as Unicef published its annual survey, called *The State of the World's Children*.

The study's theme is the necessity of early-childhood development; the first three years of a child's life are considered fundamental to physical, mental and social development.

Louis-Georges Arsenault, a Canadian who is the Unicef representative in Afghanistan, said investment in the first three years of life is the only way for children to reach their full potential.

"The greatest tragedy is that many decision-makers simply don't know how crucial those first three years of life are," he said at a news conference in Toronto yesterday.

Mr. Arsenault cited a mass of statistics from the Unicef report to establish that the failure to invest in early-childhood development carries a terrible cost:

- Eleven million children under 5 died last year of preventable diseases.
- More than 100 million children never go to school.
- About 20 million children around the world have been displaced by conflict.
- About 177 million children are suffering from stunted growth, mainly because of malnutrition in pregnant women.
- One of every 10 children is disabled.

The Unicef campaign for early-childhood development is based on the premise that it is a basic human right for children to have sound nutrition, health care, clean water, adequate sanitation and basic education.

Early care is a solid investment. Unicef studies have shown that for every dollar spent on early-childhood care there is a \$7 saving in later costs. Those attending preschool or day care are less likely to suffer illness, drop out of school or need later remedial services.

In comparison with most of the world, Canada's children are well off. The rate of low birth weight has decreased and child death rates have steadily declined.

But Dawn Walker, executive director of the Canadian Institute of Child Health, said at the Unicef news conference that 20 per cent of Canada's children are living in conditions of "serious economic disadvantage."

The health indicators of aboriginal children in Canada are closer to those of Third World countries, she said.

Ms. Walker was critical of the Canadian child-care system. Although most parents work outside the home, she said, "we have not progressed in the development of an accessible child-care system despite the research that indicates the clear advantages."

The result is that there are regulated child-care spaces for only 10 per cent of children, and most parents must make other arrangements, she said.

-Reprinted from *The Globe and Mail*

Tags: [poverty](#) ^[2]

[child development](#) ^[3]

[funding](#) ^[4]

[accessibility](#) ^[5]

[children's rights](#) ^[6]

[international organizations](#) ^[7]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/06/unicef-calls-80-billion-year-help-children-int>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/06/unicef-calls-80-billion-year-help-children-int> [2]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-development> [4]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [6]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/childrens-rights> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/international-organizations>