The state of the world's children 2005: Childhood under threat [1]

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Excerpts from the press release: Despite the near universal embrace of standards for protecting childhood, a new UNICEF report shows that more than half the world's children are suffering extreme deprivations from poverty, war and HIV/AIDS, conditions that are effectively denying children a childhood and holding back the development of nations. Launching her 10th annual report on The State of the World's Children, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy said more than 1 billion children are denied the healthy and protected upbringing promised by 1989's Convention on the Rights of the Child &em; the world's most widely adopted human rights treaty. The report stresses that the failure by governments to live up to the Convention's standards causes permanent damage to children and in turn blocks progress toward human rights and economic advancement. "Too many governments are making informed, deliberate choices that actually hurt childhood," Bellamy said in launching the report at the London School of Economics. "Poverty doesn't come from nowhere; war doesn't emerge from nothing; AIDS doesn't spread by choice of its own. These are our choices. "When half the world's children are growing up hungry and unhealthy, when schools have become targets and whole villages are being emptied by AIDS, we've failed to deliver on the promise of childhood," Bellamy said. The report &em; entitled "Childhood Under Threat" &em; examines three of the most widespread and devastating factors threatening childhood today: HIV/AIDS, conflict, and poverty. The State of the World's Children argues that bridging the gap between the ideal childhood and the reality experienced by half the world's children is a matter of choice. It requires: - Adopting a human rights-based approach to social and economic development, with a special emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable children. - The adoption of socially responsible policies in all spheres of development that keep children specifically in mind. - Increased investment in children by donors and governments, with national budgets monitored and analyzed from the perspective of their impact on children. - The commitment of individuals, families, businesses and communities to get involved and stay engaged in bettering the lives of children and to use their resources to promote and protect children's rights. "The approval of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was our global moment of clarity that human progress can only really happen when every child has a healthy and protected childhood," Bellamy said. "But the quality of a child's life depends on decisions made every day in households, communities and in the halls of government. We must make those choices wisely, and with children's best interests in mind. If we fail to secure childhood, we will fail to reach our larger, global goals for human rights and economic development. As children go, so go nations. It's that simple."

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