

The state of the world's children 2001^[1]

Author: Bellamy, Carol

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AVAILABILITY

Access online [PDF]:^[3]

Excerpt from the press release: Declaring that "investment in the development and care of our youngest children is the most fundamental form of good leadership," Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, argued today that the world is squandering human potential on a massive scale as hundreds of millions of the world's youngest citizens flounder in poverty and neglect in their first years of life. The report makes four key points: * EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. As a birthright, all children are entitled to registration at birth, sound nutrition, health care, clean water, basic education, cognitive stimulation and an opportunity to reach their full potential. Nations must strive to provide optimum care for all their children. * EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE IS GROUNDED IN SOUND SCIENCE AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. Research in neuroscience and field experience point to critical windows of opportunity for the development of language, motor skills, personality, social behaviour and resiliency. Comprehensive early care provides the building blocks for social and intellectual competence that allow children to reach their full potential. * EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE IS A SOLID INVESTMENT. For every \$1 spent on early childhood care there is a \$7 return through cost savings. This figure is derived from studies showing that participants in pre-school and day care are less likely to suffer illnesses, repeat grades, drop out of school, or require remedial services later in life. Moreover, by shifting money within budgets, nations can create comprehensive programmes for their youngest citizens without adding large sums of money or further depleting their budgets. * THREE MAJOR CONFLICTS LOOM: POVERTY, CONFLICT AND HIV/AIDS These three plagues remain the most pressing challenges for the world and compete with early childhood care for funding. In the poorest nations, scarce resources are used to pay loans. By investing in destructive war machines, many countries steal food, clean water, health care and schooling from their citizens. And in some countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has stripped health and education budgets to the bone.

Region: International^[4]

Tags: economics^[5]

poverty^[6]

child development^[7]

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