

United for Life

From: Paula Plaza [paulap@unicef.org.uk]
Sent: 19 October 2006 15:04
To: info@unitedforlife.com
Subject: UNICEF's response

Dear Mr Mason,

Thank you for your letter and apologies for the delay in responding to you. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

As guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we strive to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF itself does not take a position on when a child's life begins. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not specify a starting point for childhood, or indeed life. The wording of article 1 does not address the question of the moment at which 'childhood' should be considered to begin, thus intentionally avoiding, in view of the prevailing diversity of national legal solutions, a single solution common to all States.

By avoiding a clear reference to either birth or the moment of conception, the Convention leaves it to the national legislation the specification of the moment when childhood or life begins." (Manual on Human Rights Reporting, 1997, p. 413).

The Holy See was one of the first states to ratify the Convention and many countries, such as Ireland and the Philippines, which have strict abortion laws have also ratified the CRC. Conversely, countries such as Sweden and France who have legalized abortion have also ratified the Convention.

A number of countries have made declarations and reservations upon in relation to the question ratifying the Convention, in order to emphasize their standpoint. The United Kingdom declared that it "interprets the Convention as applicable only following a live birth". (CRC/C/2/Rev.8, p. 42)

UNICEF does not promote abortion as a family planning method nor does it use its funds for abortion. UNICEF supports a multi-sectoral approach to family planning through the promotion of girls' education, women's rights, child health, and access to family planning information and services. UNICEF's policy on family planning is consistent with a fundamental part of its mandate - ensuring the survival and development of children.

It includes the promotion of safe motherhood and responsible parenthood; promotion and information on safe and effective family planning methods; promotion of condom use as part of a broader effort to prevent HIV and other STD diseases. UNICEF recognizes the impact of unsafe abortion as a cause of maternal mortality and morbidity.

I hope that this answers your query.
Best wishes,

Paula Plaza
Emergency Project Manager
New Media and Resources

www.unicef.org.uk / paulap@unicef.org.uk

19/10/2006