

Box 1. The most deprived one in six

A baby girl born in one of the least developed countries in 1993 can expect to live barely 44 years — 2 years more than a baby boy born in the same year. Her problems begin before birth since her mother is likely to be in poor health. If she is born in southern Asia, she has a 1 in 3 chance of being underweight, a greater chance of dying in infancy and a high probability of being malnourished throughout childhood. She has a 1 in 10 chance of dying before her first birthday and a 1 in 5 chance of dying before her fifth. In some African countries her chance of being vaccinated is less than 1 in 2. She will be brought up in inadequate housing under insanitary conditions contributing to diarrhoeal disease, cholera and tuberculosis. She will have a 1 in 3 chance of ever getting enough schooling to learn how to read and write. She may be circumcised at puberty with consequent effects on her life as a woman and a mother. She will marry in her teens and may have 7 or more children close together unless she dies in childbirth before that. Ancient traditions will prevent her from eating certain nutritious foods during her pregnancies, when she most needs building up, and dangerous practices such as using an unsterile knife to cut the umbilical cord and placing cow-dung on the stump may kill some of her babies with tetanus.

She will be in constant danger from infectious disease from contaminated water at the place where she bathes, washes clothes and collects her drinking-water. She will be chronically anaemic from poor nutrition, malaria and intestinal parasites. As well as caring for her family she will work hard in the fields, suffering from repeated attacks of fever, fatigue and infected cuts. If she survives into old age she will be exposed to the same afflictions as women in the rich countries: cardiovascular disease and cancer. To these she will succumb quickly, having no access to proper medical care and rehabilitation. She will not be able to pay anything herself: her country currently has less than \$9¢ a year to spend on her health.

Some 24 million babies, one-sixth of the world total, were born in the least developed countries in 1993 and too many of them will grow up in miserable conditions of life and health. Equity demands that the situation of these deprived infants be improved without delay.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Box 2. The fortunate one in eight

A baby girl born in one of the richest countries in 1993 can expect to live to the age of 82 — 6 years longer than a baby boy born in that country the same year. As she grows up she will be assured of adequate nutrition, hygienic living conditions, schooling and advanced medical care. She will receive full vaccination against all childhood diseases at the appropriate age and the proper intervals. She will probably not marry until she reaches her twenties and will then have one or two children, properly spaced and delivered in hospital after regular pre-natal checkups. The greatest dangers to her health in her middle years will be the risk of an accident at home or while she is out driving, or a particularly virulent influenza epidemic. As she enters old age she will be liable to develop cardiovascular disease or cancer, but will survive the first attacks of these with little disability because of excellent medical care and rehabilitation services. She will receive good institutional care in her old age. She will spend on average, including government assistance, the equivalent of \$1 540 on her health every year.

Some 17 million babies, one in eight of the world total, were born in the more developed nations in 1993 and most of them will grow up to enjoy conditions of life and health similar to those of this fortunate little girl.

