



WHO/D. Maillefer

Stockpile of
WHO Emergency
Health Kits in
former Yugoslavia.

Tailor-made Emergency Health Kits

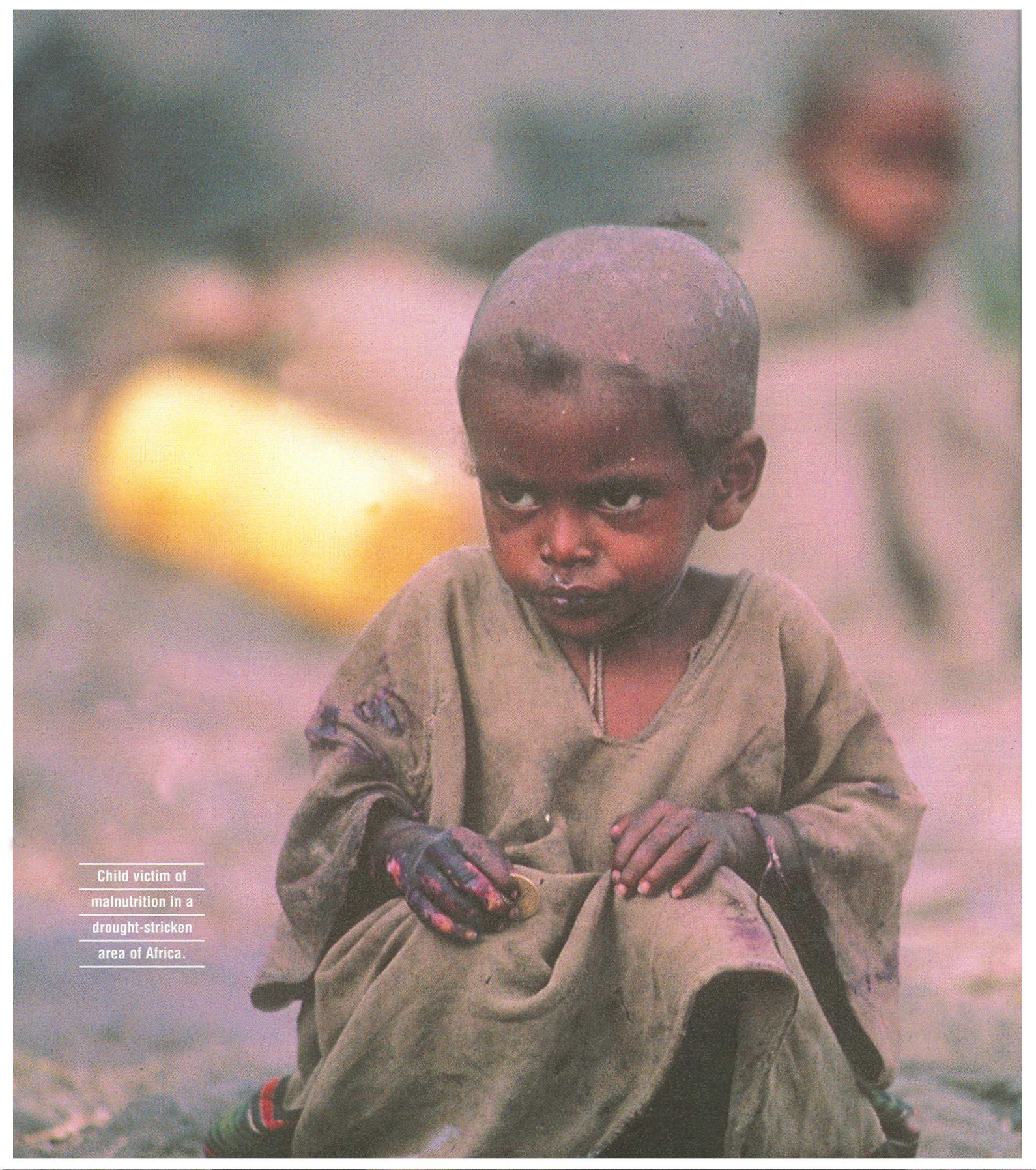
International response to the Armenian earthquake of December 1988 was overwhelming – literally – and proved a point that emergency “specialists” had long tried to make: international aid needs to be tailor-made to the region and country concerned. International voluntary aid came spontaneously from 70 countries.

Unfortunately, the “relief supplies” included huge quantities of unsolicited medical drugs, often inappropriate for the situation and labelled with foreign brand names which were unintelligible to local relief workers. Identifying them wasted much valuable time. Typically, less than 30% of drugs donated by the international community proved to be suitable for emergency use.

To counter this kind of waste and inefficiency, WHO developed **Emergency Health Kits** whose contents vary according to the needs of different situations anywhere in the world. The kits provide the

clearly-labelled generic drugs and medical supplies that are most needed during disasters, together with a concise explanatory booklet. Each kit provides supplies for 10,000 people for approximately three months, and consists of ten basic units, each containing drugs, renewable supplies and basic equipment, packed in a single carton weighing about 860 kilograms.

One variant on the contents, for instance, is the kit prepared for treating pneumonia among children in hospital, and designed for a hospital paediatric unit of 30 beds. Variants of the standard kit, designed expressly for use in Bosnia, included – besides desperately needed drugs and surgical supplies – such special supplies as anaesthetic kits, transfusion kits, mental health kits and vitamin kits. It was as a result of WHO's technical advice that the bread available to the beleaguered inhabitants of Sarajevo was enriched with vitamins. □



Child victim of
malnutrition in a
drought-stricken
area of Africa.