

**Launch of the Innocenti Working Papers
on Child Mortality and Injury in Asia**
UNICEF and TASC

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David Parker, Deputy Director, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy

Implications of the research findings – for and beyond Asian countries.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I take the opportunity first to add to the welcome by Ms Rao Singh and the other speakers, with a greeting from the Innocenti Research Centre which has joined with TASC, national partners and other offices of UNICEF to help bring the studies on child injury in Asia to a wide audience. We consider it a great honour to be able to contribute to this effort.

The Innocenti Centre is named after the building in which it is housed in Florence, Italy – the first orphanage in Europe, dating from the mid-1400s, which operated for 500 years until just after the Second World War. Since that time the facility has housed a range of services for children and mothers as well as policy and research activities, including UNICEF IRC in cooperation with the Government of Italy and the Tuscany regional authority. The Centre's research concentrates on issues critical to the realization of children's rights, often issues of an emerging, multisectoral, long-term and under-examined nature. Child injury is a key instance reflecting all of these conditions.

Addressing injury is fundamentally a matter of fulfilling the rights of the child to survive, to develop and to be protected. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, calls for "all appropriate" measures be taken "to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment". This responsibility rests first with States or government at different levels, as well as with other stakeholders including families, communities, NGOs and the private sector. Similarly, the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides additional impetus to the fight against child injury. The resolution is reflected as well in international targets, including notably the fourth Millennium Development Goal – namely to reduce under-5 mortality by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. As has been described, it is unlikely and perhaps impossible for this goal to be attained without significant progress in reducing the mortality burden due to child injury.

The research reported in the Working Papers establishes the significance of child injury and adds new depth to understanding of its scope, its causes and preventive actions for the countries of the region. The findings are important as they give academic and policy weight to something that is of course deeply understood by people themselves and their communities: injury matters a great deal. Industrialized countries have taken strong measures to counter accidents and injury, as presented for example in an Innocenti Centre report of a few years ago. The developmental trajectory of poor countries – as seen, for example, in greatly increased road traffic – and the known availability of effective preventive measures should place injury at the centre of the global children's agenda.

For these studies UNICEF has had the privilege to partner in this research with leading experts, technical agencies and academic institutions to help develop new knowledge on this important issue. Networks in the case of child injury were of course already well developed. The Working Papers contribute to making the research findings available for ready access and use, for example

as a resource for the upcoming World Report on Child Injury Prevention. They also enable dissemination through additional channels around the world. The key aim is to help “mainstream” child injury as a key element of policies for children – going beyond the health sector to address other major actors within and beyond government.

Particularly within Asia, but also across the developing and middle-income world, we anticipate that the papers will contribute to a widened technical literature on child injury and its prevention, and that they will support countries’ programmes for MDG achievement. The findings merit recognition within the child health and development strategies of international agencies, as well as in national reports, for example in period reporting on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The aim is to influence the agendas of governments and donors within the public health field – to which an extraordinary level of resources are now being devoted – as well as in many wider areas of child rights promotion.

Such a focus on children’s rights underscores the relevance of the study findings to strategies not only for child survival, but also for children’s development and protection. A major point of attention is the terrible effects caused by disability due to injury, in many cases permanently affecting the functioning of children themselves as well as their families.

The findings now pave the way for a further agenda for research and knowledge sharing on child injury in Asia. For example, the projects that are now underway in Bangladesh may be expanded for greatly improved understanding of the effectiveness of interventions for prevention of child injury, and of responses including reahabilitation. Coupled with this should be economic assessment of the costs associated with injury and the social gains from investments for addressing it. Background research should look even more closely at the factors in the child’s social, economic and cultural setting that may predispose her or him to injury and its worst effects. Finally, we need to better understand the behaviors, values and attitudes that say that some degree of child injury is tolerable and not meriting our fullest attention. Accidents and injuries will still occur. But the message of the studies is that we can take many measures to reduce them dramatically from their current unacceptable levels.

We must already look beyond the MDG target year of 2015 to consider the future for children who have been injured. MDG 4 on child mortality reduction provides an excellent platform to make continued progress in reducing childhood injuries. Additional goals might be considered at the national level to more explicitly take on child injury – for example to consider the disability caused by injury and its lifetime effects, and to focus attention on children over the age of five. Attention and action are imperative: it is not expected that the burden of death and disability due to injury will spontaneously decline in Asia any more than in any other region of the world.

The findings of this research have opened our eyes to the reality of child injury affecting the developing world as well as middle income and rich countries – of the sheer magnitude of the threat posed by injury to children’s well being and society. It is now up to us to continue to advance knowledge, and above all to apply the evidence in our work and in our own communities.

Thank you.