

## UNICEF at a glance

1. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the only UN organization dedicated exclusively to children. Founded as part of the United Nations system in 1946 to ease the suffering of children in the aftermath of World War II, UNICEF was an expression of the prevailing spirit of the times, a commitment to face and solve problems collectively. It continues to embody that spirit-for the sake of the world's children-today. Many of the world's finest impulses and best intentions come together around children. UNICEF helps translate them into action, mustering the necessary political will and material resources. It cooperates with other UN agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations and communities to meet children's needs and to protect children's rights.

2. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish child rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. The Convention is the human rights treaty that came most rapidly into force. Ratified by almost all countries, it is close to being the first such convention to achieve universal ratification.

3. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office based in Riyadh is responsible for co-operation activities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

4. UNICEF has provided financial and technical support for the **Child Health Survey** in the Gulf countries, and followed this with similar support for the **Gulf Family Health Survey** in each of these countries. In addition it has supported studies, surveys and evaluations in various countries in such areas as **immunization** coverage, prevalence of **iodine deficiency disorders**, **maternal malnutrition** and weight gain, and **childhood disability**. It has supported workshops on **maternal and child health**, polio, and on formulation of **National Plan of Actions (NPAs)** for the achievement of 1995 and year 2000 goals on the survival, protection and development of children and women called for by the 1990 World Summit on Children. Support was given to **training and materials development** activities aimed at improving the delivery of services in child immunization and **primary health care**. Among the larger projects supported was one on quality assurance of primary health care in Saudi Arabia.

5. In Education, support was given for the evaluation of literacy programmes in Saudi Arabia. UNICEF supported the review of health services within the **girls education** system in Saudi Arabia. It also supported the development of **female literacy** programmes in Saudi Arabia. Encouragement has been given to addressing the needs of the girl child in the provision of basic services, including health and education.

6. UNICEF has given strong advocacy for the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, which has now been adopted by all the Gulf countries. In this respect it co-operated with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), with whom it organized a workshop on **Child Rights and Care in Islam** in Jeddah in June 1991. It co-operated with the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to organize a workshop for Gulf countries on **Country Reporting on the CRC**, in Riyadh in June 1997. The Convention provides the broad framework of reference for addressing the needs of children in a comprehensive manner. The challenge is to move from ratifying the Convention to implementing its provisions, and UNICEF will be supporting countries in these efforts.

7. UNICEF has provided a steady flow of **information** and **communication** to the Gulf

countries with a view to empowering them with appropriate knowledge on the survival, protection and development of children and women. Communication is a two-way process, and some notable publications have been the Gulf Newsletter, Facts for Life, the Progress of Nations, and the annual State of the World's Children Report. Materials have also been shared with the press, radio and TV. UNICEF has also promoted the dissemination of knowledge and experience, through experience exchange and the provision of technical assistance.

8. The Gulf countries possess the economic resources to finance services for meeting the basic needs of their children. UNICEF can co-operate with them in improving the quality and appropriateness of these services by assisting with the development of information bases, the dissemination of knowledge, the exchange of experiences, the provision of technical assistance, and the development of information and communication programmes for children, parents, communities, service providers and decision-makers. It can help to mobilize societies to better address the needs of their own children, and where resources permit, the needs of children elsewhere.

9. UNICEF can co-operate through a new level of partnership with emphasis on advocacy, public policy development, and the mobilization of commitment and resources for children. The new level of partnership would put the emphasis on quality rather than on quantity. The emphasis would be on public policy formulation, national capacity building, information base development, social mobilization and communication, and human resources development. Among major thematic areas for co-operation would be:

### **1. The Social Development of Children in the Gulf in the 21st Century.**

The purpose here would be to analyse and assess the emerging needs and challenges for children in the Gulf countries, to encourage examination of the issues, and to promote appropriate public policy development. The emphasis would be on development of the information base, the dissemination of information, experience exchange, and informed decision-making pertaining to the social development of children. Efforts would be made to integrate the Gulf countries into the global network of over 140 countries in which UNICEF operates.

### **2. The Survival, Development and Protection of Children in the Gulf within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).**

The purpose here would be to help countries to address the survival, development, and protection needs of children within the comprehensive framework of the CRC. The emphasis would be on national capacity building and human resources development. This would include appropriate support to help countries achieve the goals for children set out in the National Plan of Action, and in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the 1990 World Summit for Children.

### **3. Communication for the Children in the Gulf in the 21st Century.**

The purpose here would be to mobilize the extensive network of audio-visual and print media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines) to communicate within and outside the region to communicate about children and their needs, and the activities geared to addressing these needs. Another aim will be to mobilize support for activities for children within communities, and by governments, philanthropic organizations, the private sector, and non-government organizations (NGOs) .

