

Media Release

SAUDI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY, UNICEF AND PARTNERS MEET TO DEVELOP PROGRAMME ON CHILD INJURY PREVENTION AND CONTROL

RIYADH, 4 September 2005—Meeting to discuss the problem of injuries and accidents, now the leading cause of child deaths and disability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, representatives and programme managers of the Saudi Red Crescent Society, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ministry of Interior, Civil Defense, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the private sector gathered yesterday to explore possibilities of co-operation in the area of child injury prevention and control in the Kingdom.

Hosted and convened by the Saudi Red Crescent Society, the meeting was also attended by Dr. Wahid Al-Kharusi, an Omani expert in trauma and injury who made a presentation on road safety and an outline approach to conducting a community-based survey. UNICEF Representative for the Gulf Countries, June Kunugi, also made a presentation on the overview and impact of the child injury problem, UNICEF's programme experiences working on the issue in Asia, and the need for a co-ordinated response involving all concerned sectors.

Injuries and accidents are the principal cause of child deaths in industrialized nations, and in developing countries, account for at least one million deaths of children aged under 15 years. In Gulf countries, injuries might now be the leading cause of death and disability for children aged from 1-17 years. The main type is road traffic injuries, and others include falls, burns, contact with animals and insects such as scorpions, violence, as well as accidents involving machines and mechanical forces.

The vast majority are preventable, but requires a systematic approach including research and a survey to better understand the causes, impact, and most effective means for preventing injuries and accidents; development of a policy and multi-sectoral partnerships involving both government bodies, civil society and the private sector; education and training packages for schools, families, and communities; as well as effective communication through multiple channels including the mass media.

Participants in the meeting concluded with an agreement to establish a committee, with the Saudi Red Crescent Society serving as the co-ordinator, to develop a programme and multi-sectoral partnership on child injury prevention and control. "It's important to focus on educating students and the younger generation, because they will then learn skills and knowledge that will last a lifetime protecting themselves and their future families," said Dr. Abdulkarim Al-Zahrani, Director of EMS for the SRCS, who was the main organizer of the meeting.