

Press Release

Children Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Out of Reach

UNICEF condemns child abuse as a violation of child rights and calls for research into the extent of the problem at the launch of the State of the World Children Report in Jakarta.

Jakarta, 12 January 2006

A UN Report warns in East Asia and the Pacific high economic growth tends to mask a growing gap between those who are benefiting from expanding wealth and millions being left behind and marginalized.

The United Nations Children's Fund in its State of the World's Children Report concludes public investment in health and education in the region is meager, with tax-based spending on health the lowest in the world.

The annual report, titled "Excluded and Invisible" was launched today in Jakarta by Deputy Minister for Women's Empowerment, Dra. Sumarni Dawam Rahardjo, MPA.

The Report focuses on children without adequate access to education, to life-saving vaccines, or to protection. These children grow up beyond the reach of development campaigns and are often invisible in everything from public debate and legislation, to statistics and news stories.

While Indonesia has made huge leaps forward over the past decade in many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), notably, reducing poverty and improving education and literacy, progress lags in others, such as reducing child malnutrition, improving maternal health, and access to safe water.

Speaking at the launch, UNICEF Representative in Indonesia, Dr. Gianfranco Rotigliano appealed for an urgent assessment of the extent of child abuse.

"What we are seeing in recent days is just the tip of the iceberg but we need hard data in order to tackle this important issue."

UNICEF conducted two separate researches in 2002 and 2003 in West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara which showed alarming levels of child abuse. While caution must be shown extrapolating the results across Indonesia, the research left no doubt that the rate of child abuse in Indonesia was high. The 2002 survey, which involved 125 children, took place over six months and involved carefully monitored interviews, revealed two thirds of the boys and about a third of girls had been physically beaten. Over a quarter of the girls surveyed had been raped. In a much broader survey in 2003 in which about the 1700 children participated, the vast majority reported being slapped, punched, or having an object thrown at them. The evidence of rape was not supported.

"Abuse is a violation of child rights and also a criminal act under Indonesia's Child Protection law. We are supporting the Government to stop child abuse with a number of interventions," Rotigliano said.

The State of the World's Children Report stated that although East Asia and the Pacific has some of the world's fastest growing economies, social inequities in the region are growing, exacerbating problems such as malnutrition, child labour and child trafficking. Around 14 per cent of people in East Asia and the Pacific live on less than \$1 a day, according to *The State of the World's Children 2006*.

On average, a child born into the poorest 20 per cent of households is three times more likely to die than a child born into the richest quintile in East Asia and the Pacific, says the report.

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In Indonesia this can be seen in the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) which varies dramatically across provinces ranging from 23 deaths to 103 deaths per thousand live births. About half of infant and child mortality may be attributed to coincident malnutrition, often preceded by low birth weight. Underweight status of children under five has declined nationally but exceeds 40 percent in the east, again with striking disparities. Stunting and wasting remain high, around 34 and 16 percent respectively.

Similarly maternal mortality ratio remains high, at 307 per 100,000, in comparison to East Asia's average of 110 per 100,000. It is even worse in Eastern Indonesia.

"Without focused attention, millions of children will remain trapped and forgotten in childhoods of neglect, with devastating consequences for their long-term well-being and the development of a nation. Any society with an interest in the welfare of its children and its own future must not allow this to happen," Dr. Rotigliano said.

The State of the World's Children Report argues that the world must go beyond current development efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable children are not left behind. Governments bear primary responsibility for reaching out to these children, and must step up their efforts in four key areas:

- **Research, monitoring and reporting:** Systems to record and report on the nature and extent of abuses against children are essential to reaching excluded and invisible children.
- **Legislation:** National laws must match international commitments to children, and legislation that fosters discrimination must be changed or abolished. Laws to prosecute those who harm children must be consistently enforced.
- **Financing and capacity-building:** Child-focused budgets and the strengthening of institutions that serve children must complement laws and research.
- **Programmes:** Reform is urgently required in many countries and communities to remove entry barriers for children who are excluded from essential services.

In combating child abuse in Indonesia UNICEF supports the development and implementation of a teacher's manual on the prevention of child abuse in schools. With the Ministry of Health and the Indonesian Doctors' Association, UNICEF is building the capacity of medical professionals through trainings on how to recognise, refer, and report cases of child abuse.

In selected provinces, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Child Protection Bodies (Lembaga Perlindungan Anak-LPA), UNICEF has supported the establishment of Special Service Units in public hospitals for child victims of abuse as well as strengthening the existing Women and Children Desks in police stations. UNICEF has also contributed in improving knowledge base on child abuse through surveys conducted in selected provinces as well as the establishment of community-based monitoring and reporting mechanism on child abuse.

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FACT SHEET

Indonesia has made progress over the past decade in many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), notably, reducing poverty and improving education and literacy. Progress lags in others, such as reducing child malnutrition, improving maternal health, and access to safe water. Huge disparities are a challenge: for example, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) varies dramatically across provinces from 23 to 103 per thousand live births. Following decentralization, implementing national laws, policies and standards across the vast country is another challenge, given weak capacities for planning and managing service delivery in many of the 440 districts in 33 provinces.

Infant and under-five mortality

With an infant mortality rate of 35 per thousand live births and an under-five mortality rate of 46 per thousand live births, Indonesia is on track to achieve the MDG targets in reducing infant and child mortality. However, the rates vary widely among provinces and between rural and urban areas. Infant deaths make up over 76 per cent of deaths among children under five years old, and neonatal deaths 45 per cent. The three main causes of infant mortality are perinatal complications, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Approximately one-third of under-five and half of all infant deaths occur in the perinatal period, pointing to a critical service role during pregnancy and delivery. The main causes of child death (age 1–4 years) are acute respiratory infections (ARI), diarrhoea, vector-borne and vaccine preventable diseases.

Immunisation

Immunisation has shown improvement from the 1990s, with 72 per cent of children 12–23 months old immunised against measles. Immunisation coverage varies widely, and outbreaks of measles are not uncommon. Polio cases have re-emerged in 2005, for the first time since 1996, with 236 cases in the first nine months. DPT3 coverage is low, leaving 1.7 million children 12–23 months unprotected each year. One in five districts is at high risk for maternal and neonatal tetanus. Malaria affects up to 20 per cent of the population, especially in the east. Only 10 per cent of the 30 million annual cases are treated in health facilities.

Nutrition

About half of infant and child mortality may be attributed to coincident malnutrition, often preceded by low birth weight. Underweight status of children under five has declined nationally but exceeds 40 per cent in the east, again with striking disparities. Stunting and wasting remain high, around 34 and 16 per cent respectively. Exclusive breastfeeding of infants remains low at 40 per cent in the first six months, due to the traditional early introduction of foods, challenges of modernisation and increasing workforce participation of mothers.

Although 73 per cent of households consumed adequately iodized salt in 2003 (up from 50% in 1995), some 58 million people still remain at risk of iodine deficiency. National surveys also confirm high rates of anaemia among pregnant women (40%) and women of reproductive age (28%). Indonesia has led the way in successfully eradicating xerophthalmia, however vitamin A deficiency remains a public health problem.

Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality ratio remains high, at 307 per 100,000, in comparison to East Asia's average of 110 per 100,000. Major maternal mortality contributors include haemorrhage, eclampsia and hypertension, complications from abortions, obstructed labour and infections. One in four births still relies on a traditional birth attendant.

Basic education

Indonesia's nine years compulsory basic education policy comprises six years at primary level (ages 7–12 years) and three at junior secondary level (ages 13–15 years). Policy implementation since 1994 has led to near-universal primary education enrolment (94 per cent) but junior secondary education enrolment is still only 65 per cent. Indonesia is making uneven progress toward achieving the relevant MDG target, as an estimated two million children of school age are still out of school. High gross enrolment ratios reflect

significant proportions of over-age children. Improvements in educational quality, reduction of inefficiencies and geographic disparities are still high priorities, as well as promoting the rights of all children to complete nine years of basic education and providing livelihood opportunities for adolescent girls as a primary strategy for preventing child labour and exploitation (including trafficking).

HIV/AIDS

The spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic remains concentrated in 12 provinces across Indonesia, at a time critical to averting a large-scale, generalized epidemic. Once driven primarily by intravenous drug users and commercial sex workers, the epidemic places Indonesia's youth at increasing risk. By 2010, an estimated 110,000 people will be suffering or will have died from AIDS and another million will be HIV-positive. While HIV prevalence among pregnant women who underwent testing is under 3 per cent, reliable data for the general population are lacking. Stigma, discrimination and ignorance are major barriers. In 2003, a third of young women and a fifth of young men in the 15-24 years age group had never heard of HIV/AIDS. In Indonesia as in most countries of the world, children continue to be the missing face of HIV/AIDS. Yet they bear the brunt of the epidemic when they lose their parents to HIV/AIDS. In most cases they are driven to the street, child labour and selling sex in order to survive. Ministry of Health's estimation in 2002 of People Living with HIV/AIDS indicates that 59 children living in streets were infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Reported cases are probably much less than the real numbers. Based on Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.5 in 2003, it is thought that 2,250 to 3,250 infants at risk of HIV infection will be born each year in Indonesia.

Child protection

About 60 per cent of children under five years old do not have birth certificates; about half are not registered anywhere. Children who are not registered at birth do not appear in official statistics and are not acknowledged as members of their society. Without a registered identity, children are not guaranteed an education, good healthcare, and other basic services that impact their childhood and future. The lack of birth registration heightens the risk in later life of exploitation, age and identity falsification. Three million older children work in potentially hazardous occupations. At least 30 per cent of all female sex workers in Indonesia are under eighteen years of age, with children as young as ten forced into prostitution. An estimated 100,000 women and children are trafficked annually, mostly as commercial sex workers in Indonesia and abroad. Around 12 per cent of females are married at or before the age of 15. Some 4,000 to 5,000 children are in detention centres, correction facilities and prisons; 84 percent of those sentenced are detained with adult criminals. Recent studies show that abuse and violence against children and women are common throughout Indonesia, including in homes, offices and institutions. An estimated 20% of children affected by armed conflict suffer from moderate psychosocial distress, while small but significant numbers of children are separated from their families or involved with armed groups.

Government policies

The Government of Indonesia has recently strengthened the national policy and legislative framework to safeguard children's rights, adopting the 2002 Child Protection Law; the 2003 Basic Education Law; the 2004 Sentani Commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS; and the 2002 National Plans of Action – on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Eradicating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, and Eliminating Trafficking in Women and Children. The National Programme for Indonesian Children 2015 (PNBAI) was launched in 2004. The Commission for the Protection of Indonesian Children (KPAI) was established in October 2003 through a democratic and transparent process. The adoption in 2004 of Law No. 23 on domestic violence is a positive step towards addressing violence and abuse against women and children. Laws currently under deliberation or revision – on civil registration, migrant workers, human trafficking, victim and witness protection, and marriage and juvenile justice – are expected to strengthen the protection of women and children. *The Committee on the Rights of the Child* in Geneva welcomed the Government's proposal to withdraw its reservations from certain articles; commended the country's progress in safeguarding child rights; and urged ratification of Optional Protocols and action to address the situation of children affected by conflict, drug abuse, trafficking and sexual and economic exploitation.

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