

Outlook Newsletter, Volume 3, July-September 2006

Issue in Focus: The importance of exclusive breast-feeding in the fight against malnutrition

There is no reason for complacency: Nearly 11% of Iranian children are still underweight.¹ Such general data does not reflect the significant social gaps between children living in richer and poorer provinces. There are districts in Iran where one in four children is malnourished. This situation calls for serious action by the State and society. National Breast-feeding Week from 1st to 8th August is an opportunity to raise the awareness of the population on the importance of good nutrition for children early on. Human milk is the ideal nourishment for infants' survival, growth and development. But in Iran, statistics show that just over half of all children are weaned off exclusive breast-feeding before the age of four months.

Awareness-raising is not enough. Social and political action to combat malnutrition must be stepped up. Malnutrition can only be reduced by a well-coordinated joint effort by various state institutions in health care, provision of clean water and sanitation, education, improved early childhood care and provision of early child care centres. But Iran does not yet have a framework for such concerted action. It lacks an integrated Early Childhood Policy. Such a policy is badly needed if the country wants to ensure that no Iranian child suffers from malnutrition.

More investment is also needed to reduce child malnutrition in those provinces where children are highly affected. Half of all malnourished children in Iran live in five provinces: Sistan-Baluchestan, Khorassan, Hormozgan, Fars and Kerman. This is doable. Already in recent years Iran has demonstrated this by reducing the number of malnourished children in the country down to current levels. More needs to be done, however. Therefore we call upon all responsible institutions of the country to engage in joint efforts to eradicate child malnutrition in Iran - and we stand ready to support all partners in such a noble endeavour.

By Christian Salazar Volkmann,
UNICEF Representative, Iran

Juvenile justice seminar with UN Appeal Judge

Top officials from different sectors, including Judges, legal experts, police and members of the State Welfare Organization gathered in Orumiyeh last month to discuss juvenile justice in Iran. The seminar was organized by the Department of Judicial Development of the Iranian Judiciary with support from UNICEF. It is one of a series of juvenile justice events aimed at aligning Iran's child protection and

juvenile justice practices with international conventions.

The seminar was followed by a three day workshop which brought together dozens of judges, social workers, prosecutors, police officers and staff of correctional centres.

Topics at the workshop included issues such as a review of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, a comparison of the CRC with Iranian legislation, restorative justice, alternative sentencing, diversion and the protection of child victims in criminal procedure.

"In my opinion, Restorative Justice is in complete correspondence with our religions teachings," said Dr Moazzen Zadegan, from Allameh Tabatabaie University. "It has also proven very effective for settling disputes and for restoring the character of children."

UNICEF brought in two leading experts to participate in the event - Justice Renate Winter from Austria, a UN appeal judge to the Sierra Leone tribunal and a leading juvenile justice specialist, and Nigel Branken, a top police trainer from South Africa. Both have been to Iran many times to take part in seminars and workshops, jointly organized by UNICEF and the Iranian Judiciary.



Iranian children to learn journalism skills

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Trainers from MediaWise show examples of youth media from all over the world

Around 14 aspiring young reporters will attend a UNICEF supported workshop with the weekly newspaper Hamshahri Mahaleh in early July and learn new skills on writing, interviewing, taking photographs and design. They also will learn about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and how children can exercise their own right to freedom of expression.

¹ Demographic and Health Survey(DHS) 2000

The aim is it to produce a monthly insert into the newspaper, written by and for children.

Two journalists from the UK with extensive experience in working in youth media will spend six days with the children and staff at Hamshahri Mahaleh, training them on various techniques.

Both work for MediaWise, an organization that employs working journalists to conduct training all over the world on subjects such as ethics, children's rights and journalists' codes of conduct.

The children will also spend a day following local journalists so that they can see the professionals in action.

Hamshahri Mahaleh weekly has a circulation of around 300,000 and is one of Tehran's most popular newspapers. Each district of Tehran has a different version - in this way the paper reflects the issues relevant to that area of the capital.

"Preparing the grounds for youth participation in city journalism is one of our main priorities," said Naser Mousavi Jazayeri, Editor in Chief of Hamshahri Mahaleh. "We believe that a good city life comes when everyone especially young people, have an interest in what's going on in their district."

The 14 children taking part in the workshop have been selected by Hamshahri Mahaleh after they advertised for volunteers for the project. They come from different districts of Tehran and some of them have already had their work published in children's publications and Hamshahri Mahaleh.

Street theatre on HIV/AIDS comes to Bam



© UNICEF Iran/2006/Eeles
An actor pretends to be a drug addict whilst performing street theatre in Bam

A drama on the dangers of risky behaviour has been taking place on the streets of Bam over the last few months. It's one of a series of HIV/AIDS projects supported by UNICEF and organised by the Family Planning Association (FPA) that targets most at risk children, adolescents and women. Actors from a local theatre group were asked by the FPA to come up with a script using key messages to prevent catching

HIV. It's hoped the successful project will be taken to other towns and cities.

UNICEF and Mofid University in new partnership for child rights promotion

In collaboration with religious scholars, UNICEF has joined forces with Mofid University in Qom to advocate for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The University's Centre for Human Rights Studies (CHRS) and UNICEF signed a two year contract which aims to engage Shiite scholars in child rights promotion.

"The idea of Mofid University working in partnership with an international organisation is important because we can bring in the Islamic perspective," said Grand Ayatollah Ardebili, head of Mofid University. "We have done a lot of work on rights' issues in general so we know where the sources are."

The main purpose of the contract is to support a comprehensive review of the CRC from a Shiite perspective and produce a manual to be used by scholars, religious advocates, and academics working with children.

This manual is an adaptation of a handbook produced by Cairo's Al Azhar University which uses research papers, Koranic verses, Hadiths and Sunnas to provide guidance on children's rights to such things as health, education and protection.

Upon completion of the manual, key messages will be developed for advocacy with religious leaders who are influential in Iranian society.

Information Resource Centre News

Young volunteers at UNICEF

Over the summer holidays UNICEF plans to work with a group of young volunteers on a number of activities including a bi-weekly newsletter, a debating group, a website group and a presentation group. If you are interested in attending the first debate by young people, to be held on July 13th ahead of Iranian Women's Day, at the Melal Cultural House, please contact the IRC for more details.

Monthly lectures

UNICEF will continue to hold monthly lectures in the IRC. These will focus on the following subjects:

Nutrition in schools

Iranian children NGOs

The status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Iran

To find out more information please contact Naser Ghabadzadeh at the number below:

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