

## UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2009 Pregnancy Complications Kills 500,000 Women Every Year

Women in the world's least developed countries are 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than women in developed countries, according to UNICEF's latest *State of the World's Children* report, released on 15 January 2009 in Johannesburg.

At the same time, a child born in a developing country is almost 14 times more likely to die during the first month of life than a child born in a developed one.

The 2009 edition of UNICEF's flagship publication, *The State of the World's Children*, highlights the link between maternal and neonatal survival, and suggests opportunities to close the gap between rich and poor countries.

Iran is on 83<sup>rd</sup> place in the world's under-five mortality rate ranking. "Iranian achievements are impressive regarding newborns health. The under-five mortality rate has halved from 1990 to 2005 in Iran," says Saeed Asefi, UNICEF Iran's Early Childhood Development specialist.

"Maternal mortality in the country has reached 24.6 per 100,000 live births in 2007, following a significant decrease from 91 per 100,000 live births in 1998," he added. "According to the objective of this Millennium Development Goal, this indicator would need to reach 18 to 22 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015."

While Iran has been successful in getting close to the develop-



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ment goals, according to the *State of the World's Children* report neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan are still among the ten countries with the highest lifetime risk of maternal death. Others include Niger, Sierra Leone, Chad, Angola, Liberia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Both mothers and infants are particularly vulnerable in the days and weeks after birth – a critical time for life-saving interventions, such as post-natal visits, proper hygiene, and counseling about the danger signs of maternal and newborn health.

"Every year, more than half a million women die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth complications, including about 70,000 girls and young women aged 15 to 19," said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director, at

the launch of the global report. "Since 1990, complications related to pregnancy and childbirth have killed an estimated 10 million women."

More than 99 per cent of these deaths occurred in developing countries – the vast majority in Africa and Asia. On average, each day around 1,500 women die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth.

"Saving the lives of mothers and their newborns requires more than just medical intervention," said Veneman. "Educating girls is pivotal to improving maternal and neonatal health and also benefits families and societies."

Millennium Development Goal 5 calls for a 75 per cent reduction of the maternal mortality rate by 2015. To meet this target, the world will have to achieve a 70 per cent reduction in maternal deaths between 2005 and 2015.

Indicator	Iran
Under-5 mortality rate, 1990	72
Under-5 mortality rate, 2005	36
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 1990	54
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 2005	31
Annual no. of under-5 deaths (thousands), 2005	49
% of infants with low birth weight, 1998-2005	7
Estimated adult HIV prevalence rate (15+ years), end-2005	0.2
Maternal mortality ratio, 2000, Lifetime risk of maternal death. 1 in:	370

## UNICEF in Fajr Film Festival

A little bit of the spotlight of Iran's entertainment industry fell on UNICEF Iran this February when its Goodwill Ambassador, well-known actress Mahtab Keramati, received this year's Fajr Film Festival Award for best supporting actress in the movie "20".



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"We are very proud of her to have received this recognition, and hope that it will further support UNICEF Iran's engagement with Ms Keramati in promoting children's rights in Iran," said Christian Salazar, UNICEF Representative in Iran, in acknowledging the Award. Ms Keramati has been UNICEF Iran's Goodwill Ambassador for the last three years.

Ms Keramati's Award was accompanied by much positive feedback for another contribution of UNICEF Iran to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fajr Film Festival: the movie "Mana", which focuses on the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS in society, received several encouraging comments by cinema critics and aficionados.

The feature film was produced in 2007/8 in cooperation with Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Centre. The film helps particularly to eliminate stigma around children living with HIV.

In an effort to support the currently ongoing humanitarian efforts for the families and children of Gaza, suffering from the devastating physical and psychosocial effects of the recent conflict, UNICEF Iran appealed to the citizens of Iran to donate generously to help children of Gaza to move gradually from the bitterness of war to a more peaceful normal life.

Over half of Gaza's population of nearly 1.5 million people are children. During the recent conflict, they have had to experience death and injury, loss of parents and siblings, violence and destruction. Children have been 31 per cent of those killed, 36 per cent of the injured and 55 per cent of the displaced in Gaza.

Since the ceasefire between the warring parties has allowed for access to Gaza for humanitarian convoys, UNICEF has been delivering food, fuel and medicine to Gaza's hospitals. UNICEF has made six truckloads of emergency equipment available, including 4,343 hygiene family kits.

Aside from delivering life-saving supplies of food, water and medicines to protect children's physical health, UNICEF is concerned about the mental well-being of children in Gaza and the high level of stress they have been under during three weeks of violence. Another top priority, therefore, will be getting their daily lives back to normal.

In particular, the destruction of schools represents a major setback for children in the territory. UNICEF will move as quickly as it can to repair and rebuild school facilities in order to get them up and running. Another concern in Gaza is the presence of unexploded munitions,

## The First Cry of War and the First Smile of Peace Belong to Children

### UNICEF Iran launches fund raising appeal for Children



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which pose a particular danger for children. UNICEF has prepared radio announcements to try and ensure that the conflict takes no further toll of young lives.

People can still help UNICEF's efforts for the families and children in Gaza by donating to Bank Melli, Eskin branch (accessible through all branches), Bank account number 5005, or by sending their cheques to UNICEF's Iran office.

### Back to school in Gaza

With the return of hundreds of thousands of children to school in Gaza, UNICEF is providing essential educational equipment and materials to reinstate learning and recreational activities, create safe environments and help restore a sense of normalcy for children in Gaza, UNICEF New York HQ reported on 26 January 2009.

"On the first day of my return to school I was expecting to find damage and destruction

## First Smile of Peace Belong to Children

### raising appeal for Children



because I know that war-machine didn't leave anything in place - no human, no stone. When I first entered, I was shocked from the scenes that I saw - classrooms damaged, windows broken, every corner in the school reminds us of the war," said Hanady Akeela, 17.

On 26 January, UNICEF supplied 130 'School in a Box' kits, which include items such as exercise books and pens and pencils, to 10,400 school-aged children in the Gaza strip. UNICEF also provided about 85 recreational kits, containing sports equipment and other entertaining items, for over 6,700 children, as well as Mathematics and Science kits for 4,200 students.

Initial reports estimate that seven schools were completely demolished and many more damaged. Educational materials such as textbooks and stationery were also lost. Schools are operating in double - even triple - shifts to accommodate children whose

schools were destroyed and teachers are helping students begin the journey to recovery.

"We had each girl talk about her experience. Even the teachers were offered the chance to tell their stories. Every girl had a story to tell," said English teacher Myasoun Al-Emawi.

"In classrooms where there were students killed, some of their classmates were scared to enter the class and some other classmates refused to sit in the same place where children had been killed."

The Ministry of Education reported an 80 percent attendance at their schools. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency provides schooling for over 196,000 children in Gaza.

### Planned Humanitarian Action for 2009

UNICEF has the sector lead in water, sanitation and hygiene, education, nutrition and child protection (psychosocial support), and participates in health sector relief. UNICEF's humanitarian assistance programme will target 1.8 million children and 900,000 women in 2009.

Sector	US\$
Health and Nutrition	9,508,650
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	7,883,222
Education	8,313,600
Child Protection	11,494,850
Adolescents	5,027,700
Total	42,228,022

## "Stand on your head and see the world from another perspective"

Sometimes, Professor Robert Chambers uses unorthodox measures to explain his point of view. Standing on his head is one of them - recently done in Tehran before a UNICEF workshop about Participatory Learning and Action.

Professor Chambers, Research Associate at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton, United Kingdom, is a renowned specialist on community participation. In Iran, he trained UNICEF's staff on strategies for the changing of attitudes and behaviours and participatory approach principles, using examples of best practices.

While he is often considered a "guru" of participatory techniques and action, his work at the IDS includes a variety of interest areas: professionalism, power, the personal dimension in development, participatory methodologies, teaching and learning with large numbers, agriculture and science, and community-led sanitation, to quote only some.

The IDS is a leading global organisation for research, teaching and communications on international development. Founded in 1966, it enjoys an international reputation based on the quality of its work and its commitment to applying academic skills to real world challenges. Its purpose is to understand and explain the world, and to try to change it - to influence as well as to inform.

## UNICEF Appeals for over \$1 Billion in Emergency Aid



Wars in Iraq and Sudan, with millions of refugees, continue to prevent stability in a region that is also subject to rising food prices and climate disruptions. [Residents flee fighting in Baghdad, Iraq.]

The Humanitarian Action Report (HAR) is UNICEF's annual humanitarian funding appeal for children and women affected by protracted emergencies. In 2009, requirements to support UNICEF-assisted emergency response total US\$ 1,000,494,205 – a 17 per cent increase compared to 2008.

The HAR 2009 includes 36 countries, compared to 39 countries in 2008, with the addition of Myanmar, Tajikistan and Yemen. Compared to 2008, the Eastern and Southern Africa region has almost doubled its financial needs for protracted emergencies.

Ethiopia, Somalia and Zimbabwe were most central for this development, with Zimbabwe requiring nearly five times more funding. Over half of the funds raised will ensure the continuation of UNICEF's support to the five largest humanitarian operations worldwide: Democratic Republic

of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

"Many countries featured in the report are silent or forgotten emergencies," said UNICEF Executive Director, Ann M. Veneman. "Women and children are dying every day due to disease, poverty and hunger, but sadly their deaths go largely unnoticed."

In recent decades, the number and severity of natural disasters has increased significantly. The emergencies included in the Humanitarian Action Report represent only a small fraction of UNICEF's emergency response activities. Between 2005 and 2007, UNICEF responded to an annual average of 276 emergencies in 92 countries. Over 50 per cent were caused by disasters, 30 per cent were a result of conflict, and health-related emergencies, such as epidemics, accounted for 19 per cent of UNICEF's emergency response.

The report also notes that higher food prices and climate change have negatively affected most of the countries for which emergency aid is sought. UNICEF has initiatives in place to address nutrition insecurity, but more resources are required to ensure the response meets urgent 2009 needs.

The UNICEF report cites recent studies which find the risk of hunger could increase for some 50 million people worldwide by 2010 as a result of climate change.

Some experts have estimated that in the next decade children and women will represent 65 per cent of all those affected by climate-related disasters. If these predictions prove correct, some 175 million victims of climate change will be children.

### UNICEF Iran Quarterly Newsletter

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UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.