

State of the World's Children 2004 Report Launched in Jordan

Publications

- **Basic Life Skills Manual for Youth** (Princess Basma Youth Resource Centre)
- **Promoting Adolescents' Participation with a Focus on Girls** (Arabic)
- **Youth Service Providers' Module**
- **Girls Fly High: Livelihoods Project for Girls** (Arabic & English)
- **Adolescents Take the Lead: Empowering Adolescents with Basic Life Skills and Healthy Lifestyles** (Arabic & English)
- **HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Educational Manual for Youth**
- **Youth in Jordan: Their Lives and Views** (Arabic & English)
- **Six fact sheets based on the findings of the National Youth Survey – Youth in Jordan** (Arabic and English)
- **Religious Leaders' Manual for Early Childhood Care and Development**
- **Integrating the Human Rights-Based Approach in the Country Programme: UNICEF's Experience in Jordan (2003)/Report & Summary**
- **Anti-Smoking Leaflets for Ministry of Health Cessation Clinic**

Upcoming Events

- **The First Arab ISPCAN Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect** (February)

"It was hard, very hard, but after a lot of going backwards and forwards we finally managed to get a class established for our daughters to continue their education," said Um Hisham at the launch of State of the World's Children 2004 report in Jordan in December.

With determination shining from her Kohl-rimmed eyes, this woman told her story to some 40 people encompassing decision-makers, the Minister of Education, patronizing this event, the media and the UN.

Three females from the remote village of Al-Rashedieh in Southern Jordan, made a 350 kilometre bus trip to the capital city Amman to deliver a key message at the launch: Girls' education is a must.

"We don't know how to read and write ourselves, but we sure wanted our daughters to," said Um Issa, wearing a long robe and black headscarf.

The women spoke about how girls' education became a reality in their village: "We were empowered through the UNICEF-supported community development project to set our priorities and try to find ways of accomplishing them. Our priority was to have secondary classes for our daughters," explained Um Hisham.

The State of the World's Children 2004 Report features the story of Al-Rashedieh village. It is an example of how simple strategies involving local communities can make "a dream come true." The dream in this case was to enable the girls of this community of 4,000 inhabitants to continue their education.

"This was not only my dream, but the dream of the majority of the girls in our village. Even though I was able to continue my education and now am a second year university student, I feel sad for the other girls that did not have the chance before me," an



Um Issa saying education is a must



Asma' Hassanat speaking of her experience

emotionally charged Asma' Hassanat said.

In his speech, the Minister of Education said that the Kingdom's education policy was focusing on girls, particularly females in rural areas, and on the quality of education they are receiving.

UNICEF Representative in Jordan, Anne Skatvedt, highlighted the main findings of the report. Tying girls' education with what was taking place in Jordan she said, "In Jordan, investment in the country's human resources has paid off with a highly educated population; the country has impressive enrolment rates as nearly all girls and boys are currently enrolled in basic education." She added "despite favourable indicators in girls' education at the national level, there is a need for more data at the sub-national level to ensure that disparities do not exist at the community level."

Skatvedt also noted that girls were not making use of their education in the work force and quoted the 2003 Arab Human Development Report to support her argument: "Arabs expressed support for building the human capabilities of women, but not for their utilization."

National Council for Family Affairs and UNICEF Sign Agreement

The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) signed an agreement of collaboration with UNICEF in December.

Sharing a common vision and mission, which entails advocating for and protecting the rights of Jordanian women, children and families, the agreement is a reflection of the general agreement reached by both NCFA and UNICEF to 'foster a relationship of long-term cooperation based on mutual respect and dedication' for the promotion of their shared vision.

The agreement between both parties aims at ensuring the successful realisation of activities pertaining to advocacy to enhance the legislative

and policy environment affecting the rights of children and their families, in addition to activities related to the National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Plans of Action, which were adopted by relevant Government Ministries, amongst others.

For its part, and in its capacity as the national umbrella organisation that oversees activities pertaining to families and their members, the NCFA will coordinate efforts with UNICEF and support the national efforts of both public and private social development institutions in their initiatives. Established in 2001, the NCFA is presided by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and aims to ensure a better quality of life for Jordanian families.

Development of Educational Manual on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The UNICEF-supported Adolescents Project 'Promoting Life Opportunities for Adolescents in Jordan, with a Focus on Girls', together with teams from both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have just put the finishing touches to an "Educational Manual on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS."

The manual uses a scientific approach to explain about this disease and its prevention. It contains a wide range of exercises, activities, and assessments to practise with youths. The Manual integrates life skills training to introduce reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, self-acceptance and respect of one's own body, respect of the other sex, skills for handling external pressures and sustaining physical and mental health.

This reference adopts the youth-to-youth approach

(peer education) to adolescents' development, health and participation. It was produced with the participation of young people, all relevant stakeholders, and technical support from UNICEF. The gender-sensitive modules are to be used with adolescents aged 12-18 years old, in addition to the public.

To implement the Peer Education Project, an adult Training of Trainers workshop was held in December to introduce the formulated national training team to the modules. The team will work closely with youth trainers and provide technical support when needed. In addition, a group of young peer educators are going to be trained to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, attitudes and skills to other adolescents in formal and non-formal settings.

Government of Jordan and UNICEF Hold Annual Review

The Ministry of Planning (representing the Government of Jordan) and UNICEF held their annual review meeting for the UNICEF programme of cooperation in December 2003. UNICEF's partners from the Government and non-governmental sectors gathered for open and frank discussions on the achievements and constraints of the past year of cooperation. They identified lessons learned to build upon successes and overcome constraints in the coming years. The ultimate aim being to ensure that children and women are served in the best possible way.

The first day of the review was dedicated to evaluating the achievements and constraints of the UNICEF-supported programmes. On the second day, participants looked into 2004 and set draft objectives based on the discussions of the previous day.

“Mechanisms to Protect Family Unity from Divorce” Roundtable for Islamic Leaders, Experts, Civil Society and NGOs

The Chief of Islamic Justice and Special Advisor to His Majesty King Abdullah II, Sheikh Izzidin Khatib Tamimi, called for the establishment of a specialised division for family guidance and counselling in local law courts. At a one-day roundtable discussion held in September on “Mechanisms to Protect Family Unity from Divorce”, Tamimi emphasized the importance of reaching family reconciliation through counselling before reverting to the courts.

At the meeting, participants from the Ministry of Social Development, members of both the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament, the National Council for Family Affairs, judges and non-governmental organisations focused on the importance of ensuring family unity through the implementation of mediation programmes.

According to UNICEF, who was organising this event in cooperation with Mawada for Family, mediation programmes can be effective in resolving family disputes. However, if divorce is the outcome, then mediation can help the child to have harmonious and continued family relations with both parents.

“In the event of divorce, children have the right to stay in contact with both parents,” said Anne

Skatvedt, UNICEF Representative in Jordan. Skatvedt referred to article 9.3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states the right of the child to maintain family relations with both her/his parents in case of divorce or separation.

Parents and States share the responsibility of ensuring the best interests of the child in terms of upbringing and development and finding the proper support mechanisms to do so. The aim of the roundtable was to examine laws pertaining to family issues to ensure that the rights of both parents are preserved as well as the rights of their children.

“Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that parents have the primary responsibility for securing the best conditions for the child’s optimal development and it is the duty of the State to help them realize this,” said Skatvedt.

During the course of the meeting, Abdul Salam Darwesh, Head of Family Guidance and Reformation from the Courts Department in Dubai, presented successful case studies of preserving family unity through counselling, preventive measures and mediation. He said that such programmes have succeeded in reducing divorce rates from 36% to 21% in less than three years in the UAE.

Data Storage and Retrieval System Launched in Jordan

The Department of Statistics (DOS), in cooperation with UNICEF, held a one-day workshop in December to introduce Devinfo to managers and data users from the Government and non-governmental sectors in the Country.

Devinfo is a data storage and retrieval system that is available in English and Arabic in the Jordanian Department of Statistics. The latter now has a draft list of indicators related to the socio-economic situation in Jordan.

During the workshop, participants were given a demonstration of how the system is used and its capacities. A review also took place of the draft list of indicators currently available. Participants formed working groups and held detailed discussions on these indicators and made suggestions for other indicators to be included.

Devinfo was originally known as Childinfo, and was

developed by UNICEF. It was used by government counterparts in more than 50 countries worldwide to monitor the situation of children at the sub-national, national, and regional levels.

A global assessment revealed that Childinfo, with minimum modification, can be used effectively to support the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2000 Millennium Declaration, which encompasses the MDGs, sets out the key challenges facing humanity and outlines a response to these challenges. Jordan was a signatory to this Declaration and thus committed itself to its goals that have to be achieved by the year 2015.

This year, DOS and UNICEF will follow up on the workshop recommendations and provide training for a first group of data users from the Government and non-governmental organisations.

The International Children's Day of Broadcasting Children Speak Out

"If we continue to cover up such issues, we will just end up making them worse," said Shifa' Abu Lail (17) as she discussed child labour and verbal abuse over the airwaves with a fellow youth from a neighbouring Arab country.

Communication and negotiation skills were put to the test as children discussed their issues during UNICEF's International Children's Day of Broadcasting (ICDB) celebrated in Jordan on 19 December.

Whether they were anchors, producers, DJs, or show hosts, young people from all parts of the Kingdom spoke out on the airwaves of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, and the Ammanet internet radio station: Randomly selected groups had the chance to explain about the valuable work they have been doing in their communities as well as talk about individual accomplishments under this year's theme of "We can be heroes."

"I want to launch the show," said Alia Mada'in (13) as she insisted on anchoring for the local "Yis'id Sabhak" live television show five minutes before the programme was broadcast. She managed to convince her colleague, Ahmad Abu Mohammad, from Hittin Refugee camp, that they could do it - and they did.

After much hesitation on the part of the producer, young kids took over the show. Once they were on the programme, there was no stopping them: They interviewed airline staff celebrating the 40th anniversary of Royal Jordanian, a poet, and winners of a local song festival.

Children and young people alike started this year's ICDB by making their way to the radio and television station in the cold and early hours of the morning. The news of eminent snow only made them more

determined to be there: Those who lived far away ensured that they would not get stuck in a possible snow storm by staying the night before with relatives living close to the capital city Amman.

"Nothing would have made us miss this opportunity, we would have done anything to be on this show," said an energetic Alia to an audience of 18 million people.

Other youngsters made their contributions behind the microphones of the Arabic and English radio services: In one instance, kids took total control of the show as the sound man and the DJ left the studio for a break.

"I would love to do this all the time," said Mohannad Shahwan (17) as he handled the sound system of the English Radio Service transmitting live. He transferred incoming calls to the children in the studios, broadcast music when they asked for dedications, and worked as though he had been a technician for some time.

On the radio, children interviewed parents, ministers and even the public relations manager of the Future Arabic satellite channel about the famous Superstar show. One group interviewed a member of the Family Protection Project on domestic violence and child abuse in specific.

Twelve hours of intensive debates, entertainment, fun and music were wrapped up with a televised report on the day's activities compiled by the young people themselves: Farah Sahrif (16) anchored for the English News At Ten as she presented the report.



Young people participating in ICDB

We Would Like to Hear from You, Please Contact Us at:

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