

MEDIA RELEASE

THE SECOND CYCLE ON BETTER PARENTING COMMENCES IN KOSOVO

PRISTINA 14 March, 2006 – **UNICEF and its partners launch the second cycle of the Better Parenting Campaign in Kosovo.**

The goal of the campaign is to equip parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to improve the health, growth and psycho-social development of children, to reduce child mortality rates, and to prevent childhood diseases. This is the second part of the Better Parenting Package, and is a follow-up to last year's initiative. This package covers parents with children ages 3 to 6. The first part of this initiative, covered parents with infants up to age 3. The two sets of materials now offer scientific and evidence-based practices for parents until their children enter school.

The campaign is initiated by UNICEF in Kosovo in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, National Public Health Institute in Kosovo, Centre for Development of Primary Health, World Health Organization – Office in Pristina, NGO Miqtë e Shëndetit, Everychild and KEC – Kosovo Education Centre.

Kosovo continues to cope with high infant, under-5 and maternal mortality rates, presently believed the highest in Europe, and the conditions of poverty that are a direct cause of these problems are exacerbated by poor knowledge of care and stimulation of children by parents. There is a lack of basic awareness about the need to stimulate a child's physical and cognitive development from birth and throughout their young lives. With only less than 10 per cent of children having access to any pre-school opportunities which is ranked as the lowest in the region, Kosovo's youngest do not get the best start in life.

The Head of UNICEF's Office in Kosovo, Mr. Robert Fuderich, says *"Quality care and protection in these years are essential to avoid death, diseases, stunting, trauma and injuries, malnutrition and developmental delays, while ensuring healthy growth, self-esteem and the ability to learn. Early psycho-social stimulation is also very important for school readiness and ultimately makes school-based programmes more effective. These children that receive quality parenting will grow up to become better citizens and contribute more fully in the economic development of Kosovo. In a famous longitudinal study conducted in the US, it was found that every dollar that went into early childhood development opportunities yielded a \$7 return to the nation"*

The information package and accompanying materials are designed specifically for the campaign and around 300,000 copies have been produced in Albanian and Serbian languages. The distribution of leaflets will be done through health care centres, kindergartens, pre-school education centres and literacy centres.

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