

*preventing* **CHILD  
POVERTY**

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY





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***The ability of the poor to participate in economic growth depends on a variety of enabling social conditions. It is hard to participate in the expansionary process of the market mechanism, if one is illiterate and unschooled, or if one is bothered by undernourishment and ill health, or if social barriers, such as discrimination related to race or gender, excludes substantial parts of humanity from fair economic participation.***

Professor Amartya Sen

There is no definition of child poverty by which the full impact on a child's physical, cognitive and emotional development can be measured. Poverty itself is easily measured in financial terms of low household income and levels of consumption. Yet indicators such as health, education, housing, family size and the availability of social protection also contribute to the definition of poverty and its effects on children. Other criteria such as love, care and respect are less readily measurable but important nonetheless.

### **In the best interest of the child**

It is easy to lose sight of children's needs under the assumption that what is good for adults is also good for children. *The best interest of the child*, one of the core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), requires:

- Recognition of the fact that children have special needs and interests, which are different to those of adults and should not be assumed to be the same.
- That all actions, policies and practice take *the best interest of the child* into account.

### **Why address child poverty?**

It is vitally important for every country to protect its vulnerable citizens and also to protect its future. Children are both yet those who grow up in poverty are at increased risk of:

- Low educational achievement;
- Poor health;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- Substance abuse;
- Criminal and anti-social behaviour;
- Low income;
- Unemployment;
- Long-term welfare dependence.

# Increasing

## Why is child poverty increasing in rich countries?

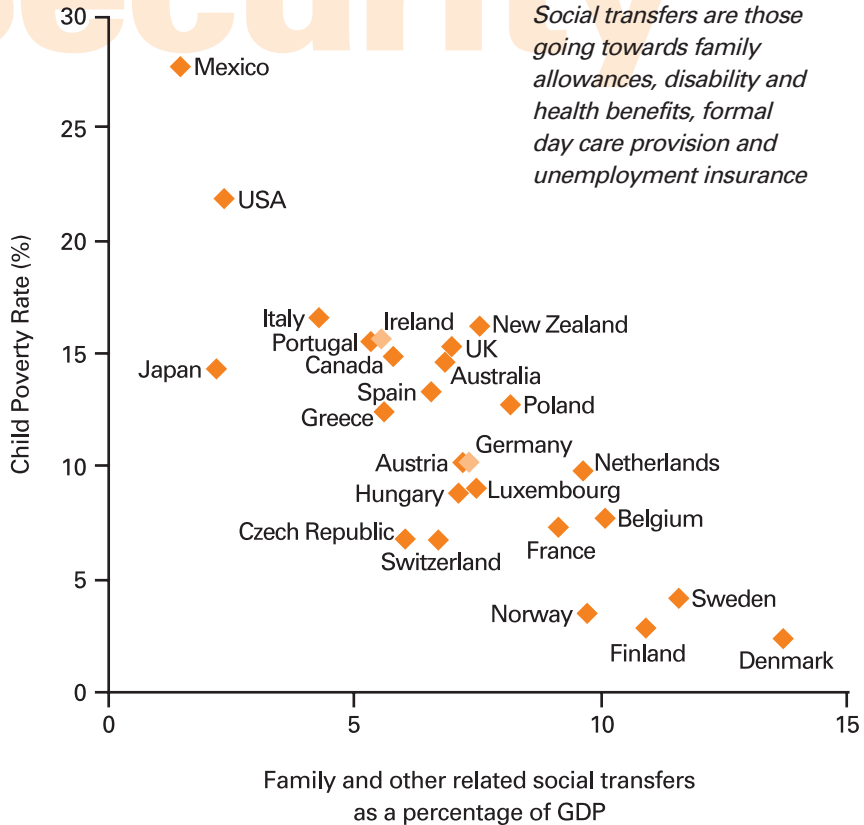
Reduction of child poverty rates is perhaps the most meaningful and at the same time measurable test of how well the governments of the world are meeting their commitments towards the CRC.

Yet the latest UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre report into *Child Poverty in Rich Countries, 2005* finds that the proportion of children living in poverty has risen over the past decade in 17 out of 24 member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>1</sup> The report suggests that child poverty levels are determined by a combination of three factors:

- Social and family changes such as the age of parents, their educational levels, the number of children per family and single parenthood.
- Labour market factors such as economic recession, technological innovation, migration of low-skilled workers, low-paid jobs, two income households, as well as privatisation and globalisation trends.
- Changes in the policies and spending priorities of governments.

Of these three, it would appear that variations in government policy account for the greatest fluctuation in child poverty levels from one country to another. The report finds that many rich countries have the potential to reduce child poverty to below 10% without a significant increase in overall spending but that policy targets need to be set and met in order for this to be achieved. It also found that there is a clear association between higher government spending on family and social benefits and lower child poverty rates.

## Social Transfers and Family Economic Security<sup>2</sup>



The impact of policies and investments for the very young is traditionally difficult for any government to assess accurately since it depends on how parents and care givers respond to incentives and how resources are shared within the family. Nevertheless, it is clear from the figure opposite that the greater the proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that government devotes to improving family life standards, the lower the risk of children having to grow up in poverty.

- No OECD country that devotes more than 10% or more of GDP to social spending has a child poverty rate higher than 10%.
- No country devoting less than 5% of GDP to such benefits has a child poverty rate of less than 15%.\*

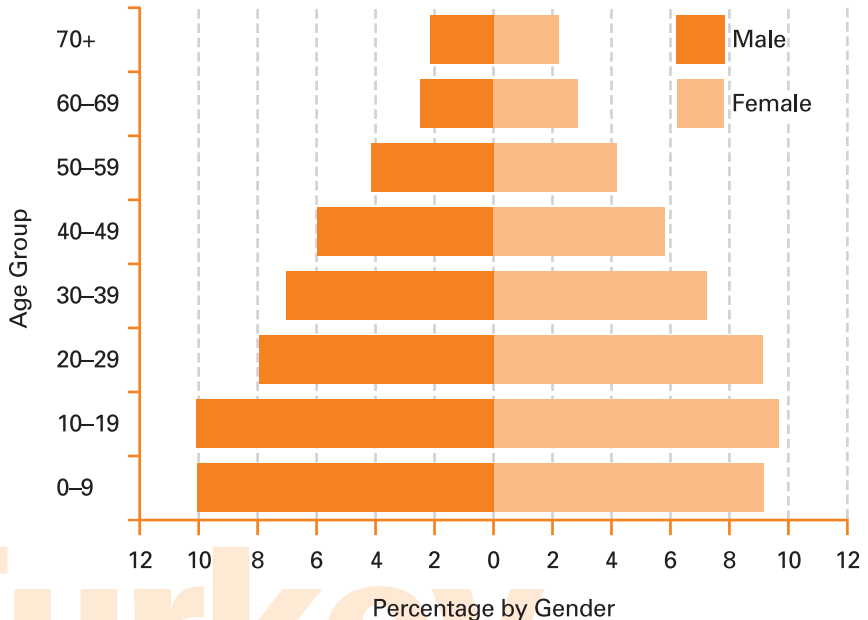
In March 2006, the European Council highlighted the ability of governments to markedly reduce child poverty and emphasised their obligation to adopt policies in favour of doing so by urging Member States to “take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”.<sup>3</sup>

UNICEF argues that: “while acknowledging the power of labour market conditions and social changes ... it is well within the capacity of governments to bring downward pressure on child poverty rates.”

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\* The exception is Japan, where the transfers are likely to be much higher as employers provide social support in some cases.

## Population Pyramid of Turkey 2003<sup>4</sup>



Children under 19 years of age make up 38% of Turkey's total population and children under 15 years of age represent 29%.<sup>5</sup> Although Turkey's population growth rate is falling, the size of the population of children is expected to be unchanged by 2015<sup>6</sup> — the target year for achieving the MDGs.

## Child Poverty in Turkey

At the beginning of the Millennium, 37% of children under 15 years of age were living with food and non-food poverty in Turkey.<sup>7</sup> This means that their parents or care givers had insufficient means to feed, clothe, shelter, educate and protect them properly.

Children most at risk of poverty in Turkey include those:

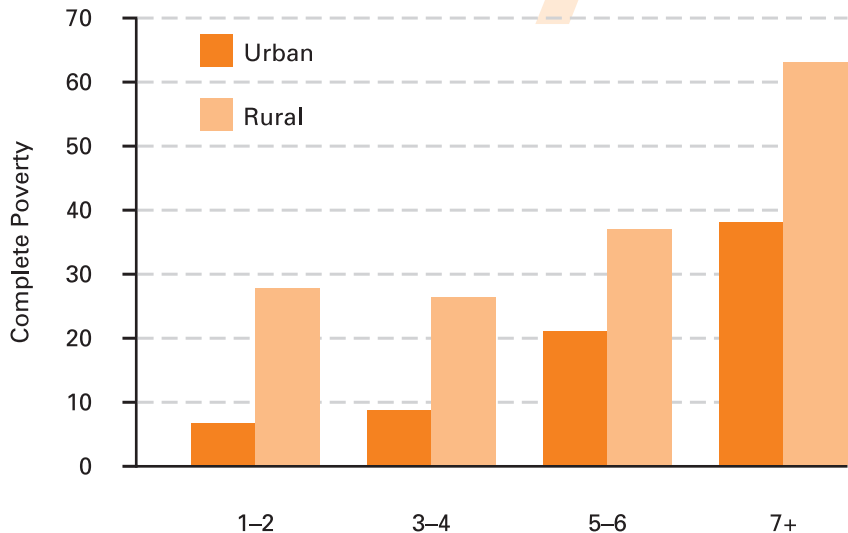
- who are born into large families with only one breadwinner;
- who grow up in dry, mountainous rural areas where outmoded farming techniques and limited access to major markets threaten livelihoods;
- who are from single-parent families;
- whose families have recently migrated to urban areas;
- whose parents work in informal and casual employment and have no regular income as a result;
- whose parents have little or no formal education, are often unskilled and have a lower than average earning capacity;
- whose parents are underemployed and unable to earn enough;
- whose parents are long term unemployed, living with a disability or caring for a disabled person.

Child

Children have the highest poverty rate of any other demographic group. Whereas a child adds to the family's cost of living, he or she does not earn wages to contribute to the family income. So the more children per family, the poorer that household is likely to be. Families in rural areas are poorer still.

One of the biggest problems facing children living in poverty is that their families very often need them to work when they should be attending school.

**Poverty Rates According to Household Size 2004<sup>s</sup>**

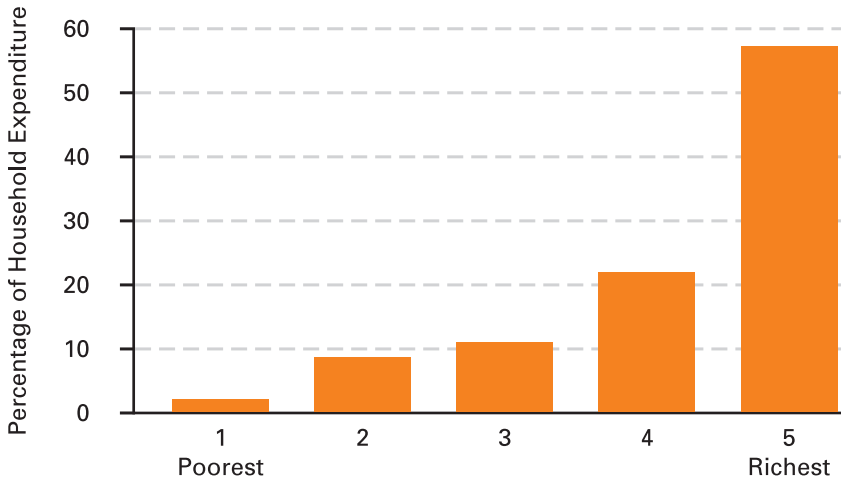


# 1

## Household Income

A third of the national expenditure on education in Turkey comes from household budgets. However, one in four children under 15 years of age live in families with extremely limited income, which was judged to be less than 269 lira per month in 2003.<sup>9</sup> Annual school expenses can be as much as 1,937 lira (\$1,300) per student.<sup>10</sup> Since 71% of families live on less than 500 lira a month, it would appear that household income is not enough to cover the cost of education for many children in Turkey.

### Household Expenditure on Education by Income Quintile 2004<sup>11</sup>



Children from low income households are at risk of not being able to enroll in school because of the hidden cost of education — for example, clothing, tutoring, transport and meals — even though primary education is free. These children are also more likely to drop out of school to help support their families through work. A low level of education increases the child’s poverty rate. It also means that his or her poverty rate as an adult will very probably be high.

# Gender

**Poverty Rates by Gender and Educational Attainment, 2004**<sup>12</sup>

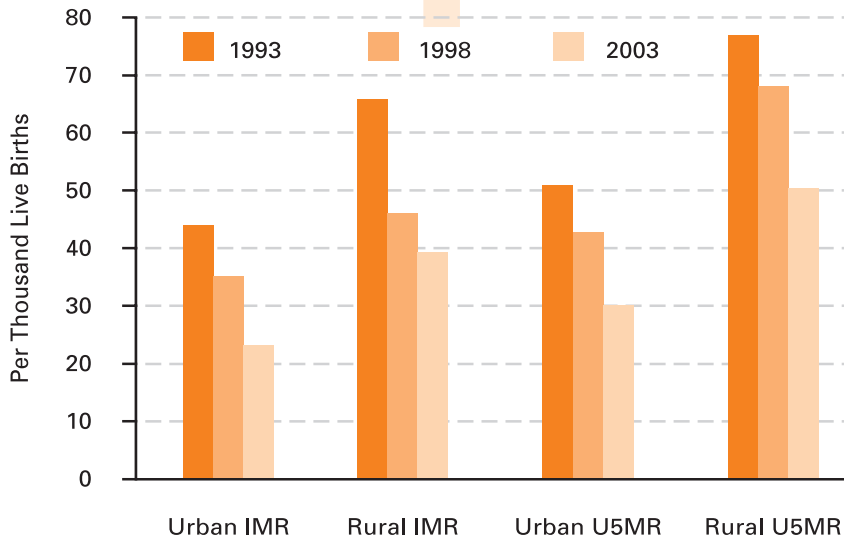
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Younger than 6 years	34.19	34.19	34.18
Illiterate	45.11	48.50	44.10
Primary school but no diploma	33.67	34.19	33.16
Primary school	24.36	27.50	21.55
Elementary school	25.49	25.37	25.60
Secondary/Vocational School	13.00	14.95	9.45
High/Vocational School	8.28	9.69	6.39
University	1.33	1.57	0.93

# 2

## Rural/Urban Health Disparities

Child health indicators are more affected when poverty is prevalent. Although overall infant and under 5 mortality rates (IMR and U5MR) are falling, increasing rates of poverty in rural areas means that rural IMR and U5MR are decreasing much more slowly than in urban areas. This is a result of insufficient access to quality health services in rural areas.

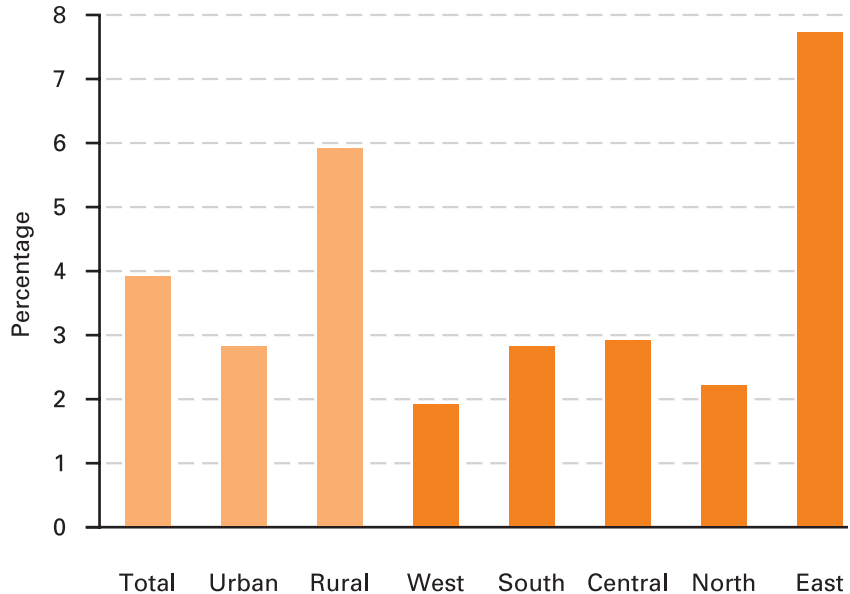
Urban/Rural IMR and U5MR 1993–2003<sup>13</sup>



Other child health indicators that are affected across the country — but most notably in rural areas — include: lower birth weight; lower rates of routine immunisation; insufficient breastfeeding practices; higher levels of malnutrition; higher incidence of physical and mental disability; higher rates of stunted growth and higher incidence of chronic illness.

# Children

## Significantly Underweight Children by Region, 2003<sup>14</sup>

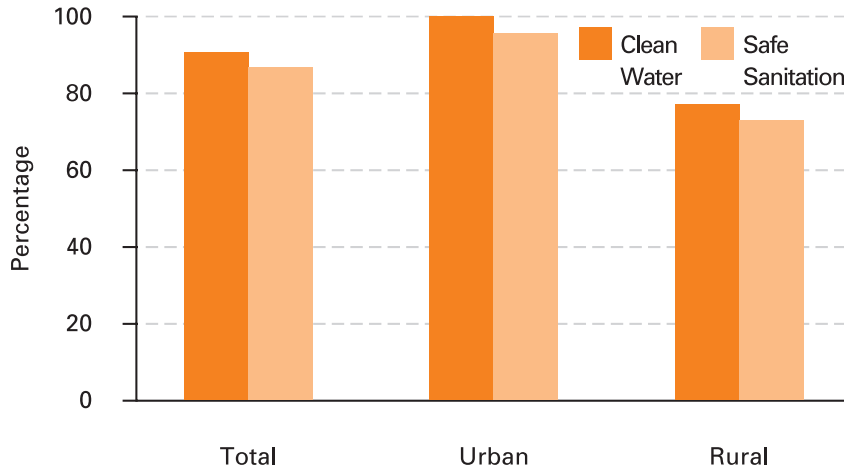


# 3

## Housing

Significant rural to urban migration over recent decades means that roughly two thirds of Turkey's population is now living in urban areas. Overcrowding and poor heating has lead to increased prevalence of asthma and tuberculosis amongst migrant families. Many families live in poor quality housing. Access to clean water and safe sanitation is often difficult: 10% of households did not have access to safe drinking water by 2003 and 13.5% did not have safe sanitation — the same rates were 77% and 72% in rural areas.

### Access to Clean Water and Safe Sanitation 2003<sup>15</sup>

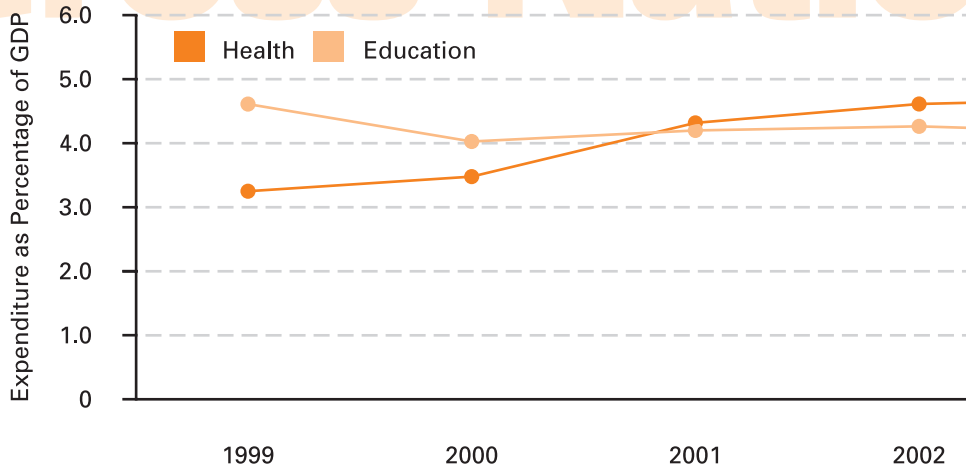


# 4

## Education

The MDG target to get all girls as well as boys into primary education by 2005 has not been met. However, the Ministry of National Education is able to report substantial progress towards achieving 100% primary school attendance in Turkey. The *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* girls' education campaign has helped to improve girls' attendance at primary school — closing the gender gap from 7% in 2003 to 5.8% in 2005. Overall enrolment rates increased from 81% in 1996 to 92% in 2004 — but much more remains to be done.

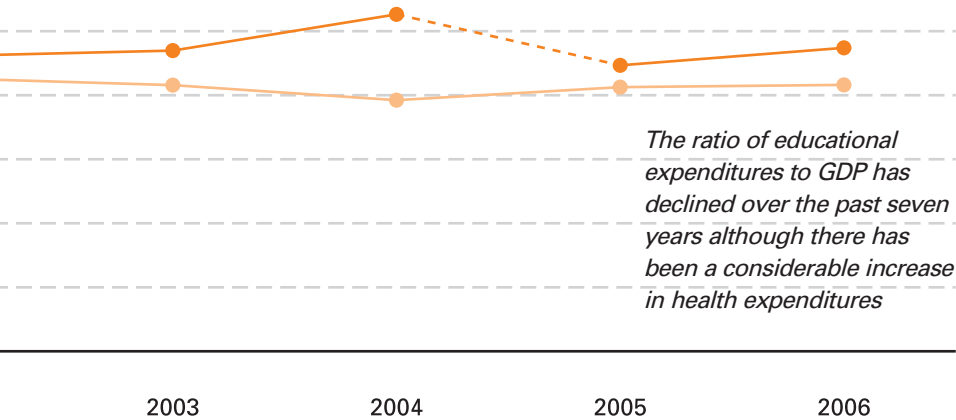
### Overview of Education and Health Expenditures in Turkey<sup>16</sup>



Insufficient investment, tradition and poor quality education contribute to low attendance figures — especially for children of low income families:

- only 16% attended preschool in 2004–2005;<sup>17</sup>
- net enrolment in primary school was still low at 94% in 2004;<sup>18</sup>
- costs and poor quality education lead to many children dropping out of school or not enrolling in the first place.

# onal Product



*The ratio of educational expenditures to GDP has declined over the past seven years although there has been a considerable increase in health expenditures*

# 5

## Social Expenditure

Greater allocation of budgetary resources to cover the cost of basic education, access to health care and social protection — particularly child benefits — is essential if child poverty is to be prevented. Yet, of approximately 7% of GDP that Turkey spent on education in 2005, 62% was public finance and 35% private — mostly household expenditure.<sup>19</sup>

Turkish households have to spend more on education than any other OECD nation, except for Korea and the United States. This has serious implications for low income families who cannot afford basic education expenditures for their children. Compared to other European countries, Turkey's public funding allocations to health and social protection expenditures are also relatively low.

### Social Expenditures as a Percentage of GDP 2003–2006<sup>20</sup>

	Euro 25	Turkey			
	2003	2003	2004	2005	2006
Health	6.6	4.7	5.2	4.5	4.7
Education	5.0	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.2
Social Protection	19.7	8.6	8.6	9.4	9.5
Total	31.3	17.5	17.8	18.0	18.4

# Countries

## Comparison of Education Expenditures in Selected Countries 2005<sup>21</sup>

Country	Public	Private	Total
Korea	4.8	3.4	8.2
United States	5.1	2.3	7.3
Turkey	4.29	2.46	6.75
France	5.6	0.4	6.0
Mexico	5.1	0.1	5.8
Finland	5.7	0.1	5.8
United Kingdom	4.7	0.8	5.5
Germany	4.3	1.0	5.3
Spain	4.3	0.6	4.9
Czech Republic	4.2	0.4	4.6
India	4.0	0.2	4.2
Slovak Republic	4.0	0.1	4.1

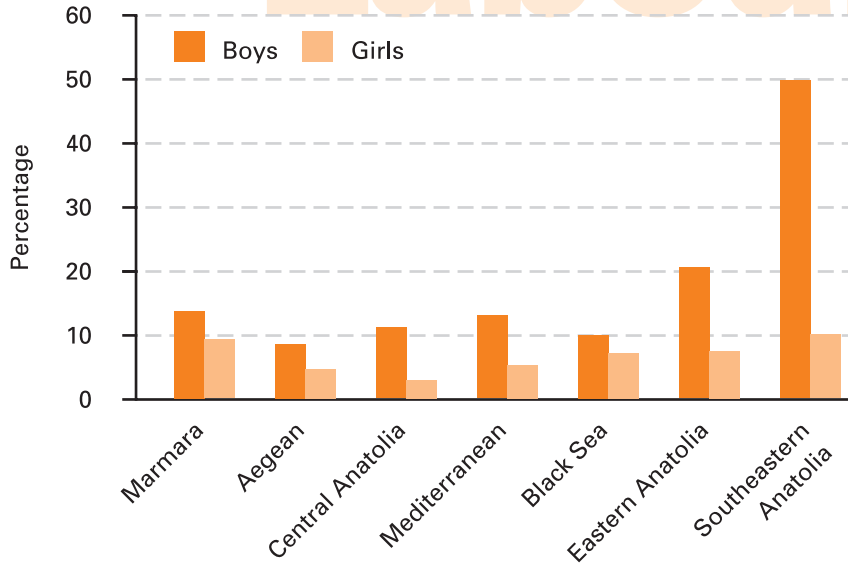
*Comparison as a share of GDP and percentage distribution*

# 6

## Child Labour

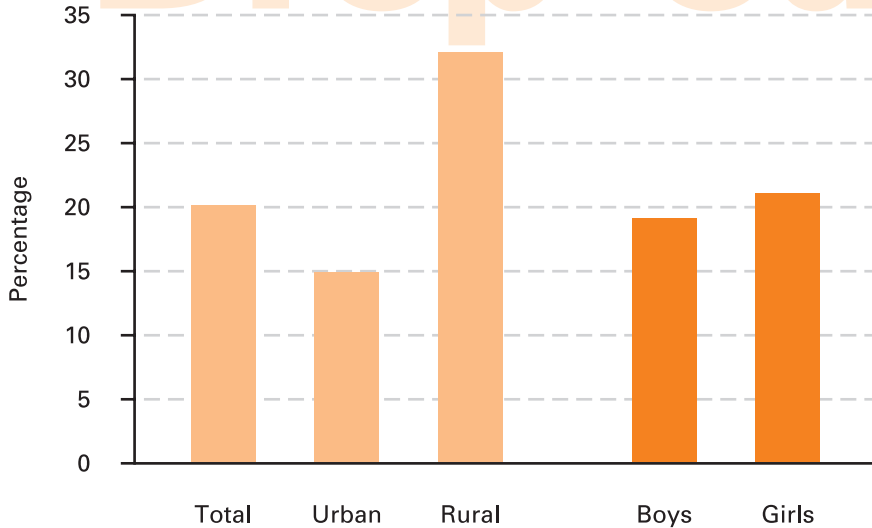
Child labour remains a problem. In 1999, 4.2% of children between the ages of 6 and 14 years and 28% of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 years were working. Of these, 68% gave the need to support their families as the main reason why they worked.<sup>22</sup>

### School Children Engaged in Labour by Region 1999<sup>23</sup>



The primary education completion rate of roughly 80% meant that one in five children did not finish eighth grade in 2003 and the rate was much lower for rural areas. The difference of 2% more girls than boys dropping-out does not appear to be a significant gender gap, but the future looks bleak for both boys and girls from low income families who have to work instead of finishing their studies — especially so for children living in rural areas.

**Eighth Grade Drop-Out Rates 2003<sup>24</sup>**



# Prevention

## Preventing Child Poverty in Turkey

Until quite recently, the problem of poverty in Turkey has been alleviated through the goodwill of friends, relatives and other benefactors offering support in the form of hard cash or 'in kind' donations of food and clothing. However, this traditionally strong sense of social responsibility has been weakened by factors such as urbanisation, fragmented family structures and a general increase in materialism that is reflected in societies the world over.

The situation of the poor in Turkey is reflected in pronounced disparities between urban and rural areas: although the overall rate of complete poverty dropped from 28.1% in 2003 to 25.6% in 2004, the improvement is very much urban-based since the complete poverty rate for rural families increased to 40%. The rates represent just under 7.2 million urban and 10.9 rural inhabitants who have insufficient means to feed, clothe and shelter themselves properly.<sup>25</sup>

The poverty rate of traditionally large rural households also increased to 56.7% for families with over 7 members. City dwelling families of similar size also have a high poverty rate of 39%.

The Government of Turkey has a number of schemes in place which seek to address the issue of child poverty — conditional cash transfers, one-off poverty alleviation payments, agricultural subsidies and a green card scheme to help the poor receive medical services, for example. Nevertheless, these social security measures often do not reach children in need. Many of these children come from families working in informal employment or very small businesses and therefore they are not covered by social security.

In order reverse this trend, the Government is proposing to provide social security to every child under 18 years old with a bill that is currently under review by parliament.

By making child poverty a political priority and taking the necessary steps to close the gap in the social security system that leaves so many children and their families vulnerable, the Government will be investing not only in Turkey's future but also in her present — providing support and protection for her most vulnerable constituents.

As with most other OECD countries, the Government needs to establish a strategic, coordinated approach to child poverty that would involve:

- ensuring that children grow up with sufficient material resources to advance their physical and mental development and allow their participation in society;
- the capacity to accurately define and measure child poverty in order to establish and monitor targets and timetables for the progressive reduction and eventual elimination of the problem;
- recognising the fact that child poverty is affected by priorities implied in the structure of government budgets as well as tax and benefit policies;
- alleviating the immediate difficulties faced by children of low income families and also including a long-term strategy to empower children and their families and enable them to break out of the poverty-cycle;

- promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child — to which Turkey is a party — by taking account of the principle of *the best interest of the child*.

The strategy to reduce child poverty should focus on improving relevant indicators with the direction of efforts towards:

- increasing the household income of the poorest families — especially women;
- ensuring access to health services for the children of low-income families;
- improving housing conditions;
- ensuring free education — including early childhood education — for poor children
- eliminating child labour.

# Strategy

## References

# Reference

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005, Innocenti Report Card No. 6*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy, 2005. As of 2005, the thirty OECD member countries include: Australia Austria; *Belgium*; Canada; *Czech Republic*; *Denmark*; *Finland*; France; *Germany*; Greece; *Hungary*; Iceland; *Ireland*; *Italy*; *Japan*; Republic of Korea; *Luxembourg*; *Mexico*; *Netherlands*; *New Zealand*; Norway; *Poland*; *Portugal*; Slovak Republic; *Spain*; *Sweden*; Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom and the United States of America. The countries where rates have risen are listed in italics — data sets for Iceland, Republic of Korea, Turkey and the Slovak Republic were unavailable.
- <sup>2</sup> *OECD Provisional Social Expenditure Database, 2004*
- <sup>3</sup> *Presidency Conclusions*, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 23/24 March 2006
- <sup>4</sup> *Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 2003*, Hacettepe University, Institute of Population Studies, Ankara, 2004
- <sup>5</sup> *Poverty Study 2004*, Turkstat, Ankara 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> *Mid-year Population Projections by Age Group 2000–2020*, Turkstat, Ankara 2006.
- <sup>7</sup> *Household Budget Survey 2002*, Turkstat, Ankara, 2003
- <sup>8</sup> *Poverty Study 2004*, op. cit.
- <sup>9</sup> *Household Budget Survey 2002*, op. cit.
- <sup>10</sup> Teachers' Union, *Socio-economic Status of Students' Families*, İstanbul, 2004.
- <sup>11</sup> *Household Budget Survey 2003–2004*, Turkstat, Ankara 2006

- <sup>12</sup> *Poverty Study 2004*, Turkstat, op. cit.
- <sup>13</sup> *Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys 1993, 1998 and 2003*, Hacettepe University, Institute of Population Studies, Ankara, 1994, 1999 and 2004
- <sup>14</sup> *Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 2003*, Hacettepe University, op.cit.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*
- <sup>16</sup> Yılmaz, H. Hakan, *Quality of the Fiscal Adjustment in Turkey: The Case of Social Expenditures*, Presentation at the World Bank, Ankara, April 2006
- <sup>17</sup> Ministry of National Education, *data*, 2005
- <sup>18</sup> Ministry of National Education, *provisional figure*, 2004
- <sup>19</sup> Teachers' Union, op. cit.
- <sup>20</sup> Emil, Ferhat, H. Hakan Yılmaz, *Social Expenditures in Turkey*, unpublished study 2005 and Yılmaz, H. Hakan, *Quality of the Fiscal Adjustment in Turkey*, op. cit.
- <sup>21</sup> World Bank, *How Much Does Turkey Spend on Education? Development of National Education Accounts to Measure and Evaluate Education Expenditures*, Background Study for Education Sector Study 2005, OECD, *Education at a Glance 2003*, Paris, 2004, Yılmaz, H. Hakan, *The Quality Issue of Fiscal Adjustment in Turkey's post 2000 Stability Programmes*, Ph.D. dissertation (forthcoming study).
- <sup>22</sup> State Institute of Statistics and the International Labour Organisation, *Child Labour Survey 1999*, ILO/Turkstat, Ankara, 2000
- <sup>23</sup> Teachers' Union, op. cit.
- <sup>24</sup> *Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 2003*, Hacettepe University, op.cit.
- <sup>25</sup> *Poverty Study 2004*, Turkstat, op. cit.

# Web

*For more information  
on preventing child poverty,  
visit the following web sites:*

[www.cocukyoksullugu.net](http://www.cocukyoksullugu.net)

[www.childpoverty.net](http://www.childpoverty.net)

[www.unicef.org/turkey](http://www.unicef.org/turkey)

