

SAY YES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF UNICEF TURKEY WINTER 2008




Inside story



Better deal for children in custody

unite for
children

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Living with the law

The Ministry of Justice has been making life more pleasant for under-eighteens serving custodial sentences or detained pending trial. With the financial support of the EU, UNICEF has assisted with the development of staff training programmes and materials. But are we going fast enough?

NB: The cover photograph, taken from inside the education home, shows a parked training vehicle with pictures of small children on the side. The children whose faces are visible have no connection with the institution.

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Here for children

UNICEF Regional Director Maria Calivis has visited Ankara. Reza Hossaini, the new UNICEF Turkey Representative, has arrived. And the UNICEF Turkey National Committee has appointed three new goodwill ambassadors in Istanbul.

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Flagship report in Ankara

Ankara was one of the venues for the launch of the UNICEF flagship report, 'The State of the World's Children' in January. Among the speakers were members of Parliament and high-level officials.

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The annual Child Forum is serving not only as a platform and a learning experience for the participants but as a focal point for children's own nationwide campaign to boost children's rights – including the right to participate.

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The poor quarter

25% of children under fifteen are still experiencing poverty, according to the latest Poverty Study from the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat). The gap between rural and urban areas is widening.

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Editorial

Welcome to this first edition of 'Say Yes' for 2008. As the new Representative of UNICEF in Turkey, it is also, of course, my first edition. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those officials, members of the diplomatic community and private individuals who have made my first few weeks here such a pleasure. Clearly, UNICEF Turkey enjoys close and fruitful relations with all sectors of government, non-government organisations, the private sector, the media and other UN agencies. Turkey is the only country in the World with both the Turkish National Committee for UNICEF and the UNICEF Country Office team. The combined wealth of technical expertise, experience and advocacy power of the two has pushed children's issues high up the agenda. I am greatly looking forward to being a part of this team.

It is a pleasure to be in Turkey for deeper reasons too. Here is a Middle-Income Country which is not just growing economically but also going through a rapid phase of development. It is a country on the move. It is making good progress towards achieving most of its Millennium Development Goals. It is proud of its achievements, but at the same time recognises that there is more to be done to improve the lot of children and women. Whether it is a case of healing those wounds of poverty and exclusion which remain, of improving the quality of education, of closing the gender gap in all walks of life, or of facing up the new health and child protection issues with which even the most developed countries have to grapple, I sense a strong desire to bring about improvements. Turkey is capable of addressing all these challenges. I will be only too happy if UNICEF's international experience, expertise and reputation can make the task a little easier.

On a personal note, I can only add that there can be few more attractive appointments. Historically, Turkey is of almost incomparable interest. Culturally, it has a fascinating location at the crossroads of continents, religions and civilisations. Physically, it is a land of contrasting natural attractions. Following postings in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, it will make a pleasant change for my family and me to live in a country with such long coastlines.

As you see, I am feeling at home already. Looking forward to your continued support,



Reza Hossaini
UNICEF Representative, Turkey

Seeds of a fresh start for juveniles in custody

Life is not easy for the 2,750 child suspects and offenders living in penal institutions. However, conditions are improving and with EU financial support UNICEF has been playing its part. 'Say Yes' reports from an Ankara detention centre.



photo by Oğuz Sağdıç

Mehmet sits at his new desk. He has just returned from his weekly hour-and-a-half in the library. The door of his room is open, leading to the communal space which he shares with eight of his peers: the hall where they play table tennis, the yard where they will play volleyball again after the snowmen melt. He misses his family and friends, the night air, drinking tea from a glass made of glass... But there are activities every day, and they can use the gym and the outdoor pitch every week. He is learning to keep his temper.

From the outside, the Ankara Child and Youth Closed Penal Institution, a detention centre located on a Justice Ministry campus at Sincan, on the western edge of Ankara, resembles a typical prison with its watchtowers, floodlights, gendarmes and high, concrete perimeter wall. Inside, however, the three year-old purpose-built facility is full of surprises. The sports facilities and visiting area are of dimensions that would be the envy of many a private secondary school (Even a closed institution can contain open spaces!) There are also fully-equipped workshops for ceramics and copperware, welding and textiles – to say nothing of the computer room and the many meeting rooms which are used for exam preparation, hygiene and health seminars, staff training sessions and many other events.

The corridors are bare, if wide, and the windows are barred. Yet here and there the residents and their teachers have brightened doorways with shining painted landscapes and decorated the walls with posters on themes that include HIV/AIDS and Children's Rights.

Everybody has his own room. The facility is built for 320, and with 285 in residence – of whom 108 are under eighteen – there are few empty beds. Indeed, young people aged 18-21 have at times had to be moved on to other institutions to make way for newly-detained children, who are given priority. Nevertheless, there is no sense of crowding as guards and visiting teachers mingle easily with small groups of residents learning how to cut hair, plant trees or play chess.

Setting children apart

The Ankara detention centre and a smaller centre in Kayseri reflect the efforts being made by the Ministry of Justice to improve conditions for children in custody, to educate and rehabilitate them, and to prevent them from coming into contact with the law again.

The legislative infrastructure was renewed in 2005, when the Penal Code and the Law on the

Execution of Penalties were amended, and a new Child Protection Law was adopted. Among other changes, the minimum age of criminal responsibility was raised from 11 to 12 and remission of sentence for children was increased.



“As a next step, this person is going to be released. So we believe he should get used to being inside society – to continue at a normal school.” İpek explains. “Actually, he is a victim too – a victim of the crime, of the people around him, of society.”

As for physical infrastructure, detention centres similar to the Ankara institution are due to open in Istanbul in 2-3 months and Izmir in 2-3 years. At present, under-eighteens are frequently held in children’s blocks in adult prisons – stressful institutions, sometimes overcrowded, which lack special facilities for juveniles or guards dedicated to them. This limits the educational and recreational activities available and increases the risks of violence and of bullying and sexual abuse among the children.

“Our policy is that wherever there are more than 50 children they should be held in separate institutions,” says Kenan İpek, Director-General of Prisons and Detention Centres at the Ministry. “And we are moving rapidly in that direction.”

Open homes

In fact, the Turkish justice system has long envisaged that under-eighteens should serve their sentences in open reformatories called Education Homes (See also page 7), rather than behind bars. “Education Homes are our source of pride,” says İpek. “There are not many other examples in the world. The children live like children of their age group live outside. They go to normal schools. The personnel are like their parents.”

There are currently three Education Homes in Izmir, Ankara and Elazığ, in the western, central and eastern parts of the country respectively. Izmir is the only one to house girls, who account for only about 5% of children in contact with the law. The Ministry is planning to open a fourth Education Home in the Istanbul area.

The catch is that the young offenders can only be sent to education homes after their sentences have been finalised. And with the process of initial trial and appeal to the High Court lasting for an average of eighteen months, that adds up to long stays in the detention centres or prisons. Of the 2,750 children in criminal justice institutions, only a small fraction have confirmed sentences. Like Mehmet (not his real name), 90% of the adolescents at Sincan are still awaiting a verdict. Some will serve their time without ever reaching an Education Home.

“The Education Homes offer much better opportunities. We want their cases to go through the High Court as quickly as possible so that they can be transferred to the Education Homes, explains İpek. “But we are also trying to make sure that their time in the detention centres is spent well.”

A question of staffing

Neither enlightened laws nor quality buildings are of any use unless institutions are adequately staffed. Aided by modern technology, the 138 members of staff at the Ankara detention centre - including teachers, psychologists and social workers – are sufficient to monitor and support the residents at all times, even when a wide range of activities are under way. But for Director-General İpek, even this is not good enough. While he admits to a deficit of personnel in the prison system as a whole, he is determined to maximise staffing levels in institutions responsible for children. A staff-child ratio of 1:1 would be ideal, he suggests.

photos by Oğuz Sağdıç



Director-General of Prisons and Detention Centres Kenan İpek:

A vote of thanks

The Ardıç Programme, which we have developed with UNICEF and the financial support of the EU, is not a project simply imported from another country. Turkish academics and Justice Ministry professionals also worked very hard to create a programme that addressed our needs and could be implemented in our conditions. More than 300 professionals have been educated. Now we are ready to implement the programme in our training centres and spread it to all our institutions. All this has involved the labour of far too many people to mention by name. But I would like to thank them all for their tireless efforts.

The success of the programme will only become clear over time. Are children offending again after they are released? We will be keeping an eye on this, drawing comparisons with other countries and sharing the outcome with public opinion. Of course, one programme is never enough and we aim to go on improving the training and resources available to our highly-committed guards and expert personnel. We will also persist with our efforts in the very important area of physical infrastructure.

Both the present government and previous governments have been very supportive of our work for children in conflict with the law. Whenever we have requested anything from the Ministry of National Education, they have never turned us down. The



photo by Oğuz Sağdıç

development of civil society organisations in Turkey in recent years is also very pleasing. I am grateful to all of them.

Our social structure too is generally supportive – you can tell this from the number of prison visitors. Re-offending rates are relatively low. However, there are some socio-economic environments where crime is higher. Families and society have their duties to fulfill. A young person released from custody has to have a home to go to, and needs to be protected from the wrong sort of attention. Some people think, “These are all glue-sniffers; there is nothing you can do for them.” If we all dodge our responsibilities in this way, nothing will get any better.

The problem faced by Muammer Seyitoğlu, the director of the Ankara detention centre, when it first opened was not the number of personnel but their knowledge and abilities. “The institution was new and 80% of the staff were new. Nobody knew anything,” he recalls. Fortunately, the Ministry has also embarked on a major effort to increase the capacity of its employees.

Since 2000, four regional training centres have been opened and a fifth is under way. One of the most important training programmes in use for those dealing with juvenile suspects and offenders is the Ardıç Programme developed and designed with EU financial support through the joint efforts of the Ministry and UNICEF.

A programme is born



‘Ardıç’ is the Turkish word both for the thrush, a bird, and for the juniper tree. The seed of the juniper must be swallowed by the thrush and spend some time inside its body if it is ever to

flourish as a tree. The Ardıç Programme seeks to improve services and opportunities for children temporarily deprived of their liberty, so that they can rejoin society once freed, with a reduced risk of further contact with the law. The programme has two strands: the training of guards and directors, and the development of activities and materials for psychosocial personnel working with children and their families.

Guards and directors learn about the law, communications skills, personal development, criminal psychology, how to deal with negligence and abuse and a range of other topics. The activities for use by psychosocial personnel cover issues such as good parenting, anger management and sexual abuse.

When the first meetings were held in late 2003, Ardıç was merely a project. After exhaustive needs analysis, drafting, testing, revision and extension, key personnel were educated as trainers and the two strands were put into practice. As of 2008,

Ardıç: Who said what?

- The difference in behaviour, attitude and communication which has emerged between those who have taken part in the training and those who have not demonstrates that this education has to be given to all the staff of the institutions. (director of institution)
- The use of interactive training models prompted personnel at all levels to start asking themselves, "What can I contribute to this process?" (director of institution)
- The Ardıç Education Project was very different: I noticed that all the personnel of the institutions were included. (director of institution)
- Our approach and attitude to the children have changed. (administrator)
- Another benefit of this work has been to eliminate the difference between institutions and establish common standards among them. (social worker)
- The inmates are not our enemies but people in our field of duty to whom we must provide a service. (guard)
- If I have a problem I share it with the chief guard. He'll sort it out. They didn't make him chief guard for nothing. (detained child)
- The institution is better than home: no beatings, no swearing. (child convict in Education Home)

responsibility for implementation and supervision has been taken over entirely by the Ministry of Justice, using its own budget. The programme has been included in in-service training, and has become compulsory for all those working with children in custody.



photos by Oguz Sağdıç

Ready to help

Guards and directors have responded well to the training sessions. Some even report that their relations with their own children have improved. At the Ankara detention centre, guards and residents communicate more respectfully. Incidents of residents climbing on the roof and cases of self-mutilation – a common form of self-expression particularly among children with past or present addictions to drugs or other substances – have declined. "There is a climate of trust," says director Seyitoğlu, attributing this partly to the Ardıç Programme, "but of course we can do better still."

Psychologists and social workers at the institution have gained in knowledge and confidence - for example when it comes to their approach to sex offence suspects. "None of us had received any such training before," says one. They are especially grateful for the standardised materials. "We used to do one-to-one interviews and interviews with the children's families, but at the same time we used to ask ourselves: 'What else can we do?'" says a senior staff member who is also a trainer for the Ardıç Programme. "So we were really happy to learn that there was a training programme on anger management and so on. And soon we will have the published material in our hands and we will be in a much better position to help the children, the families and the personnel."

What comes next?

As the "thrush" flies to all corners of the country, all the experts agree on two points. First, it would be much better if children did not come into contact with the law at all. Second, the issue cannot be tackled by the security and justice services alone. Legal rigidities or the hand of fate may explain why some youngsters end up "inside", but in many more cases the blame lies with poverty, unemployment, migration, street life and addiction, with parents who are unable to cope and with adults who exploit children for criminal ends. All these are problems which require economic and social solutions.

In the meantime, fewer children need to be deprived of their liberty for so long. The 2005 legislation provides for alternative measures in place of detention and for probation orders in place of custodial sentences. Putting these arrangements into practice is easier said than done.

Nevertheless, progress is being made and UNICEF is lending its support.

But that's another story.

* 'Say Yes' would like to thank the Ministry of Justice and the directors, personnel and residents of the Ankara Child and Youth Closed Penal Institution and the Ankara Education Home for all their kind assistance during the preparation of these articles.

** This programme has been financially supported by the European Union.

Make yourself at Home

The Ankara Children's Education Home, Turkey's first reformatory for child offenders, has occupied this site since 1941. With its trees, football pitch, drive, lawns and gardens, it is an oasis amid the airless apartment blocks of the burgeoning Keçiören district. The boys amble freely among the 2-4 storey buildings of yellow and blue which serve as dormitory, canteen and cultural centre. Some parts of the site are off-limits, and you cannot leave without permission - but there are no armed guards, barbed wire or fences.

"The system feeds on freedom, based on mutual trust," says Director Nurdoğan Ertuğrul. Whether convicted of murder or theft, the residents are treated alike. Those who are young enough, and whose schooling has not been too badly interrupted, attend schools in the neighbourhood. The others are trying to complete their academic, vocational or apprenticeship education through distance learning with the help of special classes.

Capacity is for 108, but there are only 42 residents. Eight have passed the age of 18, but will be allowed to stay on until 21, provided they pursue an education. Between them, the inmates have spent years in various detention centres and prisons. Almost all prefer it here. "I see the earth", says one. "You get to go on leave," notes another. I have been to the cinema," reports a third.

Young convicts - but not detainees - have the right to visit their families 1-3 times a year. The freedom to make and receive unlimited and unmonitored telephone calls from the pay-phones is unique to the education home - and highly valued. Visiting hours too are relatively long and flexible.



Part of society

The boys have not only been to the cinema. In addition to the handicrafts, hobbies and courses available on site, they have also visited museums and gone skating, swimming and picnicking. Five residents who gave up smoking were rewarded with a posh restaurant meal. Such activities are

often supported by associations and businesses. They increased after the Law on the Execution of Penalties was amended in 2005 so as to broaden the discretion of individual institutions.

"Whether we have a hairdressing course or a concert, we try to hold it outside, in its normal place, so that they can feel a part of social life," Ertuğrul explains. At Keçiören, the residents are outnumbered by a staff of 54 - 20 guards and 34 health, education and psychosocial professionals and administrative staff. They are already familiar with the Ardıç Programme. "The materials are very easy to use for those just starting the profession," comments a psychologist.

photos by Oğuz Sağdıç



Regional director highlights trafficking



photo by Sema Hosta

Maria Calivis, UNICEF Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, has drawn attention to the extent of child trafficking in the region.

During a visit to the UNICEF Representation in Ankara in November 2007, Calivis told the state-owned Anatolian Agency that Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including Russia, accounted for a disproportionate 25% of human trafficking globally. Every single country in the region, she pointed out, was involved in some way. Children, the UNICEF director underlined, account for 10% of all human trafficking.

Likening the global, lucrative networks behind the sexual exploitation of women and children to the

multi-headed hydra of classical Greek mythology, Calivis argued that all countries had to be involved in tackling the problem.

Child abuse

The expansion in trafficking comes at a time when Europe is stepping up its efforts to prevent child sexual abuse – an issue which until recently was often covered up on the pretext of protecting communities and families. According to the UNICEF Regional Director, a culture of listening more to children, as foreseen in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is one factor that has helped to bring child abuse out into the open. Today, efficient protection systems are being designed which transcend the traditional compartmentalisation of service provision. International conventions have been signed requiring all countries to collect data and take action. Importantly, Calivis noted, the Council of Europe convention permits prosecution of offenders wherever the crime takes place.

Care in the family

Questioned about the best form of care for children without parents, Calivis stressed that all children have the right to live in functioning families, whereas institutionalisation greatly inhibits children's development and has high social costs. Several countries in the region are successfully moving away from institutionalisation in favour of foster families, but the UNICEF director cautioned that the change should not be rushed without putting the necessary safeguards in place.

Famous names become UNICEF Ambassadors

Actress Prof. Yıldız Kenter, actor Müjdat Gezen and novelist Ayşe Kulin are the latest Goodwill Ambassadors of UNICEF in Turkey. The title was conferred by Prof. Talat Halman, President of the National Committee for UNICEF, at a press conference on November 29. The appointments were made upon a joint proposal from the National Committee and the UNICEF Turkey Representation.

All three celebrities have already taken part in public appeals on UNICEF's behalf. Kenter has staged plays for UNICEF's benefit. Gezen has donated the income from his books for children and appeared on



photo by Anatolian Agency

Left to right: Prof. Yıldız Kenter, Müjdat Gezen, Turkey National Committee President Prof. Talat Halman

New Representative starts work

With the arrival of 2008, Reza Hossaini has taken up his duties as the new UNICEF representative in Turkey, a post formerly held by Edmond McLoughney. Hossaini, an Iranian citizen, is married with one child. He was previously UNICEF Representative in Uzbekistan, where he was recently awarded the Presidential Order of National Friendship in recognition of the results achieved by UNICEF under his leadership.

From drugs to development

The new UNICEF Turkey Representative obtained his degree in pharmacy from the University of Delhi, India, in 1981. He went on to work in pharmaceutical and vaccine production in India and Iran. In 1986, he worked with the Iranian Ministry of Health on the planning and expansion of Primary Health Care.

Hossaini joined UNICEF in as a Project Officer in the Tehran office in March 1989. Within months, he was to take over responsibility for the UNICEF programme in Iran as Assistant Representative. In 1997-98 he was posted to southern Sudan and Somalia to plan and implement the Polio National Immunization Days. For the following four years he was transferred to the World Health Organisation to support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. After setting up the Polio Eradication Team for the Horn of Africa, he became Regional Coordinator of the Immunization Programme for Polio Eradication in Southeast Asia, based in Delhi and with a brief covering ten countries including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea and Bangladesh.

In 2002, Hossaini became UNICEF Senior Programme Coordinator in Afghanistan. The priorities of UNICEF's US\$100m/year operation in the war-torn country included health and nutrition,



photo by Oğuz Sağdıç

education, water & sanitation and child protection. He was appointed Representative to Uzbekistan in 2004.

Uzbek award

According to Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev, speaking at the Presidential Order of National Friendship award ceremony in December 2007, "UNICEF is now known by ordinary people in every part of the country" due to its work on the ground to improve the lives of women and children. The Government also appreciated UNICEF's collaboration in national policy and programme development. It was only the second time the Order had been awarded to an international organisation.



zen and Ayşe Kulin with UNICEF Talat Halman

television spots. Kulin, selected Writer of the Year for 2007 by the Writers Union of Turkey, is known for her support for girls' education.

Another of UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassadors is journalist and TV presenter Tayfun Talipoğlu, who has been contributing to UNICEF campaigns and activities for several years, both through television broadcasts and through personal appearances at meetings, conferences and other UNICEF events. He is an active member of the Child Friendly Media Network set up with UNICEF support.

Role models

Goodwill Ambassadors may be named at the global, regional or national levels. They assist UNICEF in familiarising the public with child rights and mobilising resources for the benefit of women and children. They are chosen from among respected public figures with an appeal to children, for whom they also serve as role models. Since the first Ambassador was named in 1954, UNICEF has worked with almost 200 Goodwill Ambassadors.

Lively Ankara launch for UNICEF's flagship report

Ankara was one of the venues for the launch of UNICEF's annual report 'The State of the World's Children'. The report, introduced by UNICEF Turkey Representative Reza Hossaini, focuses on Child Survival. Members of Parliament and top officials from Government ministries were among those on hand to discuss the implications.



photo by Şehnaz Tanıkan

Left to right: Canan Aritman, Tayfun Talipoğlu, Gaye Erbatur, Reza Hossaini, Cevdet Erdöl, Lila Pieters, Turan Buzgan, Nevzat Korkmaz

UNICEF's flagship report, 'The State of the World's Children 2008', was launched at a press conference in Ankara on January 23, coinciding with similar events taking place in all parts of the globe.

Child Survival, the theme of this year's report, is "a very sensitive indicator for monitoring a nation's development," UNICEF Turkey Representative Reza Hossaini told journalists. According to the report, 9.7 million children a year

still die before the age of five. While a child in Sierra Leone stands a one-in-four chance of dying in the first five years of life, for a child in Sweden the odds are just one in 315. There are also major discrepancies within countries.

"We have the technology and we have the knowledge and means to put it into practice, but still children are dying every day from easily preventable causes," Hossaini said.

“Sound investment”

In his first press conference since he took office in January, Hossaini highlighted the past achievement in reduction of child mortality and the wide existing disparities between different regions of the world. He declared himself optimistic that the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing under-five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 were achievable, provided there is increased government commitment, improved coordination and collaboration between international, national and local agencies for provision of well focused, integrated basic package of services. For every life saved, moreover, another 3-4 children would be saved from morbidity, disability and malnutrition.

“Investment in mother and child health is not only a human rights imperative, but also a sound economic investment,” Hossaini underlined.

Turning to Turkey, the Representative suggested that focusing on the new-born might help to achieve further reductions in the child mortality rate. He commended the media on their interest in the launch, which, he said, “clearly indicates a commitment to children’s well-being”.

Situation in Turkey

Dr Turan Buzgan, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, presented an overview of the situation in Turkey, where economic and social trends and the efforts of the authorities have contributed to a sharp reduction in the child mortality rate. He pointed to the impact of baby-friendly hospitals, increased access to prenatal care and improvements in immunisation rates. He noted, for example, that there had been only three cases of measles in Turkey in 2007.

Deputy Undersecretary Buzgan said that the Government was targeting an infant mortality rate of no more than 15 per thousand by 2013, compared to an estimated 21.6 in 2007. The infant mortality rate refers to children dying before the age of one, who in Turkey account for about 90% of all under-five deaths. He also suggested that the fertility rate would work out at 2.0 in 2008, compared to 2.2 in 2003.



Vigorous discussion

The press conference, at the Hilton Hotel, was jointly organised by UNICEF Turkey and the Health Ministry. Well-known TV presenter Tayfun Talipoğlu, a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, introduced the speakers, who also included Prof. Cevdet Erdöl, the chairman of Parliament’s Health Committee, and Prof. Gaye Erbatur, opposition member of Parliament for Adana.

The speakers touched on issues as diverse as the role of fathers in looking after children, the importance of educating girls, violence against women (including pregnant women) and

children, early marriage, the government’s social, health and health insurance policies and the recent law on the sale and use of tobacco products. Members of Parliament Canan Aritman and Nevzat Korkmaz also contributed to the discussion.

Prominent among the audience were Turkish National Committee for UNICEF President Prof. Talat Halman, Dr. Rifat Köse, Director General of Mother and Child Health and Family Planning at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Ruhi Kılıç, Director-General of Special Education, Guidance and Counselling Services, Mr. Necmettin Yalçın Director-General of Non-formal Education at the Ministry of National Education and representatives of various embassies.

What the report says

‘The State of the World’s Children 2008’ contains detailed information about child survival in the various regions of the world. It summarises the lessons learned from evolving health care systems and successful community partnerships. Recommendations include: concentrating on those countries and communities which have the highest child mortality rates and levels; packaging essential services together; strengthening community partnerships; ensuring a continuum of care across the life-cycle, and taking a results-oriented approach to health system development. The report also stresses the crucial role of political commitment, leadership and sustained financing.

As every year, the report provides over 40 pages of tabulated data on economic, demographic, environmental, nutritional, health, education, gender and child protection issues which affect the well-being of children and women, permitting comparisons between regions and countries.

Child Forum hears about campaign achievements

Members of the provincial Child Rights Committees, made up of children themselves, reported back enthusiastically on the progress of their national campaign to promote child rights at the 2007 Child Forum. The highlight of the Forum was an audience with President Abdullah Gül.



photos by UNICEF Turkey

Members of the provincial Child Rights Committees, made up of children themselves, reported back enthusiastically on the progress of their national campaign to promote child rights at the 2007 Child Forum. The highlight of the Forum was an audience with President Abdullah Gül.

There was more excitement than ever when the 162 members of the Child Forum gathered in Kızılcahamam near Ankara on November 18-21, 2007. For eight years, the Forum - which is composed of one boy and one girl from the Child Rights Committees formed in each of Turkey's 81 provinces - has been giving children a chance to speak out on issues which affect them. At the same time, participants have been able to learn

more about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and to acquire the skills they need to pass on this knowledge to others.

In 2006, the Forum broke new ground by launching a national campaign to promote child rights, to be run by children themselves in an initial 25 provinces. The extra buzz at the 2007 Forum reflected the participants' eagerness to show off their achievements and share one another's experiences. The hotel lobby was lined with stands displaying photographs, newspaper clippings and child rights merchandise related to the campaign. During the formal sessions, delegates reported back on their progress using sophisticated slide shows.



photos by UNICEF Turkey

A busy year

Over the past year, the Child Rights Committees have distributed their own materials and promotional goods, staged art competitions, taken part in university debates and televised talk shows and established children's clubs. Some Committees have directly assisted other children. In Amasya, for instance, Committee members were able to identify children working or living on the streets and to follow up with the authorities to ensure their enrolment in school.

The children have been quick to take advantage of local events which traditionally pull crowds. In Karaman, a festival in memory of poet Yunus Emre provided the ideal occasion to grab the attention of the public. In Gaziantep, children secured permission to set up a stand during the annual pistachio festival, complete with clowns and brochures. In Mugla, it was a kite-flying festival which presented the provincial Committee with the opportunity to engage other children in competitions and other child rights related activities.



Negotiating skills

Some of the Committees have won support from the local private sector. Others have conducted surveys to measure the impact of their efforts. Not without difficulty, committees in Konya and several other provinces prevailed upon local authorities to provide them with an office, meeting room or storage space.

Child Forum co-presidents Rıfat Cankat and Hazal Hürman summed up the sentiments of all present when they said that children had demonstrated their ability to negotiate, communicate and take part in decision-making for themselves. At the same time, they called on the authorities to lend more support. Although the right to participation is guaranteed under the CRC alongside with the right to health, education and protection, adults often find it difficult to include children in decision-making processes.

The children were congratulated by İsmail Barış, the Director-General of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHCEK), and UNICEF Deputy Representative



photos by UNICEF Turkey

Lila Pieters. Both stressed how important it was for children to continue to speak up and claim their rights.

Meeting President Gül

The child delegates also received encouragement from President Abdullah Gül, who received them all at the presidential palace in Ankara on November 19. It was the first time that Child Rights Committee representatives had had the opportunity to present their work to the current President of the Turkish Republic.

More contacts are in store for co-president Rifat Cankat, who is to represent Turkey and the wider region in the "World Fit for Children +5" meeting taking place in New York in December. The UN General Assembly has invited 20 children to participate in interactive roundtable discussions on issues such as universal quality education, healthy lives and combating HIV/AIDS, and protection of children.

Direct dialogue

The Child Forum is timed to coincide with World Child Rights Day – the anniversary of the adoption of the CRC by the UN General Assembly in 1989. It is supported by SHCEK, UNICEF, the European Union and the ice-cream manufacturer Algida, a trade-mark of Unilever. Other activities included competitions, workshops and the drafting of action plans for 2008. There was much debate about the format to be taken by the Forum in future. Now that children know more about their rights, the time has come for a direct dialogue with adult policy and decision-makers who can make a difference for children. One idea is to put provincial governors to the test by holding a competition for the most child-friendly province!



Children still at high risk of poverty

Despite improvements, poverty in the wider sense continues to affect a large proportion of the population – particularly children.

Over a quarter of children aged under 15 in Turkey belonged to households still living in “food and non-food poverty” in 2006, according to the most recent annual study on poverty published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat).

Households living in food and non-food poverty are defined as those unable to meet all the needs of their members for food and other essential items. Children are most likely to live below the line for the simple reason that larger families, with more children, have greater difficulty meeting the needs of all their members. Yet inadequate nutrition and housing, low access to basic health and quality education services and the need to go to work at an early age can damage children permanently by retarding their physical and mental development and exposing them to illness, accidents, violence, abuse, stigmatisation, socialisation difficulties, crime and addictions.

Rural alarm

The 25.23% of under-15s in food and non-food poverty corresponds to almost 5.3 million children. The 2006 figures, which were published on December 26, 2007, nevertheless point to a continuing improvement by comparison with 2005, when 27.71% of the under-15 age group were living in food and non-food poverty.

Alarming, however, rural children are now three times as likely to experience poverty as urban children. While the proportion of under-15s living



photo by Rana Mullan

in food and non-food poverty in urban areas fell from 19.51% in 2005 to 13.5% in 2006, the corresponding ratio for rural areas – defined as settlements with a population of 20,000 or less – picked up from 40.60% to 43.63%.

Millennium Goals

Among the population as a whole, the ratio of individuals in food and non-food poverty was 17.81% in 2006 – down from 20.5% a year earlier. Accordingly, Turkey’s Millennium Development Goal target of 13.5% by 2015 appears to be in sight, despite the slower rates of growth in GDP and employment witnessed in 2007.

Turkey already appears to have eliminated poverty by the narrowest measure: the proportion of the population living on \$1 a day. But all broader indicators still point to a significant level of poverty closely linked to low education on the one hand, and unpaid family employment, irregular employment, self-employment and employment in agriculture on the other.

Percentage of under-15s living in food and non-food poverty

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total	34.55	37.04	34.02	27.71	25.23
Urban	30.59	30.43	24.22	19.51	13.50
Rural	41.10	46.44	49.34	40.60	43.63

Source: Turkstat

Did you know?

- Nearly a third of children under five in the developing world are stunted.
- In 20 developing countries, more than 5% of under-fives are overweight
- Rural children are twice as likely to be underweight as urban children.
- 60% of newborns in the developing world are not weighed.
- The global under-five mortality rate has fallen by 60% since 1960. In 2006, for the first time, fewer than 10 million under-fives died.
- Newborn deaths account for 37% all under-five deaths... Initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth is critical for newborn health and well-being.
- Newborns in developing countries are eight times more likely to die than newborns in industrialised countries.
- The births of 51 million children born in 2006 have not yet been registered.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's life-time risk of maternal death is 1/22; in the industrialised countries it is 1/8,000.
- 93 million children of primary school age worldwide are out of school – down from 115 million in 2002.
- One in six children of secondary school age worldwide attends primary school because s/he started school late or had to repeat grades.
- Only 13 developing countries have secondary school participation ratios of 90% or more.
- About two thirds of countries reached gender parity in primary education by 2005. About a third achieved gender parity in secondary education.
- The largest gender gaps in primary education are in West/Central Africa, the Middle East/North Africa and South Asia
- Pneumonia kills more children than AIDS, malaria and measles combined.
- Only about one third of children with diarrhoeal diseases in the developing world receive the recommended treatment.
- Between 1990 and 2006, the number of polio cases worldwide fell from 23,366 to 2,000.
- Globally, a sixth of all children aged 5-14 are thought to be engaged in child labour.
- UNICEF defines children 5-11 years old as engaged in child labour if they perform one hour of economic labour or 28 hours of domestic labour per week. Children 12-14 years old are considered to be engaged in child labour if they perform 14 hours of economic labour or 28 hours of domestic labour.
- The number of people living with HIV in Central and Eastern Europe and the Community of Independent States rose from 1,300 in 1990 to 1,700,000 in 2006. In the Middle East and North Africa, the number rose from 30,000 to 550,000.
- Worldwide, more than 60 million women aged 20-24 were married or in union before they reached the age of 18. Child marriage affects 34% of women in developing countries excluding China. In most countries with adequate historical data, there has been no significant change in the percentage.
- Some 1.5 billion children – two thirds of the world's child population – live in the 42 countries which were affected by violent, high-intensity conflict between 2002 and 2006.
- In a survey of 29 countries, an average of 86% of children aged 2-14 experienced violent discipline at home.
- During surveys in 57 developing countries, half of girls and women (39% in Turkey) responded that a husband or partner is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances.
- The percentage of children 2-9 years old who screened positive on disability in a 2005 UNICEF survey ranged from 2% in Uzbekistan to 35% in Djibouti
- It is estimated that there are 14.2 million refugees worldwide, of whom 41% are believed to be children.

These facts are taken from 'Progress for Children: A World Fit For Children Statistical Review Number 6', published by UNICEF in December 2007. The review provides a clear presentation of a wealth of existing information and data, some of it published for the first time. It concludes that life is getting better for the World's children and women - but not quickly enough to realise the Millennium Development Goals and to achieve the targets adopted by World leaders at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002.