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Children draw pictures about their rights as part of the CRC awareness raising activities

## UNICEF Yemen Situation Report

November 2014

**Key focus:**

### Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 25 years on

#### Highlights:

- **150,000 school bags have been distributed in conflict affected districts of Amran as part of the national Back to School campaign**
- **30,964 marginalized, disadvantaged and most vulnerable children have received birth certificates since September in Taiz Governorate.**

#### Situation Overview

With the localized conflict expanding into governorates such as Al Bayda and Ibb, UNICEF remains deeply concerned that Yemeni children continue to be affected by grave child rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict. Under 18s have been observed manning checkpoints on main roads and neighbourhoods in a number of governorates, manned by Al Houthi/ Ansar Allah, as well as the Yemeni Armed Forces.

The military use of schools and hospitals by parties to the conflict also continues to be a concern. In November, ten schools and one hospital were verified as being used, two of the schools are still being used by Al Houthi/Ansar Allah, while the health centre was subsequently attacked by AQAP. In Ibb, a further three schools and one health centre were reportedly used by Al Houthi/Ansar Allah. Under International Humanitarian Law, military use and occupation of schools and hospitals make them legitimate military targets and in recent conflict affected areas it has been proven that many of the schools and hospitals used by armed forces and armed groups were physically attacked.

The UN country task force for monitoring and reporting (CTFMR) continues to engage with Al Houthi/ Ansar Allah to finalize the action plan currently under discussion, which addresses the prevention and response of recruitment and use of children by the armed group. With the recent Government reshuffle, progress with regards to the action plan with the Government has been slow.

## Key focus: 25 Years of the CRC

### Issue

25 years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989, the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly. For the first time, the convention explicitly recognized that children possess innate rights, equal to those of adults: rights to health, education, protection and to equal opportunities. Within a year, the CRC became legally binding and has since become the most widely ratified human rights treaty, with 192 countries adopting it.

In 1991, Yemen was among the earlier countries to sign and ratify the CRC, committing to improving rights for children in the country and reporting on progress. Since then, there have indeed been some great improvements. Combatting malnutrition has progressed significantly over the past five years, with just 519 children admitted to feeding programmes for treatment in 2009 compared with 140,593 in 2013<sup>1</sup>. Since 1999, infant mortality has declined from 72 per 1,000 live births to 46 in 2012. The number of girls enrolled in primary education has also seen a boost with an increase from 42% in 1999 to 78.5% in 2012. The juvenile justice system has been established for children in contact with the law, and child polio has been eradicated from Yemen. There was also national recognition of children's rights in the outcomes of the national dialogue conference (NDC), and an action plan was signed this year with the Government to end child recruitment and use of under 18s.



“My dream is to be a journalist.”

Abdulrahman Abdullah, 12 years, participated in the “My life, my dream in a film” CRC project

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### Impact

But despite these positive steps, nearly 1 million children under 5 are still malnourished, nearly a quarter of those severely so; 13 million people still do not have access to safe water and sanitation; and over 300,000 are internally displaced. Higher prices for basic commodities cause many of Yemen's poorest to begin selling off what few assets they have and the most affected are children. Their basic right to proper food, education and healthcare are increasingly becoming the trade-offs. Currently, neither the age of the juvenile (15), nor the minimum age of criminal responsibility (7) are in line with international standards. In addition at least 64 cases of alleged under 18s have received death penalty sentences.

### Action

UNICEF works with the Government to improve child rights for all children, including the most vulnerable. The NDC recommended that 18 be the age of the child in the new constitution, currently being drafted, while 15 laws related to children have already been revised including this stipulation. Efforts are also being made for children's cases to be handled in less than 24 hours and child friendly prosecution and court procedures are in place, although often not fully respected.

To address malnutrition from a preventative as well as curative angle, UNICEF currently supports 1,603 outpatient therapeutic programmes (OTPs) throughout the country; and also works directly with communities to improve and promote hygiene and proper sanitation. About 167,000 children, of which 50 per cent are girls, now have improved access to education, through 264 supported child friendly schools; and in the past year rehabilitated 139 damaged schools, improving education for 68,000 conflict affected children.



Mohammed, 12 from Hadramout, joined the music competition, then made a Whatsapp group to discuss how to spread awareness of children's rights through music and song.

UNICEF's work is supported by vital Government initiatives, such as the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) which is the only public cash transfer programme in Yemen. It is vitally important because it is the only proven method to ensure that the poorest in Yemen get financial assistance to meet their basic needs. The quarterly grants help families make sure that their children go to school and that there is food on the table.

In November, Yemen commemorated the CRC 25th anniversary using creative, participatory and inclusive activities such as poetry, music, paintings, drawings, photography and short film-making to reach 4,200 children throughout the country. The '25 Years Strong' campaign raised awareness and understanding amongst an estimated 1.5 million parents, caregivers and other key community stakeholders and decision makers on the rights of children; and their commitment to ensure that these rights are realised.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics Database, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>, accessed: 16 Dec 2014

## Interagency Collaboration

The Strategic Response plan for Yemen has been recently concluded. UNICEF overall emergency appeal for 2015 stands at \$60.5 Million broken down as follows: Nutrition (\$20 Million), WASH (\$10 Million); Health (\$7 Million); Education (\$10.5 Million); Child Protection (\$12.6 Million).

## UNICEF Yemen Nationwide Response

### Education:

213,000 school bags were distributed in 14 governorates as part of the Back to School campaign, launched in Amran Governorate. Media coverage was in coordination and partnership with Amran Education office and the National Foundation for Development and Human Rights (NFDHR).

129 out of the 156 (82.6%) Muhamasheen (marginalized) children who have been prepared for school, have so far enrolled in the four nearby schools in Al Mokha District.

40 trainers from Lahj were trained as part of the peacebuilding programme that will eventually benefit parents, teachers and 800,000 children.

### WASH:

25,000 people will soon benefit from rehabilitated water supply schemes and sources in 4 governorates following the recent completion of technical assessments.

5,198 people from the Muhamasheen communities in Sa'ada (including 1,526 girls and 1,379 boys) have received water filters and hygiene kits, through local partners and in coordination with the Executive Council.

36,447 IDPs, host community and schoolchildren settled in and outside camps have continued to receive a daily water supply, while 28,305 IDPs have been involved in sanitation and hygiene promotion activities.

### Health:

11.63 million children aged 9 months to 15 years were targeted for Measles Rubella, and 4.8 million children under 5 were targeted for Polio during the national campaign this month conducted by the Ministry of Health supported by UNICEF and WHO. The campaign reported 98% administrative coverage for MR and 92% for polio.

61 community midwives from Shabwa (20), Al Dhale (20) and Hajjah (21) were trained to provide community based maternal and newborn care.



Trained health worker Muna provides measles vaccine for children in Hajjah

### Nutrition:

85,207 children were screened for malnutrition in November, 37,776 (18,685 boys, 19,081 girls) at a health facility and 47,431 (23,912 boys, 23,519 girls) by volunteers.

982 health workers were trained to deliver better quality services: 848 (311 female, 537 male) to deliver Outpatient Therapeutic care (OTP) and 134 (74 Female, 60 Males) to deliver therapeutic feeding services/stabilization centre services.

6 new OTPs, 2 stabilization centres, 7 mobile clinics and 25 supplementary feeding programmes were established in 15 governorates in a bid to reach more children.

### Child Protection:

162,848 people including 123,405 children (56,289 girls, 67,116 boys) received mine risk education (MRE as MRE activities were expanded to more affected governorates. This included 25 children from the Jewish community, who were reached for the first time. 45 teachers, NGO staff and community volunteers were also trained by YEMAC to carry out mine awareness.

31,914 people including 24,931 children (10,551 girls, 14,380 boys) received psychosocial support services through community based child friendly spaces in Taiz, Abyan and Shabwa Governorates. 321 children (72 girls, 249 boys) were identified as most vulnerable and provided with interim services.

74 unaccompanied Yemeni children were identified and provided with interim care in Haradh. 44 of these children have since been reunited with their families and returned safely to their community of origin. Additionally, 304 unaccompanied migrant boys were identified in Sana'a (13), Haradh (40) and the southern region (Basateen, Ahwar, Mayfa).

30,964 marginalized, disadvantaged and most vulnerable children (14,434 girls, 16,530 boys) including in Muhamasheen areas, have been provided with birth certificates since September in 6 districts of Taiz Governorate.

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