

UNICEF in Iran 2012-2016





For more than six decades UNICEF has been a driving force in building a world where the rights of every child are fully realised. Working in over 190 countries, UNICEF advocates for removing the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease, and discrimination place on a child's path to the full enjoyment of rights. UNICEF promotes new and better measures that give children the best start in life. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the organization inspires governments to make fundamental changes in laws, programmes, and policies that are designed to improve the lives of their most precious asset – their children.





UNICEF has been working in Iran since the early 1950s. Initially, UNICEF and the Government of Iran focused their collaboration on child health and nutrition, and gradually expanded to include education, child protection, HIV/AIDS prevention, and child poverty reduction. Today, all of these sectors work closely together in the recognition that an integrated approach is a more efficient and effective way of achieving results.

UNICEF collaborates with a range of governmental authorities, civil society organizations, religious leaders, academia, and private-sector groups.

UNICEF coordinates with other United Nations organizations and development partners in the framework of the priorities set by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Crucially, UNICEF's work is supported by contributions from governments and private donors, trusts and foundations from every corner of the globe.

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Early Childhood Development

Iran is home to 7 million children under the age of six. The early childhood years are critical to a child's physical and intellectual development. Studies have clearly shown that early childhood development opportunities ensure children the best preparation for primary school and beyond. Early childhood development opportunities, however, are often concentrated in urban areas and are usually privately funded. Rural early childhood development (ECD) services are limited in terms of resources and geographic coverage.

UNICEF is supporting the development of a National ECD Policy and the strategic plan of action intended to enhance and expand quality early childhood development in the country. UNICEF aims to ensure that more Iranian children survive and thrive at home, in school, and in their communities. To this end, the organization is helping to develop the capacity of the government's ECD Secretariat to design and upgrade

early childhood care and education at facility, community, and family levels – both in existing ECD centres and in areas where new centres are needed.

Impact: More children will enjoy better opportunities for optimal survival and development.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$750,000

Total unfunded: \$542,000



Advancing Nutrition for Children and Adolescents



The under-five mortality rate in Iran has improved significantly over the last two decades – from 73 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 22.5 in 2010 – indicating that children are better nourished and more protected from disease than ever before. However, there are still children and women who face health problems due to poor nutrition levels in their regions, and this has a silent but devastating impact on their growth and development.

Socio-economic disparities and insufficient awareness about good nutrition are two major contributing factors to the problem. It is estimated that only 53 per cent of infants are exclusively breastfed for the recommended first six months of their lives, which contributes to low nutrition levels and underweight babies. At the other end of the scale, adolescent obesity is on the rise. A recent study of Iranian adolescents found that 52 per cent were not involved in a regular plan of physical activity and many young people do not have a thorough understanding of healthful eating and exercise programmes.

UNICEF and the government are working together to promote the nutritional status of the most vulnerable children through the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and by developing the skills of nurses and social workers working within the nutrition sector. Crucially, this partnership will also develop plans of action to provide care and rehabilitation for malnourished children under-five years. In addition, a strategy is being developed to prevent obesity and provide a model of healthful eating for adolescents and their families.

Impact: The nutritional status of more than 20,000 children, adolescents, and their mothers who suffer from acute and chronic under-nutrition or over-nutrition/obesity will improve.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$1,062,000
Total unfunded: \$789,000

Combating HIV and AIDS



Almost half of all reported HIV cases in Iran are among adults aged 25 to 34. However, given the long incubation period of HIV, this statistic suggests that risky behaviours – including intravenous drug use and unprotected sex – start during adolescence and in the early twenties. Primary prevention is one of the most important means for controlling the epidemic. Public education on HIV prevention and the promotion of sexual health, especially among young people, are two of the most important strategies of the 3rd Iranian National Strategic Plan to Control HIV and AIDS.

UNICEF works with the Government of Iran to enhance public understanding of HIV prevention, care, and treatment through developing, producing, and broadcasting mass communication messages. In 2012, UNICEF started investing in the prevention of transmission of the virus from HIV-positive pregnant mothers to their infants. Moreover, UNICEF is working with the government to strengthen national policies and services to prevent drug and substance abuse

among young people. These priority focus areas all serve to improve HIV/AIDS awareness and to ensure the most vulnerable know how to protect themselves and their children.

Impact: Funds for this project will allow young people to be reached with information, skills, and services that will help prevent the spread of HIV. It will also continue the critical work of preventing mothers from passing HIV to their newborn children.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$1,655,000
Total unfunded: \$1,103,000





Enhanced Quality Education

Children have the right to quality education in a safe, fun, and stimulating environment. Over the years Iran has made great strides in ensuring access to education for all children. The government built schools in remote rural areas, promoted girls' education, and established alternative educational systems, such as mobile schools for nomadic tribes. It has also helped improve the academic quality of teaching and learning. Quality education is about helping all children achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

To help all children access a minimum quality education, the government adopted the Fundamental Education Reform Policy in February 2012, aimed at transforming education in every aspect. UNICEF is supporting these efforts within the broad framework of the highly successful child-friendly schools (CFS) model – an integrated approach to promoting physical and emotional security, social and cognitive development, as well as health and nutritional improvement within the school

environment. UNICEF is supporting the efforts of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to adapt the CFC model to the Iranian context.

Impact: With full implementation of this programme and its subsequent expansion by the government, children throughout Iran will enjoy a more child-friendly school environment that will enhance learning experiences and contribute to reducing the school dropout rate.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$695,000
Total unfunded: \$462,000



Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management in the Education Sector



Iran ranks among the top 10 disaster-prone countries in the world, with an average of 4.3 natural disasters per year. These disasters are sometimes so severe that they reverse much of the progress that has been made for improving the lives of children. The government is well prepared for initial relief and response, but there is a need to be better prepared for long-term recovery. The education sector is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters; children's access to schools might be interrupted for long periods in the case of high impact disasters; and infrastructure may be severely damaged, compromising hard-fought gains in educational attainment.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education to better prepare for and respond to emergencies and to ensure quality education is resumed as rapidly as possible after natural disasters. Through the

organization's Disaster Management and Disaster Risk Reduction programme, UNICEF is supporting the training of Ministry staff and teachers on ways of reducing the risks of disasters and ensuring effective response to them if and when they happen. UNICEF is also collaborating closely with the Ministry of Education to develop ways to help children themselves understand how to reduce the risks they may face during a disaster.

Impact: The full funding and implementation of this programme will result in saving more lives in future emergencies and ensuring that children are not pushed out of schools because of inadequate emergency programmes.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$352,000
Total unfunded: \$327,000



Prevention of Violence Against Children

According to the UN Secretary-General's *Study on Violence against Children* (published in November 2006), “the most violent acts against children are carried out by people they know and should be able to trust, including parents, schoolmates, teachers, and employers.” The report also found that much of the violence that affects children is socially approved or condoned, sometimes permitted by national laws or rooted in cultural, economic, or social practices. Violence against children is usually linked to poverty, addiction, and psychological disorders. It can also stem from a lack of awareness about positive parenting methods or as a result of neglect.

UNICEF is working with the Government of Iran to ensure that every child, especially the most vulnerable, feels protected within her or his family, school, and community. Together with relevant national authorities, UNICEF is working to strengthen systems and services for children at risk of abuse, exploitation, and violence; collecting evidence on the extent of the problem through improved research and knowledge building; raising awareness on violence; and developing legislation and policies to prevent and address this issue.

The key focus of this work includes improving institutional capacities for prevention, early detection, and management of violence against children (emphasising health and social work systems), creating a communication strategy for prevention of child abuse, and developing codes of conduct for professionals working directly with children. UNICEF is also supporting Iran's National Body on the Convention on the Rights of the Child to develop national-level policies and to coordinate national efforts to prevent violence against children; working with religious leaders to advocate against it; and strengthening systems for the protection of children in emergencies.

Impact: Enhanced national policies will benefit all children in Iran. Specifically, vulnerable children and families will benefit from a variety of services – social, health, psychosocial, helpline, and counselling – provided by the State Welfare Organization and Ministry of Health.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$824,000

Total unfunded: \$507,000

Justice for Children



UNICEF is working with the Government of Iran to ensure that children are better served and protected by the justice system at all levels. UNICEF specifically aims to ensure full application of international norms and standards for all children who come into contact with the justice system as victims, witnesses, alleged offenders, or for any other reason where judicial intervention is needed. One of the key challenges has been the lack of a separate juvenile justice system wherein children in contact with the law are appropriately handled by trained professionals – judges, police, and social workers – and where they receive proper services. In addition, in the existing Penal Code girls and boys aged 9 and 15, respectively, are subject to the same punishments as adults.

UNICEF works with the Judiciary, Police, Prison's Organization, and the Ministry of Justice to promote justice for children in Iran, strengthening cooperation with all stakeholders. In addition, UNICEF is supporting the government to build national and subnational capacities for implementing standards of justice for children by

relevant professionals. To date, more than 1,700 police officers, judges, and social workers have been trained on juvenile justice standards throughout the country.

UNICEF also advocates for the ratification and effective application of the provisions of the bill on the Protection of Children and Adolescents, and the bill on Addressing Children and Adolescents' Crimes, the provisions of which have been incorporated into the country's revised Islamic Penal Code bill and the Penal Procedural Code bill.

Impact: Currently in Iran, some children may have their cases heard by a Juvenile Court and, if imprisoned, children are kept separate from adults. Going forward, children in contact with the law will be kept out of the formal criminal justice system to the extent possible and will enjoy opportunities for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$559,000
Total unfunded: \$354,000

Supporting Afghan Children



Iran hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Approximately 833,000 registered Afghan refugees and about 1,400,000 unregistered Afghans are residing in towns and villages. Many Afghan children are deprived of education and have only limited access to social services. Many of these Afghan children are working under harsh conditions, earn very low wages, and are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

UNICEF works to increase the access of Afghan children to education and child protection services in Iran by advocating for their rights and collaborating with the Iranian Government to make the public service system more inclusive. UNICEF also supports civil society and non-governmental organizations to provide alternative basic services that can help protect Afghan children and adolescents from violence, abuse, and exploitation, and can offer them a sense of direction and a future to look forward to.

Impact: The successful implementation of the programme directly provides education to more than 3,500 Afghan children and women annually. However, the long-term policy advocacy aspect of the programme will facilitate access to education for approximately 800,000 refugee/migrant children.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$2,700,000
Total unfunded: \$1,725,000



Promoting Healthy Lifestyles for Young People



Substance abuse; injury, disability, and death due to road accidents; poor eating choices; lack of exercise; use of tobacco; and risky sexual behaviours are all increasing among young people in Iran. As a consequence, adolescents increasingly risk developing chronic diseases in adulthood.

UNICEF and the Government of Iran have identified 'improving lifestyles among adolescents and youth' as a top priority for their cooperation. UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Health in developing a national comprehensive plan for information dissemination as well as a variety of education and communication materials that promote healthy lifestyles. UNICEF is also working with other organizations to design and implement initiatives and policies that promote healthy lifestyles among adolescents and youth. The aim is to improve knowledge and to change attitudes and behaviours so that young people will make better choices now, which in turn will provide them with a better future.

Impact: Equipped with relevant knowledge and supported by health and education services as well as their peers, young people in Iran will be empowered to make safer, smarter, and more health-promoting choices for themselves. This will have a multiplier effect not just on their own and their families' future but on the future of their communities and country as well.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$1,459,000
Total unfunded: \$1,214,000





Poverty Reduction for Children

Given that nearly 25 per cent of Iran's population is under 15 years of age, it is especially gratifying to note that Iran has made significant strides in prioritising child survival and primary school enrolment, and that the needs of children are very much at the heart of the government's poverty eradication plans. However, emerging economic, social, cultural, political, and development issues still hinder the full realisation of rights for children, youth, and women in Iran. In some rural areas a combination of malnourishment, insufficient health care, and poor school quality trap children in a cycle of poverty.

Poverty reduction begins with the protection and realisation of the rights of children – the most vulnerable members of society. UNICEF is engaged with the Government of Iran in creating greater knowledge on child poverty and inequities to ensure that current and future policies and social protection initiatives are child focused, equitable, and human rights-based – thus helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Impact: Policy decisions are more equitable and are better informed by a comprehensive understanding of all dimensions of child poverty and deprivation.

Total planned budget for this programme is \$1,220,000
Total unfunded: \$950,000





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