ACHIEVEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES
As a reflection of their commitment to children, all members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference have embraced the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals, and the goals of “A World Fit for Children”, the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session for Children in 2002. All members (except Somalia) have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A Resolution on Child Care and Protection in the Islamic World was issued by the Cultural Affairs Committee of the OIC and adopted at the Islamic Summit Conference in 2003.

The Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict has been ratified by 23 OIC states. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography has been ratified by 29 OIC members.

In 2004, the OIC Meeting of Foreign Ministers adopted the Child Care and Protection in the Islamic World Resolution, building on earlier agreements. The Second High-Level Arab Conference on Children’s Rights, hosted by Egypt in 2001, led to a Second Arab Plan of Action on the Child for 2004-2015, which was approved by the Third Arab Conference in Tunis in 2004.

LEGAL REFORM
Egypt, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and Tunisia have adopted significant reforms to laws related to children. Tunisia’s Personal Status Code, for example, was amended in 1993 to recognize the principle of joint responsibility of spouses in caring for, and exercising guardianship rights over their children.

Turkey’s January 2002 Civil Code contains provisions that promote gender equality and the rights of the child by raising the minimum age for marriage by both sexes to 17. The new Code also grants children born out of wedlock the same rights as all others.

Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo and Tunisia are among countries that have enacted or amended education laws to align them with child rights standards. Many of these laws raise the age covered by compulsory education, or “school-leaving age.” The school-leaving age was raised to 16 in Burkina Faso, to 17 in Jordan, from six years of compulsory schooling to eight in in Sudan, and from six years to nine in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Lebanon has adopted legislation making school attendance obligatory until age 12.

Juvenile justice codes have undergone extensive revisions in Afghanistan, Morocco and Tunisia. In Nigeria and Pakistan, federal reforms have been adopted, although implementation will require additional legislative and other action at the state or provincial levels.
Turkey and the United Kingdom tabled a resolution co-sponsored by Azerbaijan, Nigeria and Uganda titled "Working toward the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour", adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2004; Iraq, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Turkmenistan subsequently joined in sponsoring the resolution. Turkey in particular has marshalled efforts to address the issue at national and international levels. Turkey’s Penal Code, adopted in September 2004, removed mitigating clauses in honour killings and envisages much more severe penalties for such crimes.

NATIONAL POLICIES, BUDGETS
National plans of action for children have been completed in 12 OIC countries, although few of these have budgets attached. Another 21 member states are in the process of developing similar plans.

Many OIC governments have increased budgets for vaccine procurement and delivery, with 31 out of 57 governments now financing 100% of routine vaccinations.

The Nigerian Government’s development plan outlines a major increase in health and education spending, with 10 per cent of expenditures slated for water and sanitation.

The budget for Senegal’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper includes funding for eliminating child labour, the care and supervision of children at risk, setting up child feeding centres and rehabilitating juvenile offenders.

Kyrgyzstan has agreed on a concrete plan of action to reduce child poverty as the centerpiece of the next phase of its National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

ADVANCING CHILDREN
HEALTH AND EDUCATION
The Mozambican Government’s campaign to distribute 250,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets to pregnant women and children has reached 36 of the country’s 146 districts, attaining as much as 60% coverage in some districts.

In Malaysia, a well-developed primary health care system, equitable access to vaccines and to oral rehydration therapy for diarrhea, good childhood nutrition, and a broad reach of clean water and improved sanitation services have placed child mortality rates in that country on a par with rates in industrialized countries.

Oman has made outstanding advances in its social and human development indicators over the past three decades, including a reduction in its child death rate to 12 per 1,000 from 280 per 1,000.

Turkey’s success in reducing under-five mortality rates is largely attributable to lowered fertility rates and increased levels of girls’ education, as well as improved neonatal care and expanded breastfeeding.

A broad partnership in Senegal is ensuring birth registration of newborns at the community level with training of birth registration officials and village chiefs; efforts to increase birth registration in Cameroon also involve community leaders.
Programmes to encourage the consumption, and in many cases, the domestic production, of iodized salt, critical for preventing mental retardation in millions of children, are underway in a number of OIC countries. After a decade-long campaign, Turkmenistan in 2004 became the fourth country in the world to be certified as achieving 100 per cent salt iodization. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Tunisia and Uganda have also made strides towards 100 per cent iodization, and Kazakhstan has committed major resources to combating iodine deficiency in its National Health programme for 2005-2010. Gabon has banned the import and sale of non-iodized salt and Guinea-Bissau has launched a public health campaign.

Gabon has adopted a national plan for measles control, Tajikistan and Turkey have conducted national measles immunization campaigns, and Kazakhstan has started a national campaign against both measles and rubella. In Afghanistan, where routine coverage is low, immunization campaigns avert an estimated 35,000 child deaths each year.

After a series of aggressive eradication initiatives, polio remained endemic in only six countries and five were OIC members: Afghanistan, Egypt, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan. The sixth was India.

A number of Arab OIC countries have succeeded in narrowing the gender gap in schooling. In Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, girls outnumber boys in primary school; Bangladesh and Turkey are set to achieve gender parity by 2005.

A birth registration campaign in Afghanistan in 2003 has reached 1.8 million children and has the potential to develop into a community-based registration system by 2005.

**PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ARMED CONFLICT**

In Afghanistan, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Sudan, the return to school (or in some cases the first school experience of a child’s life) has increasingly been seen as a priority even while violent conflict is ongoing. Schools not only provide physical protection for children, they can also inject a sense of normalcy and stability into their lives.

Several OIC countries have made significant efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers into a safe and productive civilian life. In Somalia, former combatants have benefited from a six-month period of vocational training, along with counseling and training in conflict resolution. In Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began public hearings on children’s wartime experiences in June 2003. More than 100 children from three national children’s networks took part in drafting the Commission’s 2004 final report. A child-friendly version was published – the first of its kind in the world.

**PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

In March 2004, Indonesia hosted the first Regional Conference on Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, while bilateral agreements to fight child trafficking were concluded between a number of OIC members and neighbors. Trilateral meetings between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines sought to develop a joint regional plan to combat cross-border trafficking.

National level assessments on sexual exploitation, violence and abuse against children have been made in Cameroon, Gambia, Guinea, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Yemen. Gambia has developed a rapid response programme to fight sexual tourism. Several OIC countries, including Albania, Azerbaijan.
and Bangladesh, have developed national plans to fight human trafficking, with Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria adopting anti-trafficking legislation in 2003.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM HAZARDOUS LABOUR
Over the past decade, several Arab countries have enacted legal reforms in line with ILO Convention 138, which urges states to progressively raise the minimum age for employment “to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons.” Lebanon has raised the minimum age for employment from 8 to 13; Egypt to 14; Morocco to 15, and Tunisia to 16, corresponding to the end of compulsory schooling in those countries.

PROTECTING GIRLS FROM FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION / CUTTING
Efforts to end FGM are underway. Burkina Faso incorporated a ban of FGM into its draft Constitution and the practice is punishable with up to 10 years imprisonment. In Egypt, the National Council on Childhood and Motherhood has taken the lead in a national campaign with the participation of religious authorities to raise awareness at the community level, with two-thirds of religious leaders and physicians opposing the practice. In Sudan, 90 imams have actively campaigned against the FGM/C.

The Cairo Declaration on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation (June 2003) and the Maputo Protocol (July 2003), adopted by 53 Heads of State of the African Union and now ratified by 10 African governments, prohibits the practice.

THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS
Many OIC governments have demonstrated a high degree of political commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS, most notably Uganda. National AIDS plans have been set up in Albania, Gambia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Turkey. Mozambique has begun its second five-year plan, with expanded voluntary testing and counseling.

Lebanon’s five-year AIDS plan addresses distinctive aspects of the spread of the epidemic: high numbers of migrants in high-risk areas; the early onset of sexual activity and infrequent condom use among young people; the increase in tourism and transient business; the young ages of sex workers; and a sharp increase in drug use.

Mali established the National High Council to Fight Against AIDS under presidential authority with funding from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Global Fund. Sudan has initiated a national Youth Plan of Action designed to meet the World Fit for Children goals, while the Syrian Arab Republic has developed a National Communication Strategy on AIDS.

In Jordan, where the national strategy relies heavily on peer education, there is a greater willingness to discuss the threat posed by HIV/AIDS, its link to sexual behaviour among young people and the dangers of under-reporting the extent of the disease. The Islamic Republic of Iran has developed a prevention and communication strategy for children ages 10-18, and has incorporated information about HIV/AIDS into the curriculum. Yemen has focused efforts to spread awareness among educators, scouts and sports club leaders, and women’s NGOs.
At sub-regional workshops in Bahrain and Qatar, the Gulf States resolved to make the fight against HIV/AIDS a regional development priority and to address the need for human rights education in their school systems.