

Inputs to the new Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC) - PAKISTAN

I. Trends

Despite several constraints, Pakistan has made a modest, but significant, progress towards achieving the MDGs and WFFC goals. The pro-poor spending has considerably increased during the period 2000-05. According to Labor Force Survey 2005, the Government has spent a hefty amount of Rs.1332 million on poverty related and social sector programmes over the last 5 years. Education and health sectors absorbed around half of the pro-poor budgetary expenditures.¹

With only 2.1% of GDP allocated to education, the published National Education Census revealed that there are about 13,000 non-functional schools in the country while independent analysts maintain that the actual number is more than 30,000. The gender parity persists while enrolments rates for males and females are still very low; 57% and 43% respectively. Yet, 31.3% enrolled children drop out before they complete their 5th grade of primary school. The highest drop out rate occurs between grade I and II.

Provincial governments, especially Punjab Government, are introducing several initiatives to improve the education system including providing free education up to matriculation and provision of free textbooks, missing facilities in schools and stipend to girls. Uniform academic session has been introduced through out the country.

HIV epidemic was considered to be at “low level” till the year 2004, indicating that the infection among identified high-risk groups was less than 1%. However alarming revelations have been made through two studies commissioned by the National AIDS control program. One is the National Study of Reproductive Tract and Sexually Transmitted infections conducted by the family health International in 2004-05 and a pilot study conducted by the HIV/AIDS Surveillance Project. The two studies reported current prevalence of HIV infection among the intravenous drug users (IDUs) in Karachi as 23% and 27% respectively. This level of infection among one high-risk group shifts entire epidemic scenario of the country to a higher stage i.e., “concentrated epidemic” level.

An estimated 200,000 people have been displaced by the conflict in Balochistan. A UN nutritional assessment led by UNICEF revealed the prevalence of high levels of malnutrition among the children of internally displaced families to the extent of 28% acute malnutrition (W/H) in under-five year old children. A UN multi-agency intervention under the overall coordination of the UNRC and spearheaded by UNICEF has been prepared, but is halted by government.

The 8 October 2005 earthquake, also termed as ‘children’s tragedy’ was the worst natural calamity to hit Pakistan in recorded history. The earthquake had a particularly disparaging effect on the life and well-being of children and women, as many women were caught unaware in houses when the earthquake struck and the collapse of school buildings resulted in the deaths of a large number of children. Some 80% of health facilities were damaged, about 8,000 schools collapsed, 17,000 students and 900 teachers were killed. An estimated 1.7 million people lacked access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation as water supply systems and sanitation facilities in both rural and urban areas were seriously damaged. Majority of the victims were mainly from already vulnerable groups, living in comparatively inaccessible mountain areas with lower levels of income and service provision as compared to the national average.

Children were exposed to the risk of trafficking as many of them lost or got separated from one or both the parents.

¹ 2007 WFFC+5 report

Pakistan ratified the CRC in 1990. In 2000, again 190 member states of the United Nations committed to achieve Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and Pakistan was signatory to it. Pakistan is also committed to pursue goals and targets in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).²

II. Recent developments in relation with children rights³

1. National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children: Pakistan has a comprehensive National Plan of Action for Children, suggesting concrete measures for the survival, development and protection of children from all forms of neglect, abuse, and exploitation. The Federal Cabinet officially adopted the document on 24th May 2006. The main strategic thrust of the NPA is on the political commitment, raising awareness, capacity building, advocacy, networking, social mobilization, enhanced allocation of resources, and setting up and strengthening functional structures and systems. The NPA also intends to address the situation of exploited children, including physical and psychological recovery and social integration. Apart from NPA for Children, the National Policy on Empowerment and development of Women 2002, also has a chapter on the “girl child”, addressing the issues around gender discrimination. The National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) is taking all possible steps to mobilize the concerned Government departments and agencies, civil society institutions, academia, media and other stakeholders to operationalize the NPA.

2. Launching of Child Rights Movement in Pakistan: On the eve of Universal Children’s Day 2003, the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan pledged his commitment by signing, “**Say Yes to Child Rights Movement in Pakistan**”. In order to maintain this spirit, the Prime Minister of Pakistan also showed his commitment by signing similar pledge on the eve of National Children’s Day 2005. An encouraging and welcoming response was received.

3. Declaration of the Year 2004 as the “Year of Child Welfare and Rights”: The Federal Cabinet declared the year 2004 as the “**Year of Child Welfare and Rights**” to carry forward the pledge signed by President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf “Say Yes to Child Rights Movement in Pakistan”. The Federal Cabinet constituted a ministerial level committee comprising relevant Ministries to prepare a co-ordinated Plan of Action for Children and for observance of the year 2004. The main purpose of the celebration of the year was to promote the CRC agenda for survival, protection, participation and development of children in Pakistan

4. Regional Consultation on Violence against Children: In support of the UN Secretary General’s study on Violence against Children, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education in collaboration with UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) Kathmandu, Nepal hosted a Regional Consultation on Violence against Children on **19-21, May 2005** at Islamabad. Prior to this Regional Consultation a children’s consultation was also held from 17th to 18th May 2005. The objective was to provide an in-depth global picture of violence against children and propose recommendations for the improvement of legislation, policy and programmes to address the issue. As an outcome of this consultation, a secretariat of South Asia Regional Forum for Ending Violence against Children is also working in the NCCWD to monitor the violence at regional level. First meeting of the Forum at ministerial level has been held on the issue of corporal punishment and child marriages in July 2006. The recommendations are being followed up for implementation at the SAARC level. On 4-5th Sept 2007, the Forum held a National Media Workshop in Islamabad on Violence Against Children, focusing on corporal punishment and child marriages, to sensitize journalists on these issues.

5. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP): The Government of Pakistan, on 31st.December 2003, released its PRSP, titled “**Accelerating economic growth and reducing poverty: The road ahead**”. The PRSP is a comprehensive document that translates the Government vision and strategy with a well-defined road map by linking macro-economic framework and sectoral development policies. PRSP is a result oriented plan, with monitorable outcome; builds upon public-private partnership and is also aligned with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The PRSP document has given full importance to human capital through improvement in education and health delivery; drinking water and sanitation, youth development, strengthening the National Commission for Human Development and new initiatives in the private sector. Another related initiative taken

² 2006 Annual report

³ 2007 WFFC+5 report

is the devolution of social services, so that these responsibilities are shifted to district governments. Both provincial and district governments have launched extensive programmes to improve services delivery in education, health and other social services. Besides on going programmes, some new initiatives have also been introduced. The PRSP also outlines its commitment to child labor issues and states “Although the Government is committed to eliminate child labor as reflected in the National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child labor, it is pursuing a policy of gradual elimination of all forms of child labor and immediate elimination of hazardous and exploitative forms of child labor under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC)”. To achieve this objective, certain specified time bound programmes have been initiated in all parts of the country.

6. National Plan of Action for Education For All (EFA): This is an international commitment made by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) for education for all at Dakar. An EFA Plan of Action has been developed through broad-based consultations with the principal actors of EFA and other stakeholders. The Ten Year Perspective Development Plan 2001-2011 links education with other social sectors and views EFA as the centerpiece of human capital formation. The basis for planning the goals of the National Plan of Action for EFA (2001-2015) is the six Dakar Goals. Emphasis is placed, however, on three main priority areas, namely:

- Universal primary education and quality EFA.
- Adult literacy rate.
- Raising the net participation rate of early childhood education.

7. National Health Policy -2001 – Health Sector Reform (HSR): Pakistan is committed to meet the Millennium Development Goals and Targets of the health sector. The National Health Policy 2001 is a step forward and the Government has already started working on Health Reforms agenda towards reaching the targets. The Provincial Governments have established Health Sector Reform Units, since the main responsibility lies with them. The major problems of the health sector are low expenditure, inequity in services, and inadequate Primary Health Care Services. The present government is fully committed to improve the situation through Health Sector Reforms Agenda and substantial progress has been made since 2002. In the health sector PRSP recognizes the need to substantially increase financing and to enhance efficiency of spending through organizational and managerial reforms.

8. National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor: Pakistan has ratified the ILO Convention 182 and has taken measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Country has a National Policy and Plan of Action (NPPA) on Child Labor. The NPPA calls for progressive elimination of child labor; immediate eradication of the worst forms of child labor; a monitoring system to implement the National Plan of Action, prevention of child labor by offering alternative education, and ensuring primary education and skills training to the target children. A National Steering Committee, under the Ministry of Labor, is overseeing the implementation of this Plan in collaboration with ILO, trade unions, employers and Non-governmental organizations.

9. Legal Protection: In Pakistan’s legal system, protection of the child is anchored on the Constitution and family codes, pertaining to the social welfare of children and women inside the family. Several articles of the Constitution provides for the legal protection of the child against abuse and discrimination. Pakistan has a comprehensive set of federal and provincial laws pertaining to children, all relating to different policy areas; employment, education, sexual abuse, trafficking and juvenile justice. There is no single law dealing specifically with violence against children. In practice, violation of children’s rights, child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking are covered by the (outdated) penal code. In recent years the legal framework has been strengthened, particularly in relation to the juvenile justice and the trafficking of persons, there is still a need for legal reform, leading to the establishment of a child friendly “child protection system”. The NCCWD has prepared a draft bill “The Protection of Children Bill-2006”. The bill raises minimum age for criminal liability from 7 years to 12 years, prohibits corporal punishment and harmful traditional practices e.g. early marriages, corporal punishment etc. The draft “**child protection bill**” is a step in the right direction, and could be the foundation stone of the future child protection system. Given the experience of the recently passed ‘women protection bill’, the NCCWD along with the child rights organizations, is lobbying with the parliamentarians for its smooth passage and adoption.

10. National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS): The Ministry of Social Welfare developed the National Social Protection Strategy for the poorest and the most vulnerable, which is being implemented through the Pakistan Baitul Maal (PBM). The World Bank provided \$50 million for the implementation of the NSPS. The goals of the NSPS are to support chronically poor households and protect them against destitution, food insecurity, exploitation, and social exclusion, protecting them from being pushed into deeper poverty; and to promote investment in human and physical assets, including health, nutrition, and education, by poor households capable of ensuring their resilience in the medium run and of interrupting the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The priority areas of intervention are: (i) reaching the poorest; (ii) addressing the needs of vulnerable children; (iii) addressing the needs of vulnerable and poor women; (iv) providing employment and income earning opportunities; (v) protection against environmental and natural disaster; (vi) improving access to social care services and shelter; (vii) protection against health shocks; (viii) protection for workers in the formal and informal labour markets. The implementing modalities were planned as follows: (i) Expanding the coverage of cash transfers using conditional cash transfers (CCTs) supplemented with unconditional transfers (through the Food Support Programme (FSP) and Zakat); (ii) a new public works programme based on low-wage employment; (iii) child labour programs, and various new pilots such as (a) combination of cash transfers and basic skills development aimed at 'graduating' the poor into micro finance clients and (b) programs for bonded labour; (iv) scaling up school feeding and social care services, and (v) scaling down or eliminating the wheat subsidy. The Strategy envisioned to be implemented by the Ministry of SW to be renamed as Ministry of Social Protection, however this has not taken place. Access to social care services can be facilitated further by strengthened linkages and close coordination of the PBM with the sectoral Ministries.

III. Summary of UNICEF capacity-building and cooperation⁴

Immunization Plus:

The Immunization Plus Project Supported the development of guidelines for improving district routine immunization coverage. UNICEF support remained instrumental to convene regular EPI quarterly review and planning meetings and various capacity building activities at all levels to enhance partners' capacity and coordination. A maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination campaign was held in 11 districts of NWFP. A cold chain assessment has been completed and standard operating procedures for cold chain maintenance/vaccine management have been developed together with training materials. Training sessions for cold chain maintenance and vaccine management have been conducted country-wide.

UNICEF provided technical guidance to the Government of Pakistan for the implementation of an independent coverage evaluation survey to assess routine immunization coverage. Vitamin A supplementation of children aged 6-59 months continued during April and September NIDs. A total of 27 million children **received vitamin A during each round.**

The Maternal and Child Health program (MCHC) being implemented in all 134 districts for Immunization plus (EPI+), 19 districts for Child Survival and Development (CSD), 15 districts for Maternal Health Care (MHC) remained largely focused on the same areas as in previous years. The program is also implemented in the five earth quake districts. The consensus is to assist provincial governments to scale-up successful district level interventions and strengthen weaker areas. Newborn care needs more programmatic focus. Nutrition interventions as part of CSD need special attention and so are cross-cutting themes of community development, health systems strengthening, sustainability and evidence based management.

Child Survival and development:

About 3,725 Lady Health Workers (LHWs) were trained as part of community based CSD, as planned. A total of 1,199,498 families were reached with key child health messages. Printed materials in Sindhi were provided to the National Program to scale up CSD training throughout Sindh province. The materials have integrated messages on maternal-child health including, nutrition, safe drinking water and hygiene. A total of 248 community groups

⁴ 2006 Annual Report

and three community centers were formed under the community action process in Balochistan to enhance community participation with an integrated approach in maternal and child health including birth registration and immunization. In Sindh, a total of 32 nutrition corners are functioning as CSD corners. In Sindh, a total of 200 more hand pumps were installed in the periphery of the EmONC facilities in 2006.

Support to nutrition and micro-nutrient supplementation activities: Efforts related to Universal Salt Iodization were revitalized in 2006. These efforts include: the formation of a National IDD technical Coordination Committee; the development of a comprehensive communication and social mobilization strategy; the development of a joint work matrix for coordinated tripartite effort of UNICEF, Micronutrient Initiative and WFP; the formalization of an MoU with the Micronutrient Initiative; the provision of technical assistance for the formulation of USI legislation at the Federal level; the implementation of social mobilization/communication activities in partnership with the Salt Processor Association in NWFP, as well as iodine rapid test kits planned for field monitoring and advocacy through the lady health workers. Activities toward the implementation of the global strategy on infant and young child feeding were initiated.

Response to 2005 Earthquake: UNICEF responded to the emergency within days with its propositioned supplies. UNICEF has been providing safe water to the millions affected by the earthquake as a top priority. In a matter of days after the disaster struck, UNICEF provisionally repaired water supply systems in Muzaffarabad and other shattered cities, providing safe water to more than 400,000 people. UNICEF also helped repair nearly 200 rural water systems and built 35,000 latrines, benefiting some 700,000 people. But continued difficult access to safe water, exacerbated by recent monsoons, has increased cases of waterborne illness, including diarrhoea and cholera.

Responding to the 2005 earthquake, UNICEF financed the rebuilding of over 150 health centres and facilities. It also supported vaccination campaigns and helping to train thousands of community health workers. Responding to the damage incurred on the education sector, UNICEF Pakistan aimed to get not only earthquake-affected children back into school but also get other children to school for the first time, especially girls. To restore the education facilities in the NWFP affected districts and PAK, 125 permanent schools, all earthquake-resistant and child friendly, will be constructed by the end of 2007. To help children left vulnerable by the tragedy, UNICEF and its partners created more than 100 'child-friendly spaces', which provided about 11,000 children with recreation, psychological support, counseling and care. Furthermore, UNICEF is assisting the Government of Pakistan developed a policy of orphans and other vulnerable children in emergencies as well as model social protection models for children and other families at the district level.

Child & Adolescent Protection: Since 2005, UNICEF is supporting the Government to address the gaps in the protective environment which causes children and adolescents to be vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation through improving legislation policies and standards; strengthening institutions, mechanisms and services; and fostering families' and communities' awareness for protecting children and where children have the opportunity to participate fully in their own development. In order to create a favourable legal and policy environment for the protection of children, UNICEF supported the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) to draft the National Child Protection Policy, which is being reviewed by the provinces.

The NCCWD at the federal level, and all the four Provincial Commissions for Child Welfare and Development (PCCWDs) are being supported to establish a Child Protection Monitoring and Data-Collection System for monitoring the violations of protection rights of children. In 2007, the NCCWD submitted the combined Third and Fourth Periodic CRC Report to the CRC Committee.

Support was provided to the FIA for institutionalizing a course on Child Protection in the FIA Academy, and creating a pool of trainers on Child Protection from all the police training colleges. The Central Jail Staff Training Institute was supported to train jail staff in Juvenile Justice; review the Juvenile Justice Systems Ordinance and identify gaps in the enforcement of the law for protecting rights of children in conflict with the law. In Balochistan a Child Protection Unit was established in the Police Headquarters.

UNICEF supported the provision of protective services in the country. These include nine (9) Helplines providing referral services; and sixteen (16) Drop-in-Centers/Educational Centers which providing counseling, non-formal education, psycho-social support, legal aid, and personal hygiene support to street/beggar children, working children, run-aways, and other vulnerable children such as children of sex-workers. In 2006 approximately 15,000 were reached through these protection services, and in 2007 the number rose to 26,000 children..

The Child Protection and Welfare Bureau in Punjab is supported since 2005 to provide recovery and integration services to child beggars and street children. Support was also provided for the recovery and reintegration of 724 Children Involved In Camel racing (CICR), who returned from the UAE, of whom 97% were re-united with their families. The rehabilitation process included conditional cash grants and provision of bicycles. 80% of these children were enrolled in schools. Endowment Funds are created in Punjab and Sindh for the CICR which will be used for Conditional Cash Grant (linked with education/ vocational training) and provision of a lump sum amount by reaching 18 years of age.

A KAP study was finalized in 2007 which identified corporal punishment, gender-biaseness and sexual abuse as the core protection issues. Based on the findings a National Communication Plan on Child Protection was prepared to be launched in 2008. In the meantime several activities at the community-level such as workshops, seminar, inter-active theatre shows, docudramas were organized for sharing information on child protection rights. Support mechanisms such as Civil Society Organizations networks are established and supported in all the provinces and at the federal level. UNICEF supported the National AIDS Control Programme to finalize the National Strategy for Prevention of HIV/AIDS among young people.

Since 2005 more than a million adolescents are reached with information, knowledge and skills to protect against HIV and AIDS and drug-use. In 2007, the generic manual on Behaviorally Specific Life Skills for Most at Risk Adolescents (MARAs) and Especially Vulnerable Adolescents (EVAs) was developed and approved by the NACP, through which 44,600 MARAs and EVAs were trained. A radio programme in Karachi is supported and aired with similar information for the protection of adolescents. The Ministry of Education accepted Life-Skills-Based-Education as extra curriculum activity into Government secondary and high school curricula.