

**Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2002-2005**

# **CHILD PROTECTION**

## **Progress Analysis and Achievements in 2003**

**Programme Division**



# CHILD PROTECTION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increased attention was paid to child protection in 2003 at national, regional and international levels. However, there is no evidence that the incidence of violence, exploitation and abuse has been reduced; in fact, recent research shows that previous estimates were often conservative. Efforts to increase ratification of international standards on child protection were buttressed by improved national standards and new regional agreements. Positive developments also came about through the work of the United Nations in areas including children and armed conflict, the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography and violence.

UNICEF is seeking to place protection more firmly on the multilateral agenda through national-level poverty reduction strategies and other development frameworks. But there is mixed success in this regard. One reason may be the lack of a Millennium Development Goal specifically linked to child protection, and the low level of attention paid to provisions on child protection in the Millennium Declaration itself.

The protective environment approach provides a common platform for UNICEF's work on child protection. As a result, there are now fewer small-scale projects with limited impact and a greater emphasis on systemic changes addressing factors such as legislation, attitudes, the capacity of those working to protect children, monitoring and reporting systems and children's own knowledge and skills. New partnerships for child protection are also evolving, in some cases with government entities. In other cases, particularly where government structures are weak, partnerships with religious organizations and NGOs have expanded.

Progress in 2003 in the four target areas was noteworthy:

- **Target 1. Indicators and documentation:** 109 UNICEF offices reported that there was a child protection analysis in place or under development, up from 91 in 2002. In addition, 84 offices reported progress in identifying country-specific indicators, up from 55 in 2002. An international consultation identified indicators for child protection related to the following areas: formal care, juvenile justice, female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.
- **Target 2. Applying international standards:** 23 UNICEF offices reported that national standards adequately protect children deprived of their liberty or in formal care.
- **Target 3. The worst forms of child labour:** 80 offices reported that the government had made a public statement on trafficking, up from 64 in 2002; 84 offices reported that a public statement had been made on sexual exploitation, up from 80 the previous year.
- **Target 4. Violence:** 78 country offices reported that a review of legal standards had been undertaken either by government or others within the last three years, an increase of 28 per cent from the previous year. Three quarters of all UNICEF offices reported activities to combat violence through awareness-raising and behaviour change activities.

A meeting in November of UNICEF child protection staff from all regions identified a number of challenges and lessons learned, which are detailed in this report. Key among them was the need to clarify where the issue of discrimination best fits within the MTSP and the need to refocus UNICEF's work on violence. More generally, there was a recognized need to refine and refocus the targets for child protection in the next organizational plan, so that a stronger results-based approach could be instituted.



## ISSUE

Child protection has become a prominent area of UNICEF's work and receives growing attention worldwide, including at the highest levels of government. The practices of child labour, commercial sex, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and violence are as much in evidence today as they were in 2002, when UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan began – if not more. In the majority of cases where new data have been gathered, they show that previous estimates of the scale of abuse were conservative. A study in Bangladesh, for example, revealed that 1.3 million children in that country are working in hazardous forms of labour. Another study in Croatia reported that one in five children said that they are regularly bullied in schools. A national survey of children and adolescents in Mexico suggested that physical violence is occurring in a third of all families. A rapid assessment in Afghanistan estimated that 8,000 under age soldiers are either part of fighting forces or within the military command structure.

## ACTION

At the global level, States continue to commit themselves to international standards on child protection. During 2003, 17 States ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, making a total of 63 States Parties, compared to 16 at the end of 2001. Nineteen States ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, totalling 57 States Parties, up from 16 at the end of 2001.

At the United Nations, the Secretary-General issued his annual report on children in armed conflict, which included for the first time on the Security Council agenda a list of parties to armed conflicts that are recruiting or using children in violation of their international obligations. The Secretary-General also appointed independent expert Paulo Sergio Pinheiro of Brazil to produce his report to the General Assembly on violence against children and issued a bulletin outlining minimum standards of behaviour for UN personnel regarding sexual abuse and exploitation. Continued interest in child protection was also reflected at UNICEF's Executive Board, which requested presentations on protection of children in armed conflict and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Recognition of UNICEF's role in protecting children's rights was reiterated by children themselves. Consultations with children in a number of countries showed protection to be one of their top concerns. In Nicaragua, for example, nearly three quarters of children surveyed cited violence as their primary concern.

Child protection remains on the agenda of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and its deliberations and recommendations have encouraged attention and action on child protection at the national level, according to reports from UNICEF country offices. In India, for example, a visit by the chairperson of that Committee prompted increased consideration of child protection issues by the judiciary.

There were numerous high-level international meetings and consultations on child protection during 2003, including a meeting in Addis Ababa in February on female genital mutilation/cutting, a Stockholm meeting on residential care, the East Asia and Pacific Regional Review of Juvenile Justice, UNICEF's Consultation on Child Protection Indicators in New York,

and the Global Partners' Forum for Children Orphaned or Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, convened by UNICEF and UNAIDS in Geneva.

Last year this report noted the need to contextualize UNICEF's work on child protection within a human rights framework and the Millennium Development Goals. During 2003, UNICEF encouraged the use of the Millennium Agenda as a basis for protection partnerships, referencing the Millennium Declaration, which, unlike the Goals, makes explicit reference to child protection. There is little evidence of this succeeding: the Millennium Development Goals remain, by and large, the focus of development discourse. Experience so far suggests that while it is possible within the Common Country Assessment to address issues of discrimination in a framework defined by Millennium Development Goals, the core protection issues of the MTSP (violence, abuse and exploitation) are harder to incorporate. However, with the more sectoral approach of the UN Development Assistance Framework, it becomes easier to raise issues such as violence prevention or juvenile justice in the context of issues such as legislative or judicial reform.

## **MTSP GOALS AND TARGETS**

As noted in the 2002 Operational Guidance Note to the MTSP and the Task Manager's Report, UNICEF's approach to child protection is premised on the idea of building protective environments for children, rather than focusing primarily on responding to specific instances of abuse. The objective is to move beyond small-scale projects and a reactive approach to an integrated, systemic and more prevention-focused strategy. The overall objective for child protection in 2002-2005 is to increase the scale and effectiveness of UNICEF's work, and to increase understanding of the issue in country-level situation analyses.

In 2003, UNICEF increased its collaboration on UN reform issues and other processes, such as the development of poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches. More established sectors of UNICEF's work such as health and education are benefiting from this strengthened multilateral cooperation, and the potential to advance progress in child protection through these frameworks has become apparent.

## **IMPACT**

### **THE PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT APPROACH**

The first two years of the MTSP saw an increase in the number of country offices incorporating child protection into their programmes. The protective environment approach was reflected in the 11 new country programme documents developed in 2003 in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in a number of mid-term reviews in East Asia and the Pacific. There are also signs that child protection is receiving greater emphasis in country programme action plans. The Pakistan office, for one, has created a new child protection programme, where previously it had been combined with education.

All regions report fewer small-scale projects and greater emphasis on systemic change. These include interventions to promote legal reform, attitudinal changes, capacity-building among those working to protect children, government commitment to protection, national monitoring, and the ability of children and adolescents to protect themselves and their peers. The Latin America and Caribbean region, for example, provided numerous examples of legislative reform in 2003, such as new child protection codes in Antigua and Barbuda and in Dominica and a Law

for Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents in Guatemala. The region also reported positive results at the institutional level, including the establishment within the Office of the Ombudsman in Haiti a new mechanism for receiving complaints on violations of children's rights and a structure within the police force for child victims of abuse. It includes strengthened systems for the defence of children in Bolivia, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru and Venezuela. Similar results were reported in other regions as well, such as the new Child Protection Act in Thailand and the Indonesian Manpower Act, which prohibits the employment of any person under 18.

## **MAINSTREAMING PROTECTION**

Success in including child protection in multilateral cooperation frameworks, such as the Common Country Assessments, UN Development Assistance Frameworks, poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches, varied from country to country. Extensive and very innovative work in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, for example, and in other countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, paid off. Specific successes include provisions in Sierra Leone's interim poverty reduction strategy to reintegrate child ex-combatants, plans to deinstitutionalize children in Serbia and Montenegro, and the inclusion of child protection in social policy, legal reform and measures to combat social exclusion in the poverty reduction strategies of Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Tajikistan. Nevertheless, poverty reduction strategies still lend themselves to addressing the protection of vulnerable groups and discrimination generally rather than the more specific issues of violence, abuse and exploitation.

Eleven countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS produced Common Country Assessments in 2003. They were, to varying degrees, successful in addressing vulnerable groups. But they were less successful in incorporating an approach that protected children's right to grow up in an environment free from violence, abuse and neglect. Addressing child protection in the exclusive framework of the Millennium Development Goals remains a challenge. Exceptions include Kenya, where inclusion of protection in Millennium Development Goal discussions has been possible. Experience has been somewhat different when working under the UN Development Assistance Framework, where areas of cooperation such as governance or basic services have provided space for the inclusion of child protection. In Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, for example, protection of children in conflict with the law or exposed to violence has been addressed in sections concerning legal and administrative frameworks. More generally, the lack of agreed indicators for child protection makes these issues difficult to integrate into multilateral processes. A major contribution of UNICEF is its lead role in the development of such indicators, which is described in more detail below.

Some joint programming has taken place in the context of UN reform, but this remains an area that requires further development. Examples of collaborative efforts include the UN Interagency Project on Trafficking of Persons in the Mekong Sub-Region, which involves cooperation among six countries (Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) and a multi-agency group formed in South Asia to carry out a mid-term review of the Yokohama process on combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

## **ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships for child protection are critical to increasing the impact of UNICEF's work. Some progress in this area has been made. Partnerships have been forged with faith-based

organizations in two regions of sub-Saharan Africa working to protect orphaned children. Religious leaders have been key allies in discouraging corporal punishment in the Caribbean and on child protection more generally in Afghanistan and the Philippines. In regions including Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia, increased attention to institutional and systemic changes arising from the protective environment approach has led to greater emphasis on partnerships with governmental structures. These span from the ministerial to local levels. UNICEF's traditional partnerships among UN agencies and NGOs continue to evolve. These include partnerships targeting specific issues, such as trafficking and sexual exploitation, and protection issues more generally.

Children and adolescents themselves remain key allies in the advancement of child protection. In some cases, UNICEF has supported specific interventions to help children and adolescents to protect themselves. In other cases, as in Bangladesh and Pakistan, UNICEF and NGO partners have addressed protection within non-formal education and life skills/vocational training that covers issues such as child marriage, sexual abuse and exploitation and HIV/AIDS. In other instances, UNICEF has facilitated children's involvement in public debate and fact-finding. In Sierra Leone, for instance, a 'child-friendly' version of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee was produced. In Mexico, a Children's Consultation gave three million children the opportunity to express their views on violence and discrimination. In Indonesia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, children were partners in research on child protection.

Another key partner is the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In the Middle East and North Africa, collaboration with the five Arab Committee members resulted in the identification of strategies to address sensitive cultural issues relating to child protection and religion, including female genital mutilation/cutting and adoption. In the same region, UNICEF worked with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to host a workshop on the monitoring of Concluding Observations from the Committee, which placed particular emphasis on protection. The region has also benefited from strong partnerships with the World Bank, which resulted in joint child protection assessments in Egypt, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Yemen.

Many governments put a commitment to child protection into action in 2003. This took many forms, including the appointment of ministerial focal points on child protection in Togo, new laws, such as the Child Protection Code in Mali, and a nationwide assessment of child protection issues in Bhutan. The Bali Declaration of the Sixth East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children identified sexual exploitation and trafficking of children as one of four priority areas for cooperation.

Partnerships with the private sector lag behind those established with governments and NGOs. Nevertheless, a number of countries and regions have identified this as an area for future cooperation. In the Dominican Republic and Indonesia, respectively, UNICEF is working with the tourism industry on the issues of sexual and commercial exploitation of children and child labour. In Honduras, UNICEF partnered with the sugar and salt industries to ensure that working children receive an education.



## **TARGET 1: DEVELOPING INDICATORS FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND IMPROVING DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES**

The protective environment framework not only demands indicators relating to the situation of children, such as the number of children in detention or the number of girls subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting. It also highlights the importance of indicators that assess the overall environment in which children live. These could relate to the presence or absence of certain laws, for example, or attitudes that positively or negatively affect children.

The first two years of the MTSP saw significant advances at the international level to improve, and develop tools for, understanding child protection. At the international level, UNICEF convened a major consultation on child protection indicators in New York in November 2003, attended by representatives from 23 NGOs, three governments, four UN partner agencies, the World Bank, the chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and numerous UNICEF regional and country offices. Drawing on preparatory work undertaken in 2002, the consultation proposed indicators in the areas of formal care, juvenile justice, female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. Subsequent consultations will address violence against children and the worst forms of child labour. Indicators from the first phase are being prepared for piloting. One indication of the success of the meeting was a statement of intent by the chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to incorporate the juvenile justice indicators into the Committee's reporting guidelines.

Work on developing indicators has also taken place at the national level, in Angola, for example, and at the regional level, which fed into regional and global processes. In East Asia and the Pacific, the ChildInfo system, which is software developed by UNICEF for mapping indicators on children, was the basis for new software that uses indicators to monitor commitments to combat commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

Publications and studies on child protection produced by UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre in 2003 have also contributed to improved documentation and analysis. These include *A League Table of Child Maltreatment Deaths in Rich Nations*; *Children in Institutions: the Beginning of the End?*; a report on children with disabilities; a draft report on the minimum age of criminal responsibility; and a report on trafficking to the European Union/Africa summit. UNICEF also published *Africa's Orphaned Generations*, which highlights the protection aspects of the orphan crisis. In Zambia, for example, a rapid assessment found that three-quarters of child prostitutes were orphans.

At the country level, 109 UNICEF offices reported that a child protection analysis was either in place or under development, up from 91 in 2002 (an increase of 20 per cent). As one indication of the quality of these analyses, 84 offices reported progress in identifying country-specific indicators, up from 55 in 2002 (an increase of 53 per cent). In the Middle East and North Africa region alone, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia prepared comprehensive child protection situation assessments and analyses in 2003. Twelve countries have completed or are in the process of conducting assessments on orphans and vulnerable children in Western and Central Africa; countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have been equally active in this regard.

On a routine basis, UNICEF carried out or supported additional research into child protection issues. At times, this was part of the broader programming process. Viet Nam, for example, undertook studies on child abuse, juvenile justice, institutional care and children affected by

HIV/AIDS as part of the mid-term review process. In some cases, 'snapshots' of the current situation have taken place, such as the situation analysis carried out in Somalia. Other countries have applied a longer-term perspective, such as the review of data on crimes and sentencing of juveniles over an eight-year period in Uruguay.

There are numerous examples of initiatives to build sustainable systems for the collection and analysis of data on child protection. In Guatemala, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Labour in the establishment of a system for reporting violations of child labour standards. Over 300 complaints have already been logged. In Bangladesh, UNICEF assisted in gathering gender-disaggregated data on orphans, early marriage and adolescent knowledge of the effects of drugs and alcohol in its Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. With UNICEF support, child protection indicators were incorporated into the National Plan of Action for Children in Belize.

There have been a number of constraints in meeting Target 1, which were expected and well known to UNICEF. Many of these constraints stem from the fact that issues related to child protection are, by their very nature, hidden, obscured by stigma or associated with criminality. It is often difficult to gather data of any kind. And government capacity for monitoring violence, abuse and exploitation, especially when they are culturally condoned or their very existence is denied, can be weak at best.

Two additional constraints have also become apparent. First, the identification of indicators is much more demanding than anticipated in terms of time and money. The broadest involvement of partners is essential to both the quality and shared ownership of the indicator process. Moreover, piloting of indicators for the areas covered in the MTSP targets alone will be more expensive than appreciated at the start of the medium-term plan. These are being addressed through plans to enhance UNICEF's financial and human resources in this area. Second, while progress appears good in the area of situation assessment, the quality of resulting analyses is uneven. There is still a lack of capacity in parts of UNICEF and among some partners in applying results-based management and a human rights-based approach to child protection. This also impedes progress in incorporating child protection into processes such as the Common Country Assessment, the UN Development Assistance Framework and the sector-wide approaches. This is being addressed by capacity-building efforts within the organization.

## **TARGET 2: PROMOTING THE APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT CAREGIVERS**

The second target focuses on standards for children without caregivers, including children that are in prison or other custodial care, foster care, or residential and institutional care. The past two years have seen some progress in this regard. Many regions have found that an emphasis on international standards provides a solid basis for their work. For example, in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, a joint UNICEF/World Bank assessment of child-care systems identified governance, financial flows, case management, mandates, decision-making patterns and criteria for child placement as key elements in need of reform. Three tool kits were produced for government officials at national and subnational levels and are being piloted. One early result is that Romania has started to develop standards for its child welfare system.

Other regions have found the emphasis on international standards alone too narrow given the limited capacity of government and administrative structures. In response, and as a result of the protective environment approach, some countries are taking a broader perspective. Standards and legislation are being addressed alongside efforts to build the capacity of social welfare

systems and to strengthen families and communities through work with local authorities and NGOs. In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for example, UNICEF worked to strengthen schools of social work. In Chile, UNICEF supported day nurseries and other systems to prevent institutionalization of children. In Eastern and Southern Africa, assistance to children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS included working through district authorities in Rwanda, supporting NGOs in Zambia, and working through both district and faith-based partners in Uganda to help communities identify and support affected families and children. In conflict-ridden countries, UNICEF worked with an Inter-Agency Working Group on Separated Children that included the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Vision to produce guiding principles on unaccompanied and separated children. At the global level, the development of indicators for family-care practices now includes child protection.

There are still relatively few (23) countries where UNICEF believes that national standards adequately protect children deprived of their liberty or in formal care. While the number of countries has almost doubled since 2002, the still low numbers show that progress is slow and a bolstering of efforts is required. The situation exists despite advocacy efforts on the part of country offices. The lack of progress is even more apparent when looking at regional variations, which show that very few countries have adequate standards in the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia. Governments including those in Jamaica and Viet Nam have stated their intention to replace the institutional care system with alternative, community-based approaches. But most countries have been slower to prioritize family options for children without caregivers.

Examples of efforts to reduce the use of institutional care include Armenia, where UNICEF has worked with the Government to shift funding from institutional care to support for vulnerable families and supported the development of foster care systems. The Government of China has announced a major shift in policy on the care of orphans and abandoned children towards community-based solutions, including foster care. This change followed UNICEF-supported research and study visits. In a different context, the Northern Iraq Office identified children in institutions as part of emergency preparedness activities, and ended up returning some 150 children to the care of their parents or relatives.

Progress is more apparent in the area of legislative reform for juvenile justice, although custodial sentencing continues to be too heavily used as a response to children in conflict with the law. Work on juvenile justice is particularly widespread, with more than 80 country offices reporting activities in this area in 2003. Other countries expressed an intention to address it in 2004. UNICEF is working in the areas of juvenile justice in nearly all (95 per cent) of the least developed countries and Consolidated Appeal countries (96 per cent). In Afghanistan and Viet Nam, for example, policy seminars and workshops resulted in a national action plan for juvenile justice. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, UNICEF supported the Office of the Public Prosecutor in conducting an assessment of children in detention. In Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, a pilot project on non-custodial measures offering community service options for juvenile offenders has been taken to scale. It is now an option available to the judiciary in all five regions. In Bangladesh, following consultations supported by UNICEF, the Prime Minister's Office has stated its intention to increase the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 12 years. In Thailand, the country office reports that the number of children in detention was halved – from 32,000 in 2002 to 16,000 today, in part due to UNICEF's efforts. In Yemen, no child under the age of 15 was sent to prison in 2003. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF and partners worked with the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission to ensure that special measures were put in place to protect children while the Commission's work was under way.

A key constraint to achieving Target 2 is the long-standing practice of favouring institutional care in some regions. This has been exacerbated by the low capacity of social welfare systems. In other regions, the push for a quick and visible response to family breakdown due to poverty and other stresses, as well as massive orphanhood due to HIV/AIDS, have led governments and partners to favour institutional responses over more complex, but also more appropriate, alternatives. While progress is being made to address this through national standards, UNICEF is also starting to develop international standards for children outside of parental care, in collaboration with other partners. Steps to date have included the co-founding of a new Global Network for Better Care and strengthening of partnerships with NGOs working on this issue, including International Social Service and Save the Children.

### **TARGET 3: SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR, INCLUDING TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN, FORCED AND BONDED LABOUR, AND THE USE OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No.182 on the worst forms of child labour provides the framework for Target 3 of the MTSP. The Convention has been ratified by 147 countries, an increase of 34 countries since the start of the MTSP. The Convention is well on its way to achieving universal ratification.

The worst forms of child labour are rarely well monitored, and sometimes not even acknowledged at the national level. UNICEF has continued a strategy of encouraging government recognition of the issue. In Yemen, for example, UNICEF provided support for the first government study on the trafficking of children. Governments are increasingly recognizing the trafficking problem, with 80 country offices reporting that the government had made a public statement on the subject, compared with 64 in 2002 (an increase of 25 per cent). Similarly, in 2003, 84 country offices reported that the government had made a public statement on sexual exploitation, up 14 from the previous year (an increase of 20 per cent). While these are crude indicators of governmental recognition, they do point towards general improvement. There are regional variations, however, with the East Asia and Pacific Region showing the highest level of governmental recognition and the Middle East and North Africa the lowest.

Work in the field on trafficking has covered policy development, advocacy, legislative reform and capacity-building at international, regional, national and community levels. In Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, UNICEF developed *Guidelines for Protection of the Rights of Children Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe*, which was later adopted by the Stability Pact, a security mechanism for South Eastern Europe. In South Asia, UNICEF supported the development of a network of children and young people working to end commercial sexual exploitation. China, Indonesia and Serbia and Montenegro have introduced national plans of action on trafficking. In Angola, UNICEF worked with authorities at high-risk border crossings to establish procedures to identify individuals travelling with non-related children. In the Philippines, UNICEF supported community-based education and other efforts to prevent trafficking, mobilizing 300 parents and community volunteers and 8,000 teachers, NGOs and local officials and supported the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act.

There are numerous examples of UNICEF-supported international initiatives on trafficking. Bilateral cooperation, for example, is taking place between countries including Haiti and the

Dominican Republic and Benin and Togo. UNICEF has also facilitated cooperation at border sites. A Memorandum of Understanding between Cambodia and Thailand and a joint agreement between Viet Nam and China has resulted in the arrest of 33 traffickers in 2002, compared to 7 in 2001.

Work on the worst forms of child labour requires strong partnerships. In West and Central Africa, a number of new partnerships were developed as efforts to stop trafficking were scaled up. In Benin, strengthened cooperation with an NGO helped identify and repatriate 200 trafficked children working in gravel mines.

UNICEF works with the ILO in over 60 countries in combating the worst forms of child labour. Examples of cooperation include: preparation of a consultation on the links between HIV/AIDS and the worst forms of child labour in Ethiopia; the joint publication of national indicators on child labour in Paraguay; a child labour survey in Jamaica; and the joint preparation of a time-bound plan of action in Indonesia. UNICEF believes that its holistic and rights-based approach, strong advocacy and communications capacity, and ability to link work on child labour with education programming constitute the basis of its contribution to partnerships with the ILO and others.

New obstacles in this area have been identified. Child trafficking networks are unexpectedly adaptable and change their mode of operations in response to interventions on the ground. In West Africa, for example, trafficking networks moved into urban areas and other agricultural sectors when monitoring mechanisms were improved in the cocoa sector. Internal trafficking became more prevalent once better controls were implemented at the borders. Though projects have been successfully implemented, it has proved more difficult to address child labour at the policy level, reflecting in part the broader difficulties of getting child protection into national poverty reduction frameworks. Slow progress is reported in getting the worst forms of child labour into government data-gathering and statistical systems: in 2003, only 52 country offices indicated that the government was able to accomplish this, up 5 from the previous year (an increase of 11 per cent). While it takes time to improve central statistical systems, the absence of data undermines an effective response.

#### **TARGET 4: UNDERTAKING WORK TO PREVENT PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN THE HOME, IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS, AND IN THE FORM OF HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**

There has been encouraging progress on legal standards to protect children from violence. In 2003, 78 country offices reported that a review of legal standards had been undertaken either by government or others within the last three years. This was up by 17 from 2002, an increase of 28 per cent. A high proportion of these country offices were in the Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS and in Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, national plans of action against family violence and violence against children are in place in Bolivia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico and Panama. Once again, the Middle East and North Africa region had comparatively low numbers of country offices reporting positively on this question. At the same time, UNICEF continued its awareness-raising and behaviour change activities to counter violence, with three quarters of country offices reporting work in this area in 2003, slightly more than in 2002. This is in line with one of the key messages of the protective environment approach: that attitudes, behaviours, customs and traditions need to contribute to, rather than detract from, the protection of children. In the Caribbean alone, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines all ran campaigns for the prevention of abuse against children. UNICEF in Sri Lanka ran a multimedia campaign against abuse countrywide.

UNICEF is continuing its work to end female genital mutilation/cutting. In Senegal, where UNICEF supported an NGO in community mobilization efforts, 564 villages made public declarations against the practice in 2002 and 2003. Public declarations have also been made in Ethiopia, supported by draft legislation to ban all forms of female genital mutilation/cutting. Examples of strong leadership include Egypt, where the First Lady took a public stance against the practice.

At the global level, UNICEF continues to play a leading role alongside the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Health Organization in the *United Nations Study on Violence against Children*. UNICEF remains ready to continue its support to the Secretary-General's independent expert when funds are received and a secretariat is established, and encourages donors to pledge their support.

One key area of concern and activity has been the protection of women and children from sexual violence in humanitarian crises. Work in this area includes the development of a code of conduct for international and national staff and the establishment of protocols and procedures to encourage and enable staff and victims to report abuse. Training humanitarian workers in the code of conduct has already started, for example, in Malawi and Zimbabwe. The two sub-Saharan African regions have been particularly active in this area, with over 4,000 workers from all aspects of humanitarian relief operations trained. In Western and Central Africa, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal have completed situation assessments on the sexual exploitation of children. Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone have developed comprehensive programmes of response to gender-based violence. UNICEF's Operation Lifeline Sudan Office trained more than 500 UNICEF staff and partners on this issue, working in cooperation with other UN agencies, NGOs, religious organizations, selected southern Sudanese communities and service providers.

Another area of focus has been violence in schools, which links two MTSP priorities – child protection and girls' education. In some countries this has involved gathering information, such as in Nepal, where an assessment on the prevalence of various forms of violence, including sexual abuse in schools, was conducted, along with production of advocacy materials to discourage bullying. Studies on this subject were also undertaken in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Swaziland has scaled up its 'Shoulders to Cry On' initiative, which addresses child abuse in schools and has now enlisted the participation of 436 men, 1,540 women, 244 young boys and 280 young girls. A study by UNICEF and Damascus University in the Syrian Arab Republic showed that 73 per cent of children said they had been beaten at school with a ruler or a stick, while 69 per cent of teachers reported that other teachers used that method of punishment.

In the field, work on violence addresses a range of issues that are all aspects of the protective environment approach. In countries including Chile, Indonesia, the Philippines, Romania, Sierra Leone and Turkey, UNICEF trained professionals including health and social workers, teaching staff, police and soldiers in the prevention and detection of violence. Systems have been improved to empower those working with children to act for their protection. In Malaysia, the recent Child Act mandated teachers and health professionals to report cases of suspected child abuse and established child protection teams coordinated by the Department of Social Welfare at the district level with representation by police, health professionals and selected community members. In countries such as Colombia and Costa Rica, UNICEF has undertaken activities to prevent sexual abuse in schools. Legislation has been a focus in a number of countries, including Honduras, where changes to the penal code were proposed to increase penalties for violence against children. More generally, prevention of violence within the family has been addressed as part of UNICEF's work on early childhood development and family-care practices.

In Argentina, the early childhood development programme helped prevent domestic violence by reinforcing community networks and organizing communication campaigns.

It has become clear that the breadth of the issue of violence is a programmatic challenge. UNICEF's experience is generally stronger in areas relating to violence in schools and within the family than in peer- and gang-related violence. Changing deeply rooted and long-held beliefs about the acceptability of violence against children also presents a daunting task. However, extensive connections between violence and other areas of UNICEF's work are emerging. Target 4 will be a major focus of attention during the mid-term review of the MTSP in recognition of the need to prioritize. Programming on violence will also require more effective identification of good practices and the sharing of lessons learned.

## **CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**

Situations of armed conflict continue to provide some of the most challenging contexts for UNICEF's work in child protection. UNICEF revised the protection component of its Core Commitments for Children for work in emergencies in 2003, committing UNICEF to: monitor and report on severe or systematic abuse, violence and exploitation, including on the use of landmines and other indiscriminate weapons; assist in preventing the separation of children from their families and facilitating the identification and reunification of separated children; strive to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and to seek the release of those recruited and facilitate their reintegration; prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children and women, including by humanitarian workers, and provide post-rape care, including post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV; and support the establishment of safe environments for children, while ensuring psychosocial assistance. UNICEF also commits to assisting in the prevention of HIV and the care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children. The revised corporate commitments are indicative of UNICEF's increased attention to protection in emergencies.

This focus was also evident in activity reports from country offices. Twenty-nine offices undertook advocacy related to children in armed conflict in 2003 (up from 21 in 2002); 18 carried out advocacy related to the demobilization of child soldiers (up from 15 in 2003), and 15 focused on advocacy related to internally displaced children (up from 12 in 2002).

Work on protection in armed conflict remains varied and extensive. For example, in 2003, UNICEF's Liberia office supported the establishment of a National Child Rights Observatory Group and a Child Protection Working Group of more than 40 NGOs. The office also helped establish a Task Force on Family Tracing and Reunification that has already resulted in the return of more than 100 children to their families, trained 185 peacekeepers, military observers and UN civilian police and prepared standards and operational guidelines for the children's Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration project. This is one example of a more general effort to partner with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure consideration of child protection in peacekeeping missions. Work with child soldiers continues, in partnership with the World Bank, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and NGOs. In Côte d'Ivoire, such efforts succeeded in demobilizing 814 children associated with armed groups, and another 846 children were demobilized in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka agreed on an Action Plan for Children Affected by War, which established a formal release and reintegration system for child soldiers. UNICEF helped to facilitate the agreement. UNICEF was also involved in a decision in Sudan to include a clause on the removal of child soldiers in the proposed peace agreement.

The need to monitor child protection in situations of conflict is recognized in the Core Commitments for Children and is already an established part of UNICEF's protection work. Work is under way on a rapid assessment tool. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF documented 1,037 cases of gross child rights violations. A database on abducted children in Uganda was expanded, and work on maintaining a database on child soldiers in Sri Lanka continued. In Iraq, UNICEF's response included a national assessment on child protection, resulting in part in the creation of multidisciplinary teams for psychosocial response.

UNICEF undertakes mine action in response to the indiscriminate effects of landmines and unexploded ordnance on women and children. UNICEF's current responsibilities within the UN system include mine risk education, the rehabilitation of landmine survivors, and advocacy for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. UNICEF expanded its work in mine action to 31 countries in 2003, up from 18 at the start of the MTSP. UNICEF produced its first mine action strategy in response to the MTSP and the revised Core Commitments for Children.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The MTSP is the first UNICEF strategic plan to make child protection an organizational priority. For this reason, a number of fundamental issues are still being addressed and clarified. Though implementation in the area of child protection is still evolving, a number of key lessons have been identified, including: the importance of partnerships; the extent to which child protection can build upon the programme strategies and experiences of more established areas of UNICEF's work; the difficulty of producing rapid results; and the adverse affects of attaching unrealistic time frames to programmes. As described above, UNICEF has begun to address these issues through strengthened partnerships, application of the protective environment approach, and the start of a process to consider improvements in child protection targets for the current MTSP and subsequent organizational plans.

In November 2003 UNICEF held a meeting of child protection staff from all regions along with representatives of other sectors and members of senior management. The meeting noted several observations arising from the experience of the first two years of the MTSP:

- **UNICEF is increasingly recognized as an active and even leading partner on a wide range of child protection issues.** UNICEF needs to advocate against all violations of childrens' rights to protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation. However, the organization also needs to be strategic in determining the issues to which it can commit programming support and resources.
- **Targeting discrimination needs to be mainstreamed through all of UNICEF's work.** Discrimination is an issue that has broader dimensions than just child protection. It can deny children access to education and health care, for example. The same grounds on which children are discriminated against can also increase their vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation. Gender-related violence is one such example.
- **The protective environment framework is drawing increased attention to the need for sustainable systemic change.** It has also enabled UNICEF to communicate more clearly, both internally and with partners, about its work in child protection and to explain best practices in programming.
- **There is a need to clarify the distinction between child protection and child rights.** The distinction between child rights, which govern all the actions of UNICEF, and child protection, which refers to the right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, is not always clear to UNICEF offices.



- **As the Millennium Development Goals become more central to the work of UNICEF and its partners, there is a greater need to communicate the contribution of child protection to their attainment.** No sustainable progress can be achieved while children suffer from violence, abuse and exploitation. The links – between child labour and poverty, for example, or the link between safe schools and increased school enrolment and retention – need to be brought to the fore.
- **Protection issues are becoming central and, in some cases, more urgent in countries in transition.** How child protection can be addressed within the current framework for UNICEF cooperation at the country level requires further review, especially in light of significant reductions in the level of UNICEF resources allocated to these countries.
- **Greater clarity is needed on the division of responsibility between UNICEF emergency staff and child protection staff in situations of armed conflict.**

Another observation concerns the increasing and effective use of community-based protection systems, often referred to in Latin America as *defensorias* or systems to guarantee rights. Similar structures are found in other regions, for example in Benin, Cambodia, Mali, the Philippines, Swaziland and the United Republic of Tanzania. This may be an area for future research.

In 2003, UNICEF evaluated its Education as a Preventive Strategy against Child Labour programme, which is a central element of UNICEF's response to child labour. The evaluation concluded that education is an appropriate tool for responding to child labour, but to be effective, education needs to be accessible, of good quality, relevant, affordable, safe and appropriate to the needs of affected populations. It also stated that UNICEF's comparative advantage in working on child labour is its high degree of decentralization and broad mandate; that data collection, evaluation and lessons learned are essential to effectiveness; that establishment of networks and stronger regional capacity are key to the sustainability of programmes; and that partnerships, in particular those with the World Bank and the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour need to be sustained, enhanced and formalized.

## NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is on track to meet its objective of increasing the scale and effectiveness of its work in child protection by 2005. There are two additional objectives for the remainder of the MTSP period: to maintain the rate of progress of the first two years and to refine understanding of – and the approach to – targets for child protection in preparation for the next MTSP.

The years 2004 and 2005 will see field-testing of indicators now identified and the identification of indicators on violence and the worst forms of child labour. With regard to children without caregivers, work will continue on standards at the country level, while the process of expanding international standards will begin at the global level. UNICEF will continue to combat the worst forms of child labour, targeting, in particular, child trafficking. It will also undertake a review in 2004 of its child labour programming and comparative advantage. To help put an end to violence against children, UNICEF will continue to focus on legislative reform and behaviour change, while increasing its attention to violence in schools and working closely with the Secretary General's independent expert for the *UN Study on Violence against Children*.

UNICEF will convene a panel of experts on juvenile justice to develop tools for work in that area. To advance work on impunity and accountability, and international criminal justice and children,

a workshop at the Innocenti Research Centre will bring together UNICEF staff and partners to clarify issues, UNICEF's role and identify guidance needs for field staff.

The mid-term review and preparations for the next MTSP will reflect an improved understanding of child protection and how UNICEF should approach it. In particular, the intention is to improve targets as part of the mid-term review process by making them more SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound), building on the experience of what can be achieved and the results that can be measured.