

SAY YES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF UNICEF TURKEY AUTUMN 2007

Still on the street



For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 

In this issue

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UNICEF Representative Eddie McLoughney believes that UNICEF has contributed to improvements in children's education and health during his six years in Turkey. Challenges, however, remain in areas like the quality of education, child protection and the reduction of disparities between children from different backgrounds and locations. Against this backdrop, Mr McLoughney argues that UNICEF can still play a significant, if changing, role.

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Still on the streets

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The issue of children living and working on the street has been disturbing Turkish society for over a decade. Various organisations headed by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) have stepped up their activities to prevent it. Even so, social and economic changes continue to put many children at risk, and some of them are slipping the net. What more can we do?

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Does the media report children's views? What language is used to describe them? Are their rights respected, or are they simply exploited for the sake of a sensational story? Journalists participating in UNICEF-backed media training sessions are familiar with these issues. Now, future media professionals are to learn about them as part of their studies in Turkish universities.

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A recent report revives the debate on the level of educational spending in Turkey compared to other countries. Relative to its GDP, Turkey is holding its own in spending per student in secondary education. In primary education, its performance is less impressive. Spending also needs to increase to keep pace with higher schooling ratios.

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A string of religious and public holidays between now and New Year will boost sales of UNICEF cards and gifts. This is only one of the fund-raising activities undertaken by the UNICEF National Committee, which has just signed up TV presenter Tayfun Talipoğlu as a good will ambassador.

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Editorial

This is the last Editorial which I will be writing for 'Say Yes' before leaving Turkey to take up my new post in Romania. In an interview on the following pages, I have tried to make some observations on the situation of women and children and the work of UNICEF in Turkey over the past six years. Here, I can only add that it has been a great pleasure to work in a country with such a great history and culture. I am confident that the country will keep moving forward, and that Turkey will gain its rightful place in the European Union before too long. I am equally convinced that because of its unique history and geographical situation it will continue to serve as a bridge between East and West, the need for which is becoming more and more apparent.

It is always nice to move on to a new challenge but at the same time I am leaving with regrets. It has been great to work with Turkish partners and Turkish people. I have met many interesting people here and made many good friends. I am going to miss Turkey a lot. Fortunately, Bucharest is only a short flight from Istanbul, so I am looking forward to paying many return visits, and to watching what I am sure will be the continued improvement in the situation of children.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all my colleagues in the UNICEF Country Office who have worked so hard and done such a great job and always been so supportive. Whether international or local, I think we have a very hard-working, dedicated, competent staff here, and they have been getting good results.

I would also like to mention the Turkish National Committee under its distinguished founder and patron Professor İhsan Doğramacı, and more recently under its new president Professor Talat Halman. We have worked very productively together. I am certainly going to miss their comradeship and the unfailing support that they have provided in our joint efforts for children.

I would like to thank our donors, and especially the European Union, with which we have forged a close partnership in recent years and which has been very generous in supporting programmes in the area of child protection. Finally, I am grateful for the cooperation and support extended by our close friends in the sister UN agencies and in the NGO community.



Edmond McLoughney
UNICEF Representative, Turkey

Edmond McLoughney looks back – and forward

UNICEF Representative Eddie McLoughney is about to leave Turkey after a six-year tour of duty. In this interview, he reflects on the changes which he has witnessed and points to growing momentum for change in the situation of children.

Q. A lot of things have changed in Turkey since you first arrived...

A. Yes, when I arrived in August 2001, the country was still in the throes of a financial crisis. The late Bülent Ecevit was the prime minister at the time. Kemal Derviş, who is now the head of the UNDP and also the head of the UN Development Group, was the Minister in charge of the Treasury. The current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wasn't even on the national political scene. The AK Party, which won almost 50% of the vote in the recent election, was just being formed. Since then the country has come out of the economic slump with flying colours. Beginning in 2002, spectacular economic growth has been achieved on an annual basis.

Q. Has economic growth also been accompanied by human development?

A. Yes, I believe so. There are still big challenges to be tackled, particularly for children. But all major indicators are moving in the right direction. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, for example, the infant mortality rate has come down from 27.8 per thousand in 2001 to 22.6 per thousand in 2006, which suggests steady progress. The Institute also says that the percentage of children under fifteen living in poverty has come down, although it remains at around 27%, because



photo by Oğuz Sağdıç

children in poverty tend to be concentrated in large families and rural areas. During the time I was here, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of National Education to launch the Girls Education Campaign 'Haydi Kızlar Okula'. The objective of the campaign was to get every girl into primary school. That has not yet been achieved but nearly a quarter of a million girls have started attending school.

Q. Why is the Girls Education campaign so important to you personally?

A. I think, looking back, the Girls Education campaign is probably the initiative I am most happy with. Nothing works like education. It's an absolute prerequisite for human and economic development. According to the 2000 population census, the illiteracy rate among girls and women over the age of six was close to 50% in many



photo by UN

provinces in Southeast Turkey. A woman doesn't stand much of a chance of a life if she is illiterate. She'll end up in an unequal marriage relationship in all probability with a large number of children – because illiteracy goes with high fertility as well – and living a life of poverty and drudgery. So getting girls into school creates this great development dynamic which drives the country forward in the longer term and in its development of human resources. It benefits not just the girl herself but the family, the community and the country as a whole. With the Girls Education campaign, real momentum has been generated, and a very high level of awareness has been created in the country at all levels that Girls Education is a problem. It has also created awareness that gender issues as a whole are something that need to be addressed. In this regard, it is pleasing to see that the number of female deputies returned to Parliament in last month's election was around double the number in the last parliament.

Q. What contribution has UNICEF made in reducing mortality rates?

A. We are proud of the fact that we have been involved, giving advice on strategies and policies and programmes. For example, we have been very active in pushing the Baby Friendly Hospitals strategy which is designed not only to make hospitals friendlier places but also to push for exclusive breastfeeding. There is no doubt in my mind that breastfeeding has played an important role in reducing the infant mortality rate. For one thing, the Baby Friendly Hospitals have tackled the superstition that giving the first breast milk, colostrum, is bad for the baby. In fact, it is essentially the baby's first immunisation. I am sure this has helped small, fragile babies to survive. It is also good to see that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is on the increase because it ensures that babies get the best start in life in terms not just of physical development but also intellectual development and of course bonding with the mother.

Q. How many Baby Friendly Hospitals are there now?

A. In 2001 when I first came there were 116 baby-friendly hospitals in the country. UNICEF has worked closely with the Ministry of Health to increase this number, and now there are more than 520. In 2002, Konya was declared the first province in which all maternity facilities were baby-friendly. As of 2007, 67 of the 81 provinces are Baby-Friendly Provinces. 87% of babies delivered in hospital in Turkey are now delivered in baby-friendly certified hospitals - up from 60% in 2001. I think this provides the conditions for a continued reduction in the mortality rates.



photo by Sedat Suna

Q. What else has UNICEF done for children's health?

A. One area where we have had lots of frustration but at the same time some success is the iodisation of salt for the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, which affect mental development, particularly in very young children. Back in 2002 around 64% of households were using iodised salt but now according to the latest survey this has improved to about 75%. At the same time, the national median urinary iodine level is now 107 microgrammes per litre, which is over the recommended minimum of 100. We have equipped many salt manufacturers with iodisation machines and supported many advocacy meetings and publicity campaigns for iodised salt. There is still work to be done, but I'm very pleased that our efforts have helped to bring about progress.

Q. What are the challenges you mentioned earlier on?

A. Well, there are important disparities in poverty between rural and urban areas and between the East and West of the country. And that is also true for other social indicators which we use to measure the well-being of children, such as under-five mortality rates and education and literacy rates. In education, we are working on quality of education as well as school enrolment. In health and education we see improving figures – reduced mortality, more children at school - but in the area of child protection there are many emerging issues. There are unfortunately more children living and working on the street than there were in 2001. We are hearing more about child abuse – partly, this is a taboo being broken. Meanwhile, the rise in Internet usage has raised the question of Internet safety for children. So child protection is a huge challenge. As Turkey moves forward economically and socially, there is definitely going to be a higher profile for issues like child abuse.

Q. Are there areas in which you feel UNICEF could be doing more?

A. Of course we would like to do more, particularly in the areas of education and child protection. For example, while we take every opportunity to advocate on behalf of children with disabilities, we do not have a substantial programme in this area. But it is also important to focus. Human and financial resources are limited, and if you try to do everything you risk ending up doing nothing.

Q. How has UNICEF's strategy changed?

A. We are becoming less of a programme implementer and more of a programme advisor and programme advocate. To be a good advocate you have to have the right kind of information, data and research findings. So we are putting



photos by Sema Hosta



photo by Sema Hosta

more emphasis on research. It is important to have good information, research and analysis in order to design the right kind of programmes. In this context, I would also like to mention the work we do in promoting the use of quality of life indicators in order to identify gaps in services for children so that more resources and attention can be devoted to these issues. I think that's going to pay real dividends in the longer term. We are now calling this Dev Info (Development Information). It is a sophisticated piece of software which we are working with the government to roll out to the provinces. I think we have been good at building up partnerships as well. We have a particularly good relationship with the government, our most important partner.

Q. What else has UNICEF been doing to draw attention to children's issues?

A. I think we've sharpened up some of the tools we use for advocacy. Our newsletter, 'Say Yes', which I introduced just after coming here, gets pretty wide circulation in government, among NGOs, the diplomatic community and the media. And I am very happy about the way in which the website, which we introduced a few years ago, has

developed. It's actually the most-visited country office website in UNICEF. This shows that people feel we have something to say and testifies to our reputation in the country. It's important that we use this to serve as a voice for children, highlighting children's issues and mobilising support, awareness and action.

Q. Do you think there is now more awareness of children's rights?

A. Yes, I think there is a lot more awareness throughout the country, including among children themselves. You have to allow time for things like this to grow and develop. The human rights ethos in general, and child rights in particular, is much more out there in the public arena now than it was when I first came.

Q. How much longer do you think UNICEF will remain in Turkey?

A. Middle income countries like Turkey have more and more resources of their own which they can make available for the social sector. So that raises the question of whether UNICEF should stay and what role it has to play. The fact remains that 27% of Turkey's 25m children are still living in poverty – and with that comes lack of opportunity, low levels of education, poor health and greater vulnerabilities. So there is still a job to be done there. I also feel that UNICEF can work with the government and civil society to support policy making and strategic planning for children whose rights are still not fulfilled. I would like to add that Turkey is unique in UNICEF in having both a National Committee and a Country Office. This could be a model for other middle-income countries. Personally I find this a very rational approach, with the National Committee mobilising resources and the Office using its expertise to maximise the benefit for children.

Q. What advice would you give to your successor?

A. Don't rush into anything. Get to know all our partners well. Get to know the programme well. Get to know the staff. Do lots of field trips. Get to know the country. I think that's absolutely fundamental. Get around the country, go to the provinces, get to know partners out there, get to know the situation of children, get to know how people feel about working with UNICEF, get a feel for how we can be most effective. I think this is a process that in my experience takes about six months. And only then, and then in a collaborative way, decide what kind of changes should be made. But I would hope that the momentum in our programmes can be maintained - and if there are any programmes that are lagging a bit, that they are given a new impetus.

Children on the streets: a mixed response

Concern about children living and working on the street has spawned a range of new facilities, institutions and services. There have been success stories, and in some places numbers may have started to decline. But there are still children out there.

Fuat (not his real name) is in grade five, but his short-cropped hair and thin brown arms make him look younger. You might spot him around 7 p.m. one evening in his T-shirt, sandals and stained school trousers, trying to slip past the driver onto the number 302 bus home. Like his friends, he spends his mornings in school in an old shanty-town neighbourhood in the shadow of Ankara's citadel, and his afternoons in the city centre working "to support my family". He parries questions about his parents' roots and occupations, how much he earns and where the money goes. "My teacher knows I shine shoes," he says, "She doesn't say anything."

For around ten liras any boy can acquire a rough wooden box with a foot-rest on top, a shoulder-strap and two compartments for sponges, leathers, rags, dubbin and dye. Then begins his daily battle with the *zabita* or municipal police, who move him on and can even confiscate his box. When he is young he can always find some kind-hearted gentleman or lady to give him work, even if their shoes are not so dirty - and despite the many adult men who ply the same trade at fixed points on pavements and in parks. But he must keep an eye out for gangs of older boys addicted to thinner and glue.

Initial shock

Wandering shoe-shine boys are among the many children – girls as well as boys – who work on Turkey's streets. Others sell bread-rings, pick through garbage, clean windscreens at traffic lights, or peddle handkerchiefs or pencils on street corners and at bus stops. Their numbers multiplied in the mid to late 1990s, when children also started to be found sleeping in doorways,



photo by Özbilen Keskin

stealing from shops and picking pockets. Officials and citizens were forced to recognise an issue which they had never imagined they would face.

It took some time to get over the shock. We came to realise that these children were not just a nuisance but also that they were in danger: that



photo by Veli Gurgah, Anatolian Agency

they suffered harassment and violence from officials, passers-by and other children; that their health was in danger from cold, hunger, fatigue and exhaust fumes; that they were vulnerable to abuse, accidents and all sorts of uncorroborated accusations, and that their school careers—if they had any—were likely to be short, unhappy and unsuccessful. We determined not to label them “street children”, as if they were a different species.

Listening and learning

Then we started to talk to them. We discovered that some came from broken homes, and that many were the children of poor parents who had migrated precipitously from other provinces, especially in Southeast Turkey, with many mouths to feed. We began to distinguish between children “of” the street and children “on” the street—the former living on the street 24 hours a day; the latter working on the street at weekends or after school in order to help support themselves and their families. We learned that the children were acutely sensitive to the condescension and discrimination which they faced. We estimated their numbers, in the early 2000s, at anywhere between 40,000 and 80,000—mostly boys of all ages, but also including many girls of primary school age.

Finally, we started to act. We sought ways of protecting those already on the street, of introducing them back into the community and of preventing others from joining them. Concerned

citizens founded associations, and municipalities started to offer assistance and set up shelters. The Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), a national government body, came to provide services, activities and sometimes accommodation for children on the street in the child and youth centres which it runs in many provinces.

New Service Model

In 2004, an inter-ministerial committee was formed under the coordination of the State Ministry responsible for SHÇEK, with the Ministries of Justice, Interior, National Education and Health all taking part. The committee prepared a “New Service Model for Children Living and/or Working on Streets”. Aims included the provision of shelter and treatment and enrolment or re-enrolment of the children in school. UNICEF provided technical support.

Building on existing good practice and international experience, the model envisaged that mobile teams and street offices should be established to identify the children concerned. The children would then be referred to medical rehabilitation centres, if needed, or directly to social rehabilitation centres. Throughout this process, each child would be supported by a social worker, psychologist or child development specialist. Children living on the streets would be reunited with their families wherever possible, or otherwise placed in SHÇEK institutions or boarding schools.



photos courtesy of Bursa Provincial Social Services Directorate



Activities at SHÇEK's "Affection Village": facilities for children engaging in or at risk of engaging in street life in Bursa

Prevention and cure

The prevention of street life came to be regarded as just as important as the cure. Efforts were made to identify children at risk of starting to live or work on the streets. SHÇEK started to support their parents through training and grants. The Ministry of National Education set out to develop the capacity of teachers and school guidance counselors to identify and support children at risk of dropping out of school. In 2005-6, in a reflection of public anxiety, a parliamentary enquiry was held to "investigate... the reasons why they are on the street, and make recommendations for solutions".

Meanwhile, in June 2005, the implementation of the new service model had been discussed at a conference in Istanbul. The conference, jointly organised by SHÇEK, the Projects Coordination Centre of the Ministry of National Education and UNICEF, was attended not only by officials from various ministries and international organisations but also by members of parliament, children, the media and representatives of provincial governorates, municipalities and non-government organisations (NGOs). There followed a series of local workshops in the worst-affected cities of Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Izmir and Mersin. In each province, a City Action Plan (CAP) was devised together with a two-year plan for its implementation.

Most of the plans also emphasised the need for vocational education for children living and

working on the street or at risk of doing so, to provide them with marketable skills and so prevent the cycle of poverty which pushed many of them out to work in the first place. Several cities decided to work with the media and muhtars (neighbourhood officials), to establish hotlines, and to hold awareness meetings. Local inter-sectoral councils or committees were set up to oversee implementation, often with a measure of child participation.

Getting results?

Other organisations from the European Union and the International Labour Organisation to municipalities and grassroots NGOs also pursued activities of their own related to children living and working on the street, whether directly or in the context of projects in related areas such as child labour and children in contact with the law. Reports from the target cities indicate that:

- The number of units, facilities and institutions providing services to children living and/or working on streets has increased. There are now mobile units and coordination centres in almost all of the cities with CAPs. In Istanbul alone there are 15 mobile units. Most of these cities also have shelters for children on the street. Several have street offices and/or first-stop centres. All have centres where children who have been living or working on the street receive social rehabilitation. In Bursa, for example, an impressive Sevgi Köyü ("Affection Village") has been built and equipped with



photos by Veli Gurgah, Anatolian Agency

Before and after: a former collector of waste paper learns new skills in Mersin

computers and facilities for music, sport and innumerable other activities.

- There are drug rehabilitation centres in Ankara, Antalya, Diyarbakır, Istanbul and Izmir. More than 300 children who had drug or substance abuse problems have been treated. Istanbul and Izmir also have medical rehabilitation centres.
- More than 1,000 children who were out of school have been registered, including some at regional boarding schools. Over 2,000 children who were already registered at school but who were not regularly attending classes have started to do so.

Slipping the net

As a result of these developments—perhaps coupled with better economic conditions—officials in some cities believe that the number of children living and working on the street is on the decline. Civil society representatives, on the other hand, argue that the social conditions which cause children to take to the streets – such as migration, income inequality and family breakdowns - are as prevalent as ever. In the worst-affected cities, it is not hard to see that there are still children out there.

Fuat's elder brother says he started shining shoes entirely of his own volition seven years ago. "The first day was really hard, but we were needy and it was better than just kicking my heels." He reports that fewer children from his neighbourhood are going out to work, and more are staying on at school. But in the twelve years he has been working as a waiter, peddler and shoe-shine boy to support his ailing parents, he says, nobody has ever lent his or his family a helping hand. His un-lived childhood is a stark reminder that street life cannot be tackled in isolation from poverty and other social ills – and that the safety net is only loosely woven.

In the case of children living on the street and addicted to substances like adhesives, rehabilitation facilities are not always available, while some reportedly refuse treatment and return to their former lives. The numbers of these children may be few but they are entitled to the same rights to education, health and protection as other boys and girls.

A test for social policy

Key government ministers are expected to meet soon with SHÇEK and UNICEF officials to review the implementation of the New Service Model. More shelters, mobile teams, street offices, coordination centres and medical centres may be needed. Funding may also need to be addressed. Lacking specific budgets, the CAPs have so far relied on borrowing: a building from one organisation, a vehicle from another, a driver from a third, a teacher from a fourth. Central government agencies, municipalities and NGOs could arguably coordinate more effectively at the local level; too much seems to depend on the commitment of individual provincial governors or deputy governors.

At the national level, the issue of children on the street needs to be treated as a symptom of the exclusion of poor or unfortunate families and children from the opportunities which society makes available to others.

SHÇEK Director General İsmail Barış: A form of exploitation

In an interview with 'Say Yes', İsmail Barış, Director General of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), made the following observations about the issue of children living and working on the street:

- * There are children being exploited by being made to work on the street in almost all countries of the world. In Turkey too, there are families in economic difficulties who commercially exploit their children... on the streets.
- * The concept of children working on the street needs to be changed. These are children who are being exploited by being made to work on the street.
- * A large proportion of these children are between 6 and 12 years old and come from migrant families. Streets in some cities have almost been turned into workplaces. At traffic lights... the children sell tissues, clean windows, shine shoes... And generally the mothers and fathers hang around in the area, supposedly protecting their children from dangers but in fact casting them into the fire with their own hands.
- * I have stopped and spoken to some children. If it is explained to them, they realise that they are being exploited. But what right has the child got to say "I'm not going to work any more"? How would their families and others who make them work respond to such resistance?
- * These children even try to wipe the windscreen of police cars that stop at the lights! If we were to take that child and warn the family on the spot... I think perhaps we would have a bit more success.
- * As for children living on the street..., the Prime Minister has set up a committee of ministers, a work group has been formed and a model developed by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency has been implemented in 8 provinces. In Istanbul, for example, you don't see as many children living on the street as you used to. As far as we have determined, in all 81 provinces, the number of children whose links to their families have broken down and who are living on the street 24 hours a day is about 400-500.
- * What we ask of people is: by giving money to a child selling something or being made to work on the street you are only supporting whoever is exploiting that child, whether it is his or her family, or some other group. None of the money which you give goes into the child's own stomach or pocket.
- * Every kuruş which you give to a child working



photo by Oğuz Sağdıç

on the street causes that child to remain on the street and to end up living on the street. According to our observations, children who are made to work on the street make up 30-40% of the children who finish up by living on the street. Being made to work on the street is one of the passages to living on the street.

- * As an institution, when we talk to the families of children working on the street, we say, "If you are in economic difficulties, the state can make a material contribution so that your child can dress and study properly... it comes to about YTL325 [per month]. The child stays with his or her own family instead of going to a home or hostel, but we follow up to prevent him or her from working.
- * When any family says "I am in economic difficulties. I can't look after my children. I can't afford to pay for their health or education or nutrition," we have the matter investigated and [if it is true] we make a contribution to that family.
- * Especially when it comes to children and the disabled, the Prime Minister, the Minister and the government have opened the way for us in line with requests and needs. SHÇEK alone is spending about YTL350 million a year in this field in 2007, including personnel costs, the cost of other services and the support we provide for families.
- * Our target is to reduce the number of children working on the street to zero. We are working in cooperation with all sectors to achieve this. The economic and social causes of the problem are not easy to eliminate. But I believe that as of the end of 2008 we will have achieved significant results.

Faculties to foster a child-friendly media

Following the success of media training sessions for active journalists, the concepts of child rights and a child-friendly media are starting to make their way into the curricula of Turkey's communications faculties.

Efforts to train Turkish journalists to be sensitive towards children and children's issues take on a new dimension this Autumn as communications faculty students help children to create their own media products. The hands-on exercise forms part of the training that will be given to the future media professionals at two leading universities: the state-run Anadolu University in Eskişehir, which is well known for its broadcasting facilities, and Istanbul's prestigious private Galatasaray University.

Postgraduate students at the universities are being offered a series of modules entitled "communication for a child-centred media". The concept was thrashed out over the summer months at meetings attended by rectors and staff members from the communications faculties of several universities. The meetings were sponsored by UNICEF and also attended by representatives of the broadcasting watchdog RTÜK. There will be both theoretical and practical lessons, but the experience of working together with children to create news articles, radio programmes and video footage promises to prove the most memorable part of the curriculum.

After further development in the light of experience, the modules are expected to become part of the education provided in many if not all of Turkey's communications faculties. There are more than 30 such faculties, and media organisations are increasingly drawing their employees from their graduates. While some faculties already timetable lessons in ethics or human rights, none currently offer specific guidance on how to work with children.

Sessions for journalists

The new initiative builds on the training sessions which have been provided to hundreds of active broadcast and print journalists since 2005 as a result of cooperation between UNICEF and the Independent Communication Network (BIANET), founded by Turkish writers and journalists. Training has been provided to representatives of national and local television channels, radio stations and newspapers in seven regions and two individual provinces.

The training sessions encourage and teach reporters to write about children and child rights issues, to obtain information from children and to



Media training sessions in Uşak,...



...Kocaeli...

seek out and report their opinions on current topics. Participants also learn to respect the private lives of the children they encounter in their work, to protect the identities of children who are victims of abuse or suspects in crimes, and to avoid the use of emotive language and images which stereotype children either as mere helpless sufferers or as a monstrous threat to society.

Positive findings

Media training sessions have led to an increase in the number of newspaper stories about children and an improvement in the respect shown by journalists for children's rights. According to the report of a project study group chaired by Associate Professor Dr. Gülgün Erdoğan Tosun of the Communications Faculty of the Aegean University in İzmir, journalists taking part in the sessions have been using a wider range of sources when handling news about children. Sessions have also led to heightened local media coverage of cases of violence against children, education and health problems and child labour issues, as well as UNICEF-backed activities and campaigns.

In spite of these positive findings, both the participants and the trainers—drawn from among Turkey's leading media educators—stress that the media training sessions need to be extended and repeated if they are to have a lasting impact. Moreover, the two-day events can only touch on some of the most practical aspects of the relationship between children and the media in the field of news gathering and reporting. Other forums are needed to examine and develop issues such as children's access to the media, child participation, programmes and publications for children, media literacy among children and ethical advertising.

From in-service to pre-service

The in-service training sessions provided by UNICEF and BIANET are to continue around the country in the rest of 2007 and in the years to come. They are bringing a child-friendly media one step closer. The development of child-focused pre-service training in communications faculties will be a second step in the right direction.



... and Erzurum

photos by Şehnaz Tanılkan

*****Opinion*****



“Useful for us; good for children”

Çilem Kaya, a journalist now working with the popular national daily Hürriyet, took part in a media training session organised by UNICEF and BIANET in Ankara in early 2006. “Even before that I used to pay attention to children and look out for news about them,” she says. “But at the workshops we found out in more detail about their rights, their interests, the issues that attracted their attention...”

Kaya and other media professionals from Ankara and surrounding provinces were encouraged to regard children as individuals with experiences and opinions of their own. They were urged to seek out stories about children and children's rights, to approach children with sensitivity, to speak to them in clear comprehensible language and to permit them to report their opinions in their own words.

In line with the pledge which she made back in 2006, Kaya has put these principles into practice. “I have frequently tried to write news about children and about the work which NGOs are doing for children,” she explains, “and I have made an effort to ensure that these articles are actually published.” Nevertheless, she admits that journalists and broadcasters in general do not pay enough attention to children.

“At the moment, we in the media are unable to give children sufficient opportunity to express themselves. In time, more news will appear. But we need to be reminded as often as possible about how to approach children. After all, none of us is a trained child psychologist or educationalist...”

“The workshops were enjoyable. What I learned about child rights has been beneficial. It was also a useful event in terms of bringing journalists together. I had the opportunity to meet and chat to many journalists from the surrounding provinces.”

The Hürriyet reporter recommends that UNICEF and other organisations working with children should continue and extend their work with the press, especially the national press, which tends to under-report children's issues due to its rapidly-moving political and economic agenda. “It would be useful for us and it would be good for children,” she asserts. Personally she says she would be more than happy to take part in further briefings, seminars or workshops—or to work directly with children to help them create their own media outlets.

Kaya is delighted to hear that students in communications faculties are to study communication for a child-focused media. “They will be able to learn from the start what we only discovered later on,” she remarks.

Educational spending: still room for improvement

Educational spending in Turkey has recovered by comparison with the years of economic crisis. But how does it compare with other countries?

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its annual “Education at a Glance” report in September. The publication of the report drew attention to educational spending ahead of the new school year and the submission to Parliament of the budget bill for 2008.

The OECD, which is regarded as a club of rich nations, calculates annual expenditure per primary school pupil in Turkey at US\$1,120 (Exchange rates are adjusted for purchasing power parity). This compares to spending of US\$5-7,000 in most West European countries. In this respect, Turkey also lags all other OECD member countries including Mexico (US\$1,694) and even some non-OECD countries (E.g.: Brazil, with US\$1,159).

Annual expenditure per secondary school student is US\$1,808, according to the OECD. This is well below the US\$6-9,000 spent by West European countries but higher than the amounts spent by Brazil (US\$1,033) and Russia (US\$1,615).

Adjusting for GDP

The figures are more meaningful – and less unflattering – when adjusted to take account of the very different levels of production and consumption in the various countries. The report puts the ratio of annual expenditure per schoolchild in Turkey to per capita GDP at 16% for primary education and 25% for secondary. For most OECD countries, these ratios work out at 17-25% in primary and 22-30% in secondary education.

In other words, Turkey is still under-spending, relative to its economic capacity, on its primary school pupils, whereas secondary school students are getting a fairer slice of the cake. All in all, when adjusted for Turkey’s lower national income, expenditure per schoolchild is similar to the level recorded in countries like Ireland and Greece, but

still significantly less than in the majority of OECD countries.

Growing needs

The figures are not without their drawbacks. Some of the data on Turkey relates only to public spending. Moreover, the OECD’s statistics date back to 2004, and do not take account of any further increases in educational spending since then. At the same time, it is worth noting that Turkey has still not achieved 100% primary school enrolment. In addition, Turkish boys and – especially - girls are much less likely to complete secondary education than their counterparts in all other OECD countries except Mexico. Even those children who do complete secondary education in Turkey receive fewer years of schooling (11 years) than in all other OECD countries (12-13 years). Spending on education needs to go rising as compulsory education is extended and participation rates increase.

Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, excluding higher education

	1995	2000	2004
Germany	3.7	-	3.5
Greece	1.8	2.3	2.2
Italy	-	3.2	3.4
Japan	3.1	3.0	2.9
Korea	-	4.0	4.4
Mexico	4.0	3.8	4.3
Poland	-	3.9	3.8
Slovak Republic	3.0	2.7	3.0
Spain	3.8	3.2	3.0
Sweden	4.1	4.3	4.5
Switzerland	4.6	4.1	4.5
Turkey	1.7	2.4	3.1
United Kingdom	3.9	3.6	4.4
United States	3.9	3.9	4.1
Brazil*	2.5	2.8	2.9
Israel	5.0	4.6	4.7
Russian Federation*	-	1.7	2.0

* from public sources only
Source: OECD

High season for fund-raising efforts

The sale of greetings cards and gifts is just one of the activities organised by the UNICEF Turkey National Committee in its efforts to raise funds to support activities for children

It is a busy time of year at the two-storey UNICEF Turkey National Committee House on the Bilkent campus west of Ankara, the headquarters of the UNICEF National Committee. Here, the approach of holidays like the Eid-al-Fitr (*Şeker Bayramı*), Eid al-Adha (*Kurban Bayramı*), Christmas and New Year only means more work. It is the National Committee which sells UNICEF's famous greetings cards and gifts. In the showroom downstairs, UNICEF publications are on display, and UNICEF films can be watched on video. In the offices upstairs the telephone never stops ringing.

The latest greeting card and gift catalogue features a rich assortment of images by popular artists and designers from all around the world. The cards, with their floral, winter, ethnic, modern and traditional designs, are familiar yet new. There are also eye-catching candles, calendars, diaries, jigsaw puzzles, toys, games, T-shirts, mugs, bags, giftwraps, decorations and stationery. Besides UNICEF's offices in Ankara and Istanbul*, these products are available at numerous bookshops, stationers and similar outlets in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and more than a dozen other provinces (See <http://www.unicefturk.org/menuset03.php> for a list of addresses). Electronic sales are increasingly popular: orders can be placed at <http://eshop.unicefturk.org>

Living on donations

UNICEF receives no funds from the United Nations or any other source. All its work depends on the voluntary donations of governments, organisations and individuals. One of the main duties of the Committees is to raise funds.

Turkey's National Committee is one of 36 around the world set up to increase awareness of UNICEF's activities and to raise funds for its programmes and campaigns. Famously, Turkey is the only country where a National Committee and a Representative Office operate side-by-side as sister organisations. National committees are set up in developed countries while representative offices take UNICEF's services to the developing world.

The sale of greetings cards and gifts is not the sole activity of the friendly staff at the National

Committee's Bilkent house - or of their colleagues in the Istanbul office in Beyoğlu. Cards remains a major source of funds for supporting UNICEF programmes in-country and contributing to UNICEF's work in emergencies elsewhere. But increasingly funds are being raised through individual and corporate donations, including those provided by regular donors, and those raised as a result of special events such as the telethon broadcast live by NTV on April 23, exhibitions, gala evenings, concerts of classical and contemporary music and other social and cultural events organised by UNICEF friends and volunteers.

New good will ambassador

In a recent development, well-known TV presenter Tayfun Talipoğlu has agreed to become a UNICEF good will ambassador. Talipoğlu was one of the stars of the telethon, which aimed to raise money for prefabricated classrooms. Broadcasting live from a village in Mardin, he witnessed at first hand the difference which the prefabricated classrooms could make to the lives of girls previously unable to continue their education beyond grade five. As good will ambassador, he will be maintaining his support for girls' education and the prefabricated classrooms campaign, and inviting others to take part.

Talipoğlu's letter to the general public is reproduced on the back cover of this edition of 'Say Yes'. His warm personality and irresistible enthusiasm will reinforce the determination of the Turkey UNICEF National Committee in all its activities and appeals.

DONATE NOW!

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A letter from Tayfun Talipoğlu



Unfortunately there is still an incredible level of inequality between girls and boys in education in Turkey, to the detriment of girls. At UNICEF, we are lending all the support we can to tackling this sad and serious state of affairs.

Within the last three years, thanks to the girls' education campaign "Haydi Kızlar Okula", 223,000 girls and 100,000 boys have started school or resumed their education from the point at which they left off. But we still have another 500,000 girls to get into school. Work with families is continuing, especially to persuade them to send their daughters to school. But the fact is that breaking down the resistance of the families generally depends on a school being available near to the place where they live.

The shortage of schools and classrooms became blatantly obvious in 2003. For want of space, we know of school principals who locked the doors during the registration period and looked for somewhere to hide. A solution had to be found. In August 2004, at the inspiration and with the support of UNICEF, 70 prefabricated units were taken from the Marmara Earthquake Region and transported to Şanlıurfa, where they were converted into classrooms serving 5,000 pupils on a double-shift basis.

Since April, your generosity, and the generosity of people like you, has helped to put fully equipped prefabricated classrooms into service in Mardin, Kırşehir and Diyarbakır, with the support of the provincial governorates. In the weeks and months ahead, almost 200 more classrooms will be set up in ten different provinces. We are encouraged in our commitment to this happy task by the knowledge that all the money collected through the support of UNICEF and yourselves will be matched by the governorates with an equal amount. A prefabricated classroom which can be used by up to 100 children

under the two-shift system costs YTL26,000. So for every YTL13,000 that we come up with, another 100 schoolchildren will be provided with a school close to their homes which they can attend in safety and with full peace of mind.

I directed the first opening ceremony in Mardin. The village of Eskin, in the Kızıltepe district, already had a school if the truth were told. But the classrooms were insufficient. With the backing of UNICEF, the problem was already being solved - not by talking about it endlessly, but by quickly installing prefabricated classrooms. Eskin village in Kızıltepe was just the first stop. That was where I met Semra. She was older than the other students. Her parents had chosen her role for her long ago. At the insistence of the state, she had studied up to grade five and learned to read and write. A few years later she would be married off. She was one of those who were most excited about the new classrooms. Her elders no longer had an excuse. The flicker in her heart at the opening of this school was reflected in the expression on her face. "Actually, my dad wants me to go to school," she explained, "but he said to me: 'Nobody sends their daughter to Kızıltepe, so how can I send mine?'"

Yes, Semra can now go the school near her home. But let's make an avalanche of classrooms and schools. I know that UNICEF has international experience in the area of prefabricated classrooms. They are an urgent solution to an urgent problem. They cost little, they are quick to install, they can be transported, and they last for at least 35 years. It is clear that they are a much handier option.

In short, I was a volunteer for this campaign, and I have decided to go on supporting it. You know how you always ask me, when I am out and about with the 'Bam Teli' programme, "What can we do for the children of this country?" Now we are giving you the answer: COME AND JOIN US!

Yours sincerely,

Tayfun Talipoğlu
UNICEF Turkey Good Will Ambassador

NB: All donations to the National Committee are eligible for tax deduction.