

# UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW – HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## UNICEF INPUTS – QATAR

### I. Contextual Framework

1. The State of Qatar occupies a peninsula jutting into the Persian Gulf from the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia borders it on its landward side. It has an area of about 11 000 km. Much of the land is stony, barren desert. Barren salt flats cover southern Qatar. The capital, Doha, is located on the central east coast on a sweeping (if shallow) harbor. Other ports include Umm Said, Al Khawr, and Al Wakrah.

2. With a population of approximately 821,000 people, Qatari citizens follow the dominant Hanbali branch of Islam practiced in neighboring Saudi Arabia; therefore it is considered the culturally closest Persian Gulf state to Saudi Arabia. Expatriates form the majority of Qatar's residents. The petrochemical industry has attracted people from all around the world. Because a large percentage of the expatriates are male, Qatar has a heavily skewed sex ratio, with 3.46 males per female.

3. The ruling Al Thani family continued to hold power following the declaration of independence in 1971. The head of state is the Amir, and the right to rule Qatar is passed on within the Al Thani family. Politically, Qatar is evolving from a traditional society to one based on more formal and democratic institutions to meet the requirements of social and economic progress. The country's constitution formalizes the hereditary rule of the Al Thani family, but it also establishes an elected legislative body and makes government ministers accountable to the legislature.

4. Qatar's national income primarily derives from oil and natural gas exports. The country has oil estimated at 15 billion barrels (2.4 km<sup>3</sup>), while gas reserves in the giant north field (South Pars for Iran) which straddles the border with Iran and are almost as large as the peninsula itself are estimated to be between 800 trillion cubic feet (23,000 km<sup>3</sup>) to 80 trillion cubic feet (2,300 km<sup>3</sup>) (1 trillion cubic foot is equivalent to about 80 million barrels (13,000,000 m<sup>3</sup>) of oil). Qatar has the highest GDP per capita in the Arab World. While oil and gas will probably remain the backbone of Qatar's economy for some time to come, the country seeks to stimulate the private sector and develop a "knowledge economy", "education city", and "sports city" and has plans to build an "entertainment city" in the future.

5. Qatar has strong diplomatic relations with its neighbours and within the international community. It was one of the founding members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) which was established with an aim to integrate the Gulf States and promote mutual co-operation. Qatar is also a member of the League of Arab States.

6. In 2005 Qatar became the first Arab country to win a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council and served a two year term.

7. Qatar is a member of a number of other organizations including the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

8. Qatar ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995, the first periodic report was submitted in 1999 and the second report was due in 2002. Qatar has joined the optional protocols

on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

## II. Trends

1. On the human development front, the state of Qatar has achieved notable human development progress as reflected in the 2007/2008 Human Development Report (HDR) where Qatar ranked 35th among 177 countries and the third highest among the Arab world in the Human Development Index (HDI). Qatar is on target to achieve the MDGs prior to 2015. Although there do remain some weaknesses in achieving some of the MDG targets, such as the role of women in public life and sustainable environmental management (both the protection of ecosystems and land management). In the past two decades Qatari women's participation has increased in many areas of public life. This trend is reflected in Qatari women's participation in the national workforce, with their participation rising from 14.3% to 30.2% between 1986 and 2004.

2. Qatar has made remarkable progress towards realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The progress achieved towards attainment of the eight goals during 1990-2007 can be summed up as follows:

- *Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger:* This goal was attained by Qatar some time ago. Hence, this target does not constitute a challenge for the State of Qatar, which has become a high income country with per capita expenditure of more than US \$ 33 per day.
- *Achieve Universal Primary Education:* Qatar has come very close to realizing the goal of universal primary education with the rate of enrollment in primary education being 97.6% in 2006. Statistics indicate a rise of enrollment rates in various educational levels. The literacy rate among youth rose to 99.1% in 2007. There is no longer a gender gap in education.
- *Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women:* Qatar has made considerable progress in achieving gender equality in various educational levels. However, women's participation in the labor market and politics still requires intensive efforts to bridge the gap between men and women.
- *Reduce Child Mortality:* Qatar is close to attaining this goal. The under 5 mortality rate was 9,1 per 1,000 births in 2007 compared with 16,6 per 1,000 in 1990.
- *Improve Maternal Health:* Qatar has attained the objective of promoting women's reproductive health and safe maternity. The rate of deliveries under qualified health specialists was 100% in 2007.
- *Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases:* Qatar has made remarkable progress in realizing this objective, with the incidence of TB, malaria and related fatalities reaching near zero. Medications are provided free for patients with AIDS by the State, which has adopted policies that try to contain its incidence. Regarding HIV/AIDS, health statistics indicate that the indicator of HIV/AIDS incidence in the 15-24 age-group in Qatar was zero in 2007.
- *Ensure Environmental Sustainability:* The entire population of Qatar has access to potable drinking water, sewage services and adequate housing (100%).
- *Develop a Global Partnership for Development:* Qatar has taken part in a global development partnership by raising the volume of development assistance provided by Qatar to developing countries, which exceeded 0.50% of the 2006 GDP.

3. Qatar has witnessed an improvement in the promotion and protection of human rights, this being related to dissemination of human rights education.

This improvement has furthermore been achieved through various legislations and the enactment of the Constitution (the permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar was issued in 2005). Noteworthy

are also the enactment of Law No. 22 on prohibiting the employment, training or participation of children in camel races, as well as the establishment of the Qatari Refugee and Human Care House, which provides shelter to children, women and workers.

### **III. Training on CRC:**

Qatar has implemented a number of programmes to integrate the concepts of human and children's rights into educational curricula. A higher committee was established in order to spread a children's rights culture in state schools. With regard to training, Qatar has run awareness programmes for groups that work with children, on the principles and provisions of the Convention and their practical application

### **IV. UNICEF Involvement in Qatar:**

1. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office (GAO) will continue its ongoing ad hoc support to the Qatari government in capacity building and orientation on the CRC for government counterparts, NGOs, and others. UNICEF GAO is also providing technical support to convene an international congress to be held in November 2009 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CRC.

2. In 2009, UNICEF GAO gave presentations to the media on ethical reporting on children, with the aim to improve the quality of articles and news covering children's issues, and most importantly to put children's interest at the core of the media's priorities.

3. During 2008, UNICEF GAO provided technical support to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) in the field of child rights, with two major activities taking place: a CRC training workshop targeting mosque preachers and a training workshop targeting military officers aimed at incorporating child rights into military agenda as well as in summer school programmes. In addition, UNICEF GAO participated in the first scientific conference on "Human Trafficking between Theory and Practice" organized by the National Office to Combat Human Trafficking in cooperation with Qatar University.

4. In 2005, UNICEF GAO participated in a regional workshop in Qatar on the Concluding Observations of CRC Committee. The host organization was the Childhood and Family Council of Qatar.

5. In February 2004, UNICEF GAO participated in a regional workshop held in Doha, Qatar, on human rights education in the Gulf States school systems. The objective of the workshop was to develop a common understanding of human rights in school curricula, identify mechanisms to integrate human rights into the educational system, discuss strategies of human rights education in the Arab States, identify and develop national strategies, and facilitate cooperation among partners. The workshop concluded by encouraging the concerned bodies in Gulf countries to study and ratify the international and local (Gulf/Arab) conventions and treaties related to human rights; called for developing standards and assessing the performance of educational institutions; and asked concerned parties in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to establish a coordination mechanism, and promote the role of civil society organizations, academia, and the media in the field of human rights.