

**UNICEF Iran**

**Universal Periodic Review of the Situation of Human Rights in Iran**

**18 March 2019**

## Sanctions

1. The tightening of sanctions on Iran caused a fall in the country's revenues, devaluation of national currency, and increase in inflation and unemployment. These have all resulted in deterioration of people's overall welfare and lowering of their ability to access the necessities of a standard life such as nutritious food, healthcare and medicine. Moreover, sanctions on banking, financial systems and shipment has led to scarcity of quality life-saving medicines. The impacts of sanctions have been more intense on the lives of the poor, patients, women and children.<sup>1</sup>
2. Despite the tightening of sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran continued investing in programmes aiming to improve the situation of children.

## Health

3. During the past decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been very successful in improving the health situation of its population. In particular, the country managed to impressively improve the survival of its children, to such an extent that the probability of dying before the age of 5 years dropped by 70 per cent from 1990 to 2015 at the national level, surpassing the two-thirds reduction called for by MDG 4. The under-five mortality rate has dropped from 57.9 per 1,000 live births (1990) to 15.5 per 1,000 live births (2015). The majority of under five deaths (81 per cent) now occur before children reach their first birthday and 64.2 per cent during the first month of life. There are significant disparities in death rates, both geographically, as well as in economic quintiles of the population. As an example, the neonatal mortality rate (NMR) in West Azerbaijan is 4.35, while it is 15.11 in Sistan and Baluchistan.<sup>2</sup> With the right combination of interventions and investments, many of these deaths can be prevented and newborns can be given the best start in life.

## Education

4. National enrolment in primary education with gender parity remains high and pre-primary education shows an improvement. Challenges remain with regards to transition from primary to secondary school and, subsequently, retention at secondary level, especially among disadvantaged children in rural and sub-urban areas. Based on the official data of the school year 2015-2016, 777,862 children (438,036 girls – 56 per cent) are out of school, including 152,225 children aged 6-11 years (76,846 girls – 50 per cent) at primary level, 215,854 children 12-14 years (135,639 girls – 63 per cent) at lower secondary level, and 409,783 children 15-17 years (225,551 girls – 55 per cent).<sup>3</sup>
5. Iran continued to host one of the largest refugee populations in the world. According to the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs' (BAFIA) latest reports, a total number of 950,000 registered (documented) Afghan refugees and an estimated number of 1.5 million undocumented Afghan refugees live and work in Iran. It is estimated that approximately 800,000 Afghan school-age children are in the country. Regardless of their documentation status, they can benefit from

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ijhpm.com/article\\_3454.html](http://www.ijhpm.com/article_3454.html)

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Health neonatal mortality statistics.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF Iran CO Annual Report 2018

the public education system based on the all-inclusive education decree of the Supreme Leader issued in 2015. The population of Afghan children enrolled in formal education increased to 470,000 in the 2018-2019 school year from 420,000 in the 2017-2018 school year.<sup>4</sup>

### **Prevention of Violence against children<sup>5</sup>**

6. In 2018, UNICEF Iran continued working closely with key national partners (namely the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and State Welfare Organization) to support national efforts for strengthening prevention and response to child maltreatment, with focus on enhancing quality of services, promoting preventive measures, developing models, and strengthening case management systems. These initiatives aim to promote and strengthen an inter-sectoral approach to prevention of child maltreatment at all levels:
  - A pilot was initiated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to establish specialized health centres for referral and provision of specialized services to children at risk of and/or subjected to child maltreatment in four selected provinces (Tehran, Semnan, Hormozgan, and Golestan). An important component of the pilot is building capacities of health professionals of the targeted centres, including pediatricians and physicians working in emergency rooms. The pilot has been designed in a way to ensure alignment with Iran's 2014 Health Reform Plan.
  - Technical support was provided to enhancing the quality of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education's positive parenting (PP) programme through development of specialized material to be used for building capacities of mental health professionals and counselors providing counseling services to children and families. The PP programme of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education aims to reduce the prevalence of child maltreatment in family settings through enhancing parent-child relationships and promoting non-violent disciplining.
  - In line with strengthening capacities of the social service workforce and case management, the State Welfare Organization (SWO) was provided with the latest knowledge, standards and global experiences on case management, enabling them to identify gaps and explore opportunities to strengthen current case management practices in Iran. This was a crucial step for SWO as one of the key national organizations dealing with various groups of vulnerable children and families.

### **Juvenile Justice**

7. The judicial system continues to support capacity-building of relevant judicial professionals i.e. judges, prosecutors, lawyers and social workers for application of diversion programmes,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Please see below relevant UPR recommendations:

138.187. Prevent and punish violence against women and children (Peru);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.194. Continue adequate measures for addressing the special needs of women and protecting children from violence (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

alternatives to arrest, detention and punishments in cases of children in conflict with the law. UNICEF stands ready to continue support to the government's initiatives and programmes for the protection of children in judicial proceedings.

8. 158 children deprived of their liberty benefited from the Supreme Leader's pardon and were released from Juvenile Correction and Rehabilitation Centres on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Islamic Revolution in February 2019.<sup>6</sup>
9. The judicial system supports and encourages mediation between families of victims and offenders with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement, in particular when children are involved. During the past three years, the lives of 35 children at risk of execution were saved through mediation and pardon of the victims' families.<sup>7</sup>

### **Nationality status of children born to Iranian mothers and foreign fathers**

10. The Cabinet of Ministers approved the bill for amending the single-article Act on Determining Nationality Status of Children Born to Iranian Mothers and Foreign Fathers on 4 November 2018. The bill was submitted to the Parliament for review and approval on 20 November 2018. According to the said bill, "Children born to Iranian mothers and foreign fathers can be given Iranian citizenship at the request of their mothers. The mentioned children can apply for Iranian citizenship upon reaching the age of 18 in cases where the mother has not done so before, and provided that they do not have any security problems".

### **Children with Disability<sup>8</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> Mr. Mahmoud Abbasi, Secretary-General of the National Body on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NBCRC)

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Mahmoud Abbasi, Secretary-General of the NBCRC

<sup>8</sup> Please see below relevant UPR recommendations:

138.252. Continue to implement programmes in the area of education, health and social empowerment and integration of vulnerable groups, especially women, children and the disabled, through the established national mechanisms as well as with the relevant NGOs and international organizations (Brunei Darussalam);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.108. Continue the endeavours to enhance the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities (Qatar);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.277. Continue to undertake measures to support and protect the rights of persons with disabilities (Kazakhstan);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.278. Continue awareness-raising campaigns about the rights of people with disabilities (Kuwait);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.280. Continue the adoption of special measures aimed at improving the quality of life of children with disabilities (Kuwait);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.281. Continue maintaining good cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in favour of refugees with disabilities (Kuwait);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

138.93. Intensify efforts for the enhancement of the cultural, social and economic rights of women, children and people with disabilities (Lebanon);

**Source of position:** A/HRC/28/12/Add.1 (para. 7 (a))

11. Iran is a party to the Convention of the Rights of People Living with Disability (CRPD). Furthermore, in line with its international commitments, Iran adopted a new Law on the Protection of the Rights of People Living with Disability in March 2018. This Law includes chapters on promoting access and movement, health, medical treatment and rehabilitation services, sports, cultural, education and art programmes, employment, housing, public awareness, legal protection and planning for people living with disability. It also urges establishment of a national committee for coordination and monitoring the implementation of this law and any other rules and regulations relating to people living with disability.
12. The Government has supported public awareness-raising events to address stigma against girls and boys living with disability. The State Welfare Organisation, in partnership with UNICEF, launched a campaign called “Children Have Different Abilities” in November 2018. Nine high-profile and online influential celebrities featured alongside children with disabilities in Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and shared the PSAs through their Instagram accounts to promote the campaign's messages.
13. In November 2018, a national conference on children with disability and special needs, organized by the State Welfare Organization, brought together over 400 children and professionals from various government organizations, civil society organizations, universities, the art community, etc. The outcome of the conference was release of a statement which recognized four main thematic priorities for girls and boys living with disability: a) equitable access to health services; b) inclusive education; c) equitable access to protection services; and d) social engagement and participation. The statement emphasized on participation of children living with disability as a key implementing strategy. The statement also draws upon recommendations of the CRPD, the CRC, Iran’s Citizenship Charter, and rules and regulations for people living with disability. Furthermore, a multi-sectoral coordination committee, with membership of the main stakeholders, namely governmental organizations, NGOs, Iranian Red Crescent Society, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and Tehran Municipality was established to coordinate and monitor development of an action plan for implementation of the four focus areas of the above-mentioned national conference
14. A concert performed by people living with disability was held on 14 December 2018. Its video ranked as one of the top five videos viewed in Iran on various social media channels following the week of the concert.