

Children

In 2014, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued efforts to refocus its programmes, operations, partnerships, innovation and advocacy towards a vision of every child having a fair chance in life. It drew worldwide attention to the issue of children and equity, particularly the very poorest, girls, children with disabilities, those living in remote areas and those facing ethnic and religious discrimination.

UNICEF responded to 294 humanitarian situations in 98 countries. With an estimated 230 million children living in countries and areas affected by conflicts, UNICEF and its partners worked to reach those in greatest need and gain public support for vulnerable children and families. UNICEF programme assistance expenditure totalled \$4,130.8 million, focusing on seven principal areas: health; HIV and AIDS; water, sanitation and hygiene; nutrition; education; child protection; and social inclusion.

In December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on protecting children from bullying, recognizing that bullying, including cyberbullying, could have a potential long-term impact on the enjoyment of the human rights of children and negative effects on children affected by or involved in bullying.

Follow-up to 2002 General Assembly special session on children

In August [A/69/258], pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 58/282 [YUN 2004, p. 1175] and 61/272 [YUN 2007, p. 1201], the Secretary-General submitted his twelfth report on the follow-up to the Assembly's twenty-seventh (2002) special session on children [YUN 2002, p. 1168]. He reviewed progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the Declaration and Plan of Action from the session's final document, "A world fit for children", adopted in resolution S-27/2 [ibid., p. 1169], and highlighted gaps in achievement and the strategic shifts necessary for attaining unmet goals. Failure to achieve the commitments would undermine efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The Secretary-General also reviewed progress in the four major areas of the Plan of Action: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

In the area of health, the global mortality rate for children fell to an estimated 6.6 million in 2012,

an all-time low. About 40 per cent of the fatalities occurred during the first month of life. Furthermore, the global under-five mortality rate had fallen by almost 50 per cent from the 1990 rate of 90 deaths per 1,000 live births to 48 per 1,000 in 2012. In 2013, the endemic transmission of polio remained only in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, while India was certified a polio-free country in 2014. Since 2000, global measles deaths had decreased by 78 per cent, but the virus continued to be one of the leading causes of death among young children. Regarding malaria, 3.3 million deaths had been averted since 2001 in sub-Saharan Africa, 90 per cent of them in children under the age of five, as a result of UNICEF scaling up its interventions.

Since 2013, several Technical Resource Teams were established to carry out the 10 cross-cutting recommendations put forward by the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children to scale up access to 13 life-saving commodities for women and children. Regarding nutrition, globally, one in four children under the age of five was stunted, with an estimated 92 per cent of the world's 162 million stunted children living in Asia and Africa. UNICEF continued to promote the fortification of wheat flour to reduce iron deficiencies and help prevent birth defects in women of childbearing age, as well as provision of vitamin A supplementation to children aged 6 to 59 months in developing countries. For the first time, in 2013, early childhood development reporting was made possible through the Holistic Early Childhood Development Index, which illustrated that, globally, only 63.6 per cent of children under the age of five were developmentally on track.

In the area of education, over 57 million children of primary-school age remained out of school. More than half of them were in sub-Saharan Africa, where the primary net enrolment rate had increased from 58 per cent in 1990 to 77 per cent in 2011. South and West Africa registered the highest gains in reducing the number of children out of school; however, the region's primary net enrolment rate stood at 89 per cent, leaving 12 million children out of school. Progress in guaranteeing that children stayed in school had also stalled since 2009, with a quarter of all out-of-school children entering school late and becoming more likely to drop out. Dropout rates were highest in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. About half of the children out of school, most of them girls, were living in countries affected by conflict.