

SAY YES

The quarterly newsletter of UNICEF Turkey

Winter 2003

For Every Child ...

Starfish in Diyarbakır

Playing Their Part

Understanding AIDS

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

unicef 

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BE INFORMED

LEAVE NO CHILD OUT

UNICEF has published its annual 'The State of The World's Children' report for 2003. The report argues strongly that giving children and adolescents constructive roles in society is essential for both their own development and for creating a cohesive, peaceful world.

The report also asserts that there is a serious down-side to leaving children out. It cautions that when children are excluded from the decision-making process and are provided few opportunities to engage constructively in matters that directly affect their lives as they mature, they fail to develop vital skills including the ability to express themselves, to negotiate differences, to make responsible life choices or to assume responsibility for self and others such as family and community.

The Turkish media and press launch in Ankara gave the stage to children who spoke about their experience of life so far, their views on participation in the decision making process and issues regarding the international representation of Turkish children.

See *For Every Child* ... pp 4 & 5

STARFISH

The numbers of children living and/or working on the streets continues to rise globally. Like land bound starfish, these children are vulnerable to the seemingly tidal forces of street life which can easily leave them stranded on the shores of life itself.

Together with SHÇEK and the State Institute of Statistics (SIS), UNICEF has been working hard to reach out to these children through the 'Protection for Children Living and/or Working on the Streets' Programme. Social workers are offered training on how to interview children on the street, how to research their circumstances, how to involve them in decision-making and how to network with NGOs for support.

Diyarbakır in the Southeast is a pilot province for the project under UNICEF's Country Programme of Cooperation for 2001-2005. The social work team at SHÇEK's 75th Anniversary Child and Youth Centre there took part in UNICEF sponsored training seminars. By courtesy of the Centre's dedicated team, we offer a glimpse of the trials, disappointments and joys of some of Diyarbakır's 'starfish'.

See *Diyarbakır Starfish*, pp. 8 & 9

HIV/AIDS has always been a global issue. Since it first made headlines in 1980, the HIV retrovirus has ruined the lives of millions and clouded the perceptions of many millions more.

Although current figures for people living in Turkey with HIV/AIDS are low, the country remains vulnerable to the spread of the pandemic owing to three factors:

- Turkey is a very popular tourist destination;
- almost half of the population is under twenty-five;
- neighbouring countries such as Russia, the Ukraine, Moldova and Romania are high-prevalence areas.

A fourth factor can be added to the list, although it is not peculiar to Turkey: ignorance. The lack of sufficiently accurate information about HIV/AIDS is the greatest threat posed by the pandemic.

UNICEF and its partners in the UN Theme Group as well as the Government and concerned NGOs are seeking to inform people about the risk of infection, what we can do to protect ourselves and, above all, that it is ok to care for those among us who are living with the disease.

See *Understanding AIDS*, pp 10 & 11

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SAY YES

SPEAKING OUT

Children from every corner of Turkey assembled in Ankara for the Third Children's Forum, hosted by SHÇEK and UNICEF. The event took place between the 19th and 20th of November, marking the anniversaries of the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' (CRC) in 1989 and the day when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 'Declaration of the Rights of the Child' in 1959.

This year, the main topic for discussion was 'Building A World Fit for Children' — the delegates response to the outcome document of the UN Special Session on Children in May.

Supported by the attention of the media, the Government, UNICEF and other NGOs, Delegates spoke out, loud and clear about the issues they want to resolve in order to attain that goal. A contingent from Muradiye in the province of Van entertained everyone on the first night with a passionate drama on the theme of 'Girls' Education'.

See **Playing Their Part**, pp 6 & 7

BRAND NEW BRAND

At UNICEF, we have always understood that 'clean' visual presentation is crucial to good communication and, as a global institution, we have been working to refine our branding for the new century.

Readers with a keen eye may have noticed that our classic logotype has been redrawn and that a lighter font is now used for the 'unicef' mnemonic. In the coming months, UNICEF country offices the world over will present an even more cohesive identity not just visually but in every aspect of communication with our partners and the general public.

Watch out for **Say Yes, Spring 2003**

EDITORIAL



UNICEF's flagship publication, 'The State of the World's Children' Report is published in December every year. This year, the report focuses on the issue of child participation which is a relatively new concept in the thinking surrounding child development. So what is child participation, and why is it so vitally important? The article overleaf, entitled 'For Every Child ...' attempts to address this question. Put simply, however, participation is about adults listening to and involving children in the issues which concern them and, most importantly taking note of what they say.

Unfortunately, listening is not one of the more common human virtues, particularly with respect to children. The old maxim that 'children should be seen and not heard' still holds sway with far too many people. With the best of intentions of listening, it is all too easy to offer an encouraging smile but no real 'ear' to the 'outpourings' of our children. When they are not listened to, this failure of ours to listen properly, can frustrate their emotional and intellectual growth.

Children are also human beings and they are understandably affected if their opinions, views and observations are ignored by parents and adults. The child is involved in a continuous process of emotional, psychological and intellectual development and having their communications 'bounce back' at them is bound to have a depressing effect. It is no surprise that the child who does best at school and in life in general is used to being listened to from the earliest age.

The good news about child participation is that adults, realizing its importance in building the next generation, are now taking the idea more seriously. In this context, the ground-breaking involvement of children in the United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002 was symbolic of how government and civil society leaders everywhere are becoming more conscious of the necessity of listening to children and taking what they say into account when making decisions which affect their lives.

Ultimately, the process of child participation begins in the home. As parents, we need to be aware that listening to our children is as vital to their development as proper nourishment, for example.

Far from being 'seen and not heard', children should be 'seen and heard'.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. McLoughney'.

Edmond McLoughney
UNICEF Representative, Turkey

Note: We very much like to hear readers reactions to the newsletter, so please feel free to contact us with your comments and suggestions.

FOR EVERY CHILD ...

UNICEF's report on 'The State of The World's Children, 2003' was launched in Ankara on the 16th of December. The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan writes that the focus of this year's report, child participation, "is intended to remind adults of their obligation to elicit and consider the views of children and young people when decisions are being made that affect their lives."

In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, world leaders reaffirmed their shared duty to "all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs". They pledged to a set of specific goals, six out of eight of which are directly concerned with children. In the coming years, these Millennium Development Goals will focus collective efforts to undertake the challenges of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Closing the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May, 2002, world leaders set themselves an additional agenda under the title of 'A World Fit for Children' with four goals that are specifically concerned with ensuring the rights of every child. These four goals viewed together with the Millennium Development Goals promise an interdependent framework for action where the interests of children are expected to be at the heart of every successful development agenda.

Health

Clearly families, local governments, civil society and the private sector share the responsibility to ensure that the full participation of children begins by giving them the best possible start in life. National governments must provide the leadership and resources necessary to support local initiatives in favour of children.

The children themselves can be pro-active in health programmes such as immunisation campaigns where a thorough coverage of large populations is essential. They can disseminate information and advice on healthcare and disease prevention. In many developing countries, the assistance of children in this respect has proven to be invaluable.

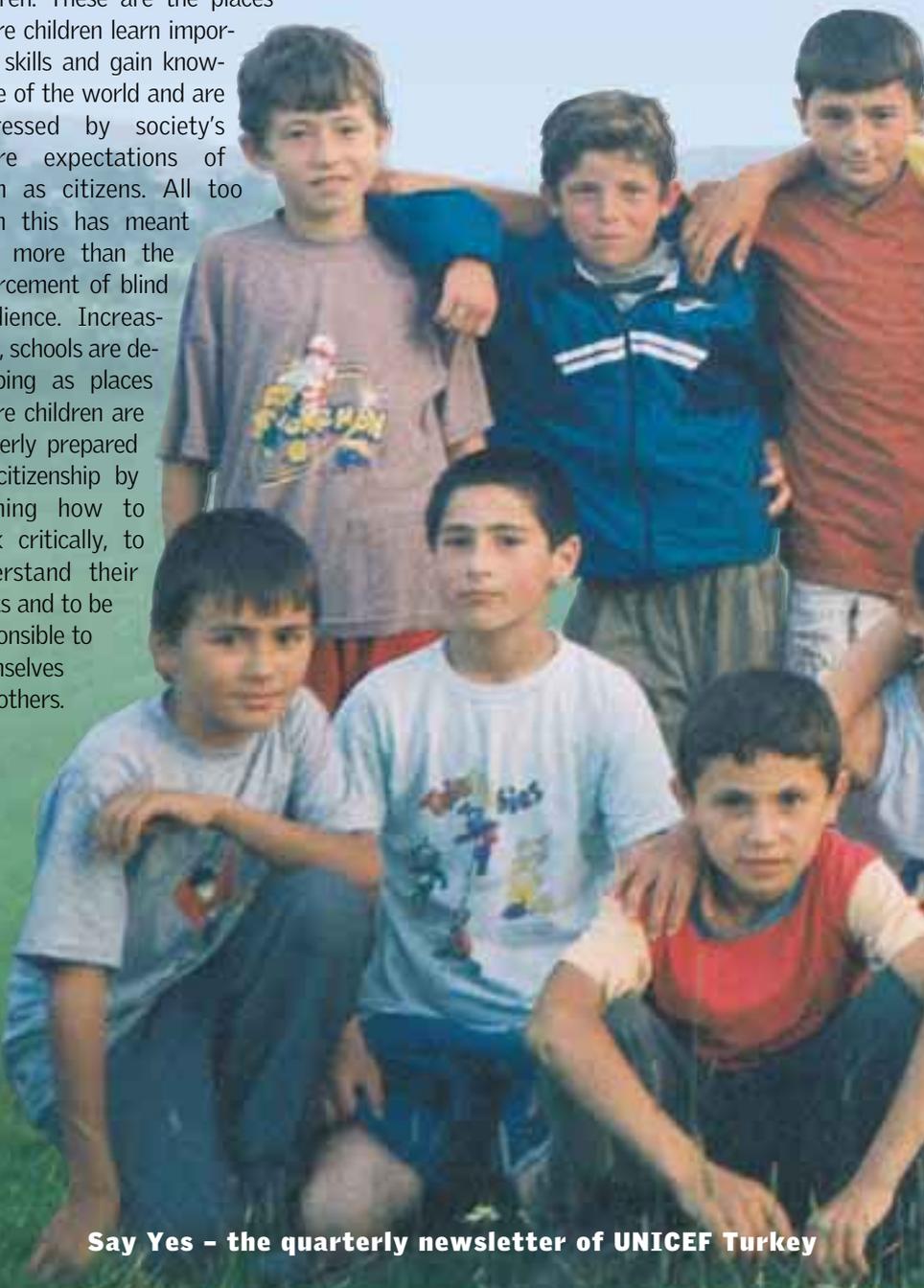
Education

Schools are vital to the socialisation of children. These are the places where children learn important skills and gain knowledge of the world and are impressed by society's future expectations of them as citizens. All too often this has meant little more than the enforcement of blind obedience. Increasingly, schools are developing as places where children are properly prepared for citizenship by learning how to think critically, to understand their rights and to be responsible to themselves and others.

Girls' education is a crucial issue in many parts of the world where, owing to a complex range of short-sighted social and economic factors, women and girls are disadvantaged in favour of boys and men. The reality is that poorly educated girls become poorly prepared mothers and, since lack of education can severely impair future opportunities, the role of a homemaker and mother is all that is left to such girls — a vicious circle. The social and economic arguments for educating girls are not so much arguments as imperatives since the participation of today's women and the women of the future extends well beyond competent motherhood.

UNICEF Turkey vigorously promotes the necessity of giving every girl in this country a quality education.

Values of peace and democracy can also be promoted through play and



recreation. Sports provide children with their own physical and emotional space, teaching valuable social skills of conflict resolution, understanding opponents and how to win and lose with respect for others. Sports can also be used to engage the children and adults of a community in a common development project.

Equality

The argument that so many adults, especially women are denied the opportunity to participate fully in society, let alone children, does not detract from the reality that children are the future and we have a responsibility to listen to them.

Writing of Governments' declared commitment to building 'A World Fit for Children', Kofi Annan stresses that: "We will achieve this only if Governments fulfil their promise that the voices of

children and young people will be heard loud and clear; if we ensure the full participation of children in the work to build a better future."

**"Wisdom is in your mind
— not in your age"
Turkish proverb**

Careful consultation of children remains something of a rare commodity requiring sensitivity on the part of adults. It is relatively easy to listen to an adolescent (and often difficult not to) but the insights of even very young children can be valuable to adult perceptions which are so often stultified by experience.

Children need their own forums which they can use to learn from their peers, build skills, identify their priorities and disseminate their views. When their views are sensitively solicited and understood, they can be a forceful medium for change.

Protection

We can protect our children in the wrong way. The refusal to listen to children, to give them a proper hearing, stems from deep-seated, very human, traits of control and authority. As parents and teachers, it is a simple matter to err in our judgement on their behalf because we wish to protect our children from making mistakes.

Children have the right to make mistakes also, for how else will they learn to make their own creative decisions about life?

It is not such a simple matter to err on the side of more sinister human prejudices such as greed and the desire for power: there is no justification for the exploitation of children as cheap labour, more often than not under dangerous conditions; there is no excuse for engaging in armed conflict without regard for the damage wrought upon innocent lives and to engage children in such conflict or to exploit them for sexual purposes is the deplorable anti-thesis of the concept of participation which UNICEF and its partners are seeking to promote.

Advance Humanity

Change begins in the present and extends to the future, be that another minute from now or generations ahead in the next century, and the very growth and development of our children is inextricably bound to that change.

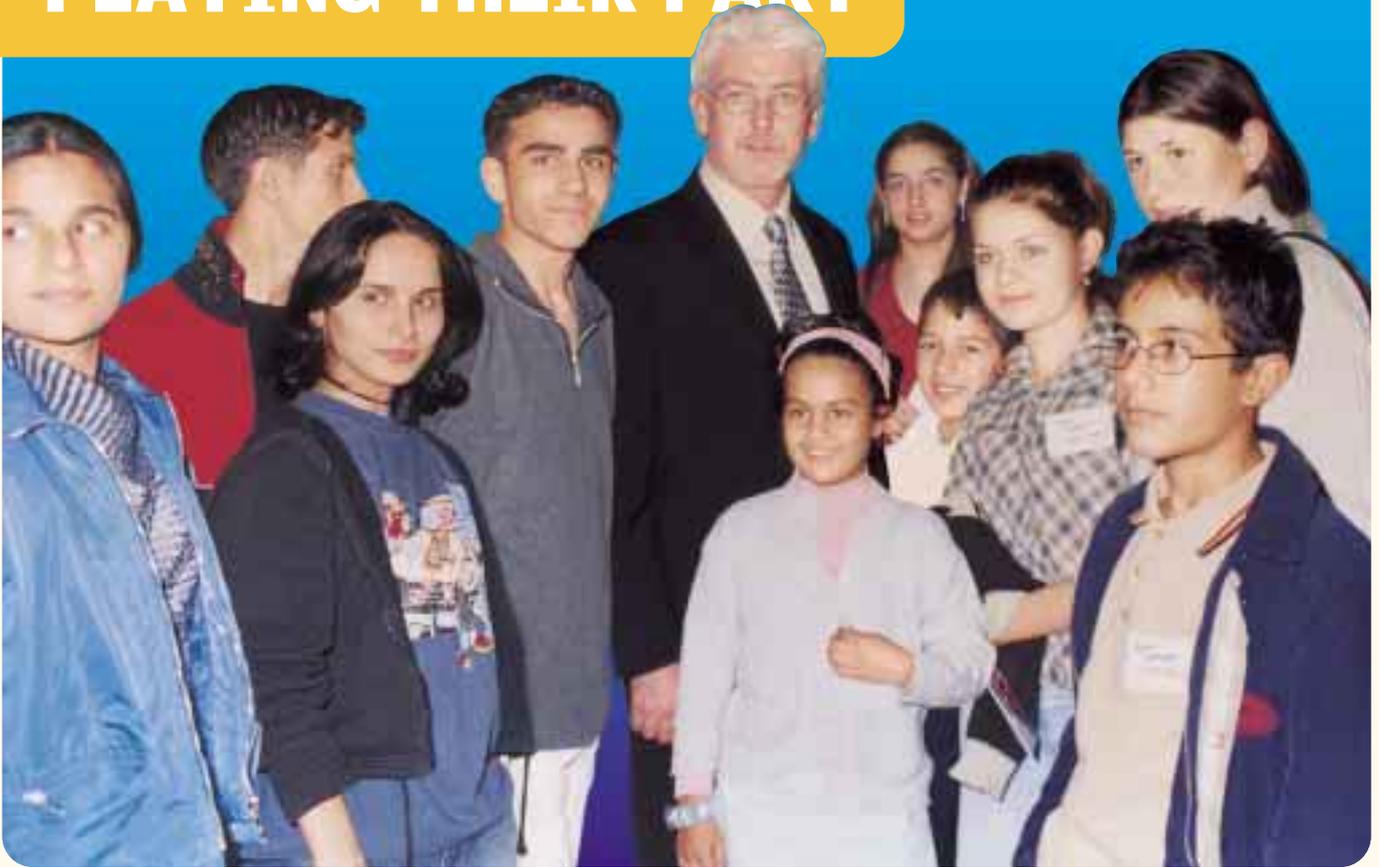
The carefully phrased wisdom of the Convention on The Rights of The Child has transformed the world we share and there is no turning back. Daily, more children open their eyes and their minds to an understanding of their rights and more of us who live and work with them are learning how to respect those rights. However, for millions of children who are still caught in the midst of armed conflict, sexual slavery or hazardous labour, there remains much to be done in building a world fit enough for them to live in.

Speaking in November, 2001, Kofi Annan reminded us: "One of the greatest challenges to humankind in the new century will be the struggle to make the practice of democracy truly universal."

Team Spirit: the value of sports for the physical and mental development of children has long been acknowledged.



PLAYING THEIR PART



"Usually I talk about children to adults but today it's great to be able to speak to children about children" said UNICEF Turkey Representative, Edmond McLoughney, addressing delegates at the opening of the Third Children's Forum in Ankara, 2002.

Taking Part

Seventeen-year-old Demet from Kars spoke from her experience of all three Forum events so far: "Being a participant is not so easy — firstly you need to get your parents' approval which means, of course, that you have to convince them of the importance of what you are doing.

"This is the third time I have taken part in the Forum. The first time I came, my schoolmates teased me. They said 'so you're a child? What difference is it going to make if you go to Ankara and talk about children's rights?'

"But I wouldn't give up — after every visit to the Forum, I've always made the effort to inform them about the decisions we took there. I'd also inform the local press and the authorities, sharing the outcome documents with them.

"Last year, I gathered pledges for the 'Say Yes for Children' Campaign with the help of my friends. Now they're all waiting excitedly for my return: they have come to believe that we can do something about the problems we all face as children."

The Children's Forum is all about participation: it is a platform for child delegates to assemble from Turkey's eighty-one Provinces in order to discuss the issues which will affect their future, to monitor and comment upon implementation of the CRC and to see that their rights as children are properly respected. They are able to air their own views, to listen to the views of others, to make decisions about the issues which affect them most and to present their conclusions to the policy-makers, institutions and organisations who shape the world we live in.

Delegates attending the Forum are not asking that adults surrender all decision making power to them. However, they are well aware that the CRC calls for children to be heard: in many cases adults still make the final decision but, with the precepts of the CRC in mind, the very act of their listening signifies a big step forward for children's rights.

Sixteen year old Suat from Trabzon was well aware that the responsibility to represent the interests of over thirty

million Turkish children and adolescents rested on his young shoulders and those of his fellow delegates:

"At first, I found it unnerving and even a little scary to get up and speak before an audience. But I've gotten over that in time. Now I feel quite free to express myself on a public platform. I know that the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) and UNICEF are prepared to listen to me ... and I have learned to listen too.

"Before now, I couldn't imagine that children in other parts of the world had problems similar to ours but, taking part in the Forum, I have learned to think more universally."

A World Fit for Children

This year, delegates were asked to develop their own Action Plan showing what they think should be done in order to achieve 'A World Fit for Children'. Their views will be incorporated into the National Plan of Action (NPA) currently being developed by UNICEF and its partners.



In his opening speech to delegates, Edmond McLoughney said: "I know that, as Turkish children, you will work on the National Plan of Action for children. You will identify what you can do to translate 'A World Fit for Children' into action here in Turkey and once more show us adults how things should be done."

**"I am looking forward to seeing the results of your endeavours to build A World Fit for Children"
Edmond McLoughney**

Giving children the opportunity to voice their opinions in such a vitally important document as the National Plan of Action is an investment in the future. Through their involvement, these children and their peers will be better prepared to understand the problems, inequities and injustices of the world they will inherit. Since they are the parents of the future, it follows that they will be more capable of dealing with these problems in a constructive way and that they will be still more sympathetic to their own children — we will be another generation closer to making 'A World Fit for Children'.

Children Must Be Heard

"If they don't listen to me now, they'll have to when I grow up. Because I'm going to be a philosopher and then they will listen to and do whatever I say. Just look: even with my poor English that big man (Edmond McLoughney) who spoke at the opening listened to me. So you see, they'll hear you if you want to be heard."

That was how eleven year old Gamze from Hatay expressed her firm intention to see that we get 'A World Fit for Children'. The sheer verve of Gamze's words was not at all unusual amongst the delegates: the voices of all children at the Forum were loud and clear. They demanded the right to be listened to and showed how they could be heard. They demanded more information about their rights and how

they can protect those rights. They demanded a greater focus on issues such as health and education.

Often, when asked what they think, children will not always tell us what we necessarily want or expect to hear: usually, the unselfconsciously direct response will result in an uncomfortable moment of soul searching on the part of the questioner. The delegates were direct, to say the least, about the harsher realities of life in Turkey such as discrimination against the poor, the disabled and other minorities. Their comments on violence at home and in school were ruthlessly uncompromising.

Most importantly, the consensus was that education is the most important factor in any equation which will produce the solution to the problems children face in today's world — an unsurprising conclusion since Turkish children collected an impressive sixteen million signatures for the 'Say Yes for Children' Campaign, thus endorsing the primary imperative of the campaign which is to 'Educate Every Child'.

Achievements

The Coordinator for the Children's Network, Murat, was elected and for the first time, seven regional coordinators were also elected. The Coordination Committee will ease communication between provincial delegates.

On the first night, a group of girls from Muradiye in Van performed 'Kardelen'. The vital issue of girls' education was presented in dramatic form so that delegates would be able to absorb the message and take it home to their communities.

Action Plans outlining the roles and responsibilities of children were developed. For instance, it was proposed that children should visit Provincial Health Directorates and request seminars on such crucial issues as HIV/AIDS.

These Action Plans

will be developed on the major themes of 'A World Fit for Children' which are: Promoting Healthy Lives; Providing Quality Education; Protecting Against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence and Combating HIV/AIDS. The completed document will be presented to the President of Turkey and all agencies concerned along with the final draft of the NPA.

It was suggested that, on their return home, delegates should discuss the Action Plans with their teachers, school principals, the mayor and other local authorities.

The Last Word

As sixteen-year-old Kurtuluş, a working boy put it: "What I got from this Forum is that if I have a child, I'll send her to school, whatever happens. She'll learn about children's rights, understand that she is not alone and be sure that there are people who will listen to and care for her."

There may or may not be some significance in the Langenscheidt Dictionary's translation of the boy's name, 'Kurtuluş': 1. liberation; 2. salvation; 3. escape'.

Decide for yourself — we'll leave the last word to Kurtuluş himself.



DIYARBAKIR STARFISH

There is much to be done before we can say that we have 'A World Fit for Children'. Many of our children do not enjoy the security of homes and families. They live on the streets, prey to all forms of physical and moral abuse, their lives hanging by a thread. In this respect, Turkey is no different to any other country: the number of children living and working on the streets rises daily. Thankfully there are agencies and individuals working hard to change this — such as the team at SHÇEK's 75th Anniversary Child and Youth Centre in Diyarbakır. Here are six stories about children of that city who, through no fault of their own, have had to brave life on the streets. Some have been successful, some continue to struggle. All of them are trying hard to find a world fit to live in. Names have been changed to protect their identities.

Şehmuz and Dicle

At twelve years of age, Şehmuz was scraping a living on the street, selling things to late-night shoppers and cinema-goers. Often he would sleep on the street, despite the fact that his family lived not far away.

One day he brought his baby brother, Dicle to the Centre. He was very worried about the baby's state of health: the child looked very thin and ill. A thorough examination revealed nothing more than that Dicle was hungry. Baby food was quickly fetched and after being fed, Dicle was put down to sleep for a bit while they looked into the children's situation.

The boys' mother had already lost two children through malnutrition and starvation. She told them: "I have ten children.

My husband only comes home a few times a year so some of my children have to work in order to find extra cash.

Even then we only get by with the help of our neighbours".

Their mother is now using a diaphragm (IUD). (Although there is a health centre close by, she had been unaware of birth control and family planning methods.)

Today, Şehmuz is at boarding school. SHÇEK plans to do the same for Dicle when he reaches school age.

Firat

Firat is thirteen. He used to sell sweets to passers-by. Then he took to begging, at which point social workers began to keep an eye on him. They asked him why he had started begging:

"At home one evening my little brothers and sisters had not eaten enough and we were still hungry. Although I had been working, my mother couldn't even afford to bake bread for us. So the following day I started begging. I earn more this way."

Since then, social workers have been trying to convince Firat to give up begging so that he can go to school and perhaps one day, he might perhaps fulfil his ambition to be a doctor. However, the boy feels it is his duty to find a solution to his family's crippling financial problems or at least to do what he can to ease their plight.

Unfortunately for Firat, the local authorities and SHÇEK have limited resources to offer families in such dire financial straits. Firat can only hope that the desperately needed assistance will come from elsewhere if he is to have any hope of shaping his future.

Murat

Still only fourteen years of age, Murat runs with a gang of thieves. His family suffer all the disadvantages of poverty: no proper medical care (his brother died of tuberculosis); lack of education and, of course, hunger and malnutrition. They are desperate.

In an effort to break the predictable cycle of poverty and crime in which he was trapped, social workers and specialists convinced Murat to sever connections with the gang and attempt to earn his living lawfully. So Murat took himself off to the Black Sea region where he found work picking hazelnuts for a couple of months.

When he came back, he visited the social workers whose advice and good intentions had been so persuasive during the summer. He looked thin and pale.

He told them he had been working from five in the morning until eight in the evening without any lunch. He was paid a total of 60 million TL — 30 million TL a month — little more than US\$37 by the current rate of exchange. Murat understood that as he starved, his employer was blithely exploiting him as cheap labour.

Finishing his story, Murat threw the money on the desk and added: "I could earn this in one day with my gang and I wouldn't have to starve for it either!"

The Water Children

A group of eight children aged between seven and thirteen years, all of them relatives, had been trying to earn money selling water and ice on the streets during the hot summer months.

For some time word about the Centre had been out on the streets, so this little group decided to have a look and see what it was all about. It would seem that they approved of what they found there because, in a very short space of time, each one of the children became something of a regular fixture. They had an incredible talent for music and took full advantage of lessons in guitar and flute as well as more practical instruction in computers.

With the support of the Centre, they eventually committed to a full-time education and enrolled in the boarding school which they currently attend.

Şirvan

Şirvan is fourteen. In Diyarbakır, it is not unusual for temperatures to rise above 35°C during the summer. Şirvan was easily recognised by her eccentric habit of an overcoat which she would wear all the year round — even in those swelteringly hot summer months.

One day, she was asked how, indeed why, she would brave the intense heat in such an outfit? She said that her breasts were attracting attention from men and that sometimes led to harassment. When social workers spoke to her mother, she was fully aware of the problem but wasn't inclined to do a thing about it.

So the social workers took it upon themselves to guide Şirvan in a more comfortable way of dressing which would also protect her from unwanted attention. Eventually, she was persuaded to wear light summer clothes which were comfortable and stylish but also loose enough to protect her modesty.

At present, Şirvan is still under observation by SHÇEK and the ægis of the Child Department of Security.

Sinan

At thirteen years of age, Sinan was living and working on the streets. He was badly electrocuted at an early age

and his body is permanently scarred in several places. He would dress to hide his scars: heavy clothes and gloves because he had also lost a hand.

A new social worker came to the Centre who, because of his own facial burns, was gifted with the kind of empathy born only of shared experience. They worked closely together focusing on the child's attitude to his injuries. After four months, Sinan shed his inhibitions along with his coat.

Eventually, Sinan had the confidence to begin open primary education in tandem with a course of æsthetic therapy provided by a local charity.

Sinan's father suffers from a very severe psychological disturbance and he would beat his son just for attending the Centre. It was he who had set the boy to work on the streets in the first place. By his mother's consent, the boy and his brothers and sisters were placed in the care of a SHÇEK boarding facility. At this point, his father threatened social workers at the Centre with violence.

In spite of this, all of the children are attending school and Sinan has plans to go to university.

About the Centre

In 1999, SHÇEK and the GAP Provincial Directorate set up the 75th Anniversary Child and Youth Centre in Diyarbakır in the heart of Southeastern Turkey. Designed as a rehabilitation project, the Centre has 480 girls and boys registered on it's books. The Centre also works with families where possible and so reaches out to more than 1,300 sisters and brothers of these children. In addition, the social work team at the Centre constantly watch over the activities and general well-being of over 3,000 children living and/or working on the streets of Diyarbakır.

The Centre is building a strong network between other concerned agencies, working closely with the Police Department, the Greater Municipality, Education and Health Departments and the Turkish National Television and Radio Channels as well as UNICEF and other NGOs. Frequent monitoring and evaluation reports are submitted to the SHÇEK General Directorate.

SHÇEK is planning to apply the successful model in other Provinces.

Would You Like to Help?

UNICEF's contribution to the future success of this project and others like it depends on the availability of funding and resources.

If you would like to help us, we can send you a copy of our Donor Funding Catalogue (see **Recent Publications** on page 12) which details the goals, objectives and strategies of the project and the budget required. Otherwise, contact UNICEF Turkey's National Committee Offices in Ankara and İstanbul (see **UNICEF Donors** also on page 12).

UNDERSTANDING AIDS



When Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome first made headlines in 1980, few could have foreseen the terrible shadow which the unforgettably deceptive mnemonic of AIDS is now set to cast over generations to come. Although the HIV retrovirus is an opportunistic infection with no will or agenda of its own, we talk of the 'war' against AIDS as if it were some otherworldly invader. In truth, the war is with our own very human qualities of ignorance, fear and prejudice and we can only arm ourselves for such a battle — adults and children alike — by being informed as individuals.

The HIV/AIDS virus is transmitted via blood, blood products, semen and vaginal secretions. It cannot survive outside of its host and it cannot be transmitted by normal social contact such as touching, breathing the same air, sharing food or even kissing.

During the early 'eighties, when AIDS was still very much a mystery, many people in the United States and Europe were infected by transfusions of infected blood. However, commercial blood donation has long since been banned in most parts of the world as it has been here in Turkey. Today, all blood donations and products such as plasma derived from blood are assiduously screened for evidence of the virus. Cases of infection through blood are mostly the result of intravenous drug users (IDUs) sharing needles. Since the number of IDUs in this country is quite low, it follows that most cases of infection are the result of unprotected sexual intercourse. As with other sexually transmitted diseases, strong

condoms are the only protection against transmission of the retrovirus.

Although the disease is a global issue, a pandemic as opposed to an epidemic since the fight to control it extends well beyond the borders of any given country or continent, the personal matter of sexual behaviour is critical: social mores about sexual behaviour are the 'minefields' of this 'war'.

While all HIV testing and treatment is principally covered by the Government, the primary objective is to negotiate these 'minefields' in order to inform those who are most at risk of infection. UNICEF works closely with the Ministry of Health and other NGOs on education and awareness campaigns.

Holiday Snaps

The disinhibiting effects of travel are marked. On business or on holiday, we can be less in touch with the usual factors of home, work and relationships which help us to regulate our behaviour. A sense of adventure, of freedom from

routine compensates for feelings of boredom, disorientation and even loneliness. The ability to make sound decisions about our behaviour can become diminished.

During the course of 2002, the tourist industry in Turkey catered to almost eleven million foreign visitors.

Didim, Summer 2000: a waiter chats excitedly about his engagement to a European girl whom he met a month before when she came for a holiday. They plan to formalise the engagement with a ring when she returns in a few months. He is no more than eighteen years of age and, perhaps, a little naive in his expectation that this was anything more than a holiday 'fling'. They probably had intimate contact, in which case they hopefully used a condom: owing to the high prevalence of IDUs in the girl's hometown, she was a potentially high risk sexual partner.

As he talks, a middle-aged tourist at a nearby table is taking a keen interest in another waiter who has brought her coffee. The boy is clearly used to the attention and cheerfully reciprocates her slightly lewd banter.

As rates of immigration, emigration and urbanisation rise, the hazards of casual sexual contact are as real for Turkish travellers abroad as they are at home.

Having completed national service, Selahattin Demirer went to find work in

Romania: "I found that the lifestyle was different to where I came from, especially in matters of sex where there was no prejudice ... I was young and single and had little experience in sexual matters. I had girlfriends but I was unaware of the dangers [of unprotected sex] so I carried on. If I had known about the danger, things would have been different".

Demirer came home and married. Shortly after his wife gave birth to their daughter, he discovered that he was HIV-positive. His wife proved to be very understanding and supportive. However, during the early stages of his treatment, both she and their daughter also tested HIV-positive. The little girl very quickly fell prey to the debilitating effects of the disease and died. His wife lost hope and refused further treatment for herself. Eventually she too died.

Writing about the common prejudice against sufferers, Demirer says: "it's important to understand that we don't have to protect ourselves from people who have this disease, we need to protect ourselves from the disease itself".

In order to inform travellers abroad of the risks, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF launched an awareness campaign in 2001. A leaflet entitled 'Unutmayın!' (Don't Forget!) is distributed at all passport checkpoints.

Straight Talking

Constituting almost half of the population, children and young people under the age of 25 represent the largest and the most vulnerable social group in Turkey. The average age for a first marriage is rising (currently almost 24 years for men and between 19 and 20 years for women) yet young people are having sex at a much earlier age: a third of men in their late twenties have been sexually active since their eighteenth year.

The need for a comprehensive programme of peer education directed by young people for young people is clear. In the past, UNICEF worked closely with the AIDS Prevention Society in Turkey, promoting peer education in the metropolitan area of İstanbul. Since 2001, activities have been expanded to reach the provinces in collaboration with other NGOs and the Government of Turkey under the Country Programme of Cooperation, 2001-2005. The 'Adolescent Health

and Development Project' involves young people in the drive to inform their peers of the hazards.

A ground-breaking brochure using humour to promote the use of condoms was developed and produced by a youth group. A light-hearted approach to the subject successfully ensured that the message would be absorbed by high-school and university students.

Since many children living and/or working on the streets are in danger of being exploited for sex, there is a clear need for concerned agencies to offer counselling, advice and protection from the hazards of infection. Above all, these children need to be sheltered from the dangers of life on the street: they need the safety and security of home and a place in society.

For the first time, HIV/AIDS was included in the primary school curriculum during 2002. Awareness campaigns have featured posters, leaflets and television broadcasts.

Further Action

Since the first case was reported in 1985, UN entities such as WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP have all played a part in the national response to HIV/AIDS. In 2001, the UN Thematic Group (TG) was established. By pooling resources and coordinating the activities of its constituent agencies, the TG aims to raise public awareness and advocates

for stronger action by the Government and NGOs. UNICEF has chaired the UNAIDS Thematic Group since 2001. A full time consultant has been commissioned to activate partners within the National AIDS Commission and other concerned institutions.

The 'UN HIV/AIDS Theme Group Situation Analysis of HIV/AIDS in Turkey' for 2002 estimates that between 7,000 and 14,000 people have been living with AIDS since the start of the pandemic. Figures released by the Ministry of Health in June, 2002, show a total of 1,429 reported cases of HIV/AIDS since 1985.

The disparity between the official record and the TGs lowest estimate is puzzling at first but there is a clue in Selahattin Demirer's words: "This disease is here in our country and it is spreading rapidly because people are frightened of taking the test ... and frightened of going for treatment".

If there is any fight against HIV/AIDS, it is not with the retrovirus — that is a matter of self-protection. The real fight is to educate, inform and counsel against the fear, ignorance and prejudice which puts communities and individuals the world over at risk.

Many thanks to Selahattin Demirer for permission to quote from his book, HIV/AIDS'le Yaşamak (Living with HIV/AIDS)

THE FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

The HIV retrovirus attacks the immune system, causing the body to lose its vital capacity to resist infection. The cumulative result is known as Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The condition is terminal.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR HIV/AIDS?

Progress of the HIV virus can be retarded with the help of antiretroviral drugs and therapy. However, there is no cure as yet.

HOW IS HIV/AIDS TRANSMITTED?

HIV/AIDS can only be transmitted in blood, blood products, semen and vaginal secretions. Most cases result from unprotected sexual intercourse. Intravenous drug users can also transfer the virus by sharing needles containing infected blood.

HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES?

Do not have unprotected sexual intercourse — always use a strong condom. For injections, always use a fresh needle and never, ever, share one.

unicef TURKEY



GOALS FOR 2005

- To reduce the Infant Mortality Rate from 42.7‰ to 20‰.
- To reduce the Maternal Mortality Rate by 50%.
- To increase the rates of exclusive breastfeeding.
- To eliminate Iodine Deficiency Disorders in children.
- To expand the Family and Child Training Programme (FACT) to reach 3 million families.
- To reduce female illiteracy to half of the 1999 rate.
- To improve the health and development of adolescents.
- To significantly minimise the ratio of children in need of special protection.
- To build local capacity in social monitoring and planning for children and women.
- To ensure that Turkey's legislation is fully compliant with CRC/CEDAW.
- To have a sustainable, interactive Child, Women and Youth Information Network.
- To respond to the needs of children and women during and after emergencies.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Copies may be obtained free of charge on request from **UNICEF Turkey, Birlik Mahallesi No.11, 2. Cadde, 06610 Çankaya, Ankara, Turkey**

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A brief description of unfunded UNICEF projects in Turkey detailing budgetary requirements for donor reference.

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Emphasising the vital importance of children's participation on education, health and social issues.

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Girl's Education, Iodised Salt, Supplies, Polio-free Europe and Fundraising.

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UNICEF works to both preserve and enhance the lives of children the world over and the success of our programmes depends upon the partnership and support of governments, non-governmental organisations, institutions and individuals. To make a tax-deductible donation to any project or programme please contact the UNICEF Turkey National Committee in Ankara or İstanbul (see below). To help you make your choice(s) ask us for a copy of the Donor Funding Catalogue (See [Recent Publications](#) above).

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