

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

Regional Monitoring Report No. 7

What UNICEF is doing to support young people in the region

Highlights of recent activities and programmes

Regional initiatives

- Young Voices, the First Regional Survey of Children and Youth, begins in November. The first systematic collection of the views of children and adolescents about their rights in Western Europe and the transition countries, sponsored by UNICEF in partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is designed to complement *Young People in Changing Societies*.
- In preparation for the September 2001 UN Special Session on Children, youth representatives from transition countries will take part in two major events to create a new agenda for children and young people for the next 10-15 years: a Regional Civil Society Consultation to be followed by the first Regional Inter-Governmental Consultation in Spring 2001.
- UNICEF and the World Organization of the Scout Movement are preparing a *Youth Discussion Guide* to present *Young People in Changing Societies* in a “youth-friendly” format for use in schools, by youth organizations and at youth-related policy meetings.
- UNICEF, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the Government of Sweden and other partners will participate in the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Young People and Alcohol, in February 2001 in Stockholm. These partners are organizing a preparatory international Youth Meeting in November, bringing together over 100 young people from 50 countries. By participating, young people will contribute to the shaping of future action on alcohol in Europe. *Young People in Changing Societies* will be an important discussion tool for both events.

- UNICEF is a UNAIDS co-sponsor for a region-wide strategy to better coordinate national efforts on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS co-sponsors, bilateral partners, NGOs and governments are creating action plans to reach vulnerable young people and address such issues as injecting drug use and sexually transmitted diseases. UNICEF is leading sub-regional initiatives in the Caucasus, Central Asia and South Eastern Europe. In the Baltic Sea Area, a dynamic partnership among UNAIDS co-sponsors, the governments of the three Baltic States, United States, Finland, Norway, Sweden has resulted in the Baltic Sea Action Plan to coordinate international efforts and strengthen advocacy.
- UNICEF is a member of a UN Interagency Group established in 1999 to address young people's health development and protection in the region, alongside WHO, UNFPA and the UNAIDS secretariat, national governments and NGOs. As well as the creation of joint workplans on key areas of youth health, the work of the Group has resulted in peer education training and policy guidance on Health Promoting Schools in most countries of the region in 1999/2000.

BALKANS AREA

- UNICEF was instrumental in the establishment of a Working Group on Young People within the Education and Youth Task Force of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, with an agenda including such key themes as democratic citizenship, peace-building and healthy lifestyles. As a result of the Working Group's efforts, more of the international assistance flowing through the Stability Pact is benefiting young people.

Country Highlights

Albania

- Elected Youth parliamentarians are working closely with local, municipal and national politicians to learn about the workings of government and raise issues of concern. By next year, five cities will have elected Youth Parliaments
- Seven youth news bureaus are being trained in basic video journalism principles so that young reporters can produce TV stories on issues of interest to them

AZERBAIJAN

- Around 1,000 young people, including refugee and internally displaced young people, took part in a major Youth Health Festival organized last June in Baku in partnership with Save the Children, youth organizations, local authorities and government ministries

BELARUS

- The Ministry of Education and the Belarusian Children's Fund, with UNICEF support, organized a National Children's Forum for over 200 children and young people in June 2000. Proposals from the Forum were submitted to the National Committee on Child's Rights.
- More than 150 representatives of children's groups and youth leaders discussed issues facing young people at a Children's Summit in November 1999, organized by the non-governmental Belarusian National Youth Council as part of the Global Movement for Children process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Around 100 youth organizations from both parts of the country took part in a Youth Fair held in Sarajevo in September to review the situation of young people and plan for the creation of a Youth Task Force to present Plans of Action for youth by youth.
- Six radio stations have been broadcasting programmes about substance abuse, HIV/AIDS prevention and young people in conflict with the law. The popular youth-oriented Radio ZID has developed a web site for young people.
- UNICEF is working with the Soros Foundation's Debate Centre to promote the Youth Agenda within the Global Movement for Children. Debates on themes such as education reform and participation in political life aim to promote new policies on youth.

Bulgaria

- UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS are supporting the establishment of a Social Development Unit under UNDP to add the youth dimension to all UN cooperation in the country.
- Youth forums in the Varna region bring young people and local government and NGO policy makers together to solve local problems; a forum webpage has been created and related initiatives are being carried out, such as youth surveys and rapid assessment of sexual health and substance use among vulnerable young people.

Croatia

- "Youth for youth" groups have organized public discussions for over 2,500 children and adolescents covering such topics as HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse and smoking. An educational kit for adolescents on responsible sexual behaviour has been produced.
- UNICEF supports peer-based conflict resolution programmes in five secondary schools.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (excluding the Province of Kosovo)

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- A youth opinion poll on the rights of young people to health care and education was conducted with 467 secondary school children in eight Serbian cities in Spring 1999.
- Around 50 young people from the region took part in an International Children's Animated Film Workshop in Vranje in September 1999 organized by the city's Children's School for Animation with UNICEF's assistance. The school has produced 'Every Child has the Right to a Loving Family', the first child rights' cartoon produced exclusively by children.

The UN Administered Province of Kosovo

- The NGO Triangle opened a youth centre in Skenderaj/Srbica in September 1999 – the only venue for young people to meet outside school. The UNICEF-supported centre offers many activities including language and computer courses, art and music instruction. A social worker is available to provide confidential support to young people.
- Radio programmes being distributed to local radio stations throughout Kosovo give young people a chance to express their opinions and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas. And a team of young people are producing a monthly newsletter for school students in Prishtina.
- A Youth at Risk project is reaching young people who are not attending school or working on the streets. NGO staff talk to them in bars and clubs about their concerns and distribute information on healthy lifestyles.

Kyrgyzstan

- Radio FM Salaam Ferghana is expected to open in November in the region of Batken. The UNICEF-sponsored station will be staffed by local young journalists trained in partnership with INTERNEWS and will broadcast to more than 150,000 young people in the conflict-prone region of the Ferghana Valley.
- The New Generation Forum was established in August to forge alliances for follow-up activities required as a result of the CRC Committee's response to the Kyrgyzstan State party report. The focus is on partnerships at the local level, with a youth TV magazine programme - *Generation X* - reporting on developments.
- Around 3,000 young people took part in events involving young British performing artists in September and October 2000 co-sponsored by UNICEF, the British Council, USAID and a number of local businesses on the theme was of Healthy Nation-Healthy Youth.

Latvia

UNICEF, in collaboration with UNFPA and UNDP has established a youth focal point under UNDP Latvia to follow-up national and sub-regional activities on young people's health, development and protection activities supported by the UN system. Joint UN training has begun on life skills for school systems, peer education training, rapid assessment methods and journalist training. The rights of young people and need for cross-sectoral work were highlighted by a recent intersectoral meeting of young people

and health, education policy makers, the media and other key players on the development of a common strategy on young people in Latvia.

FYR Macedonia

- The country's first HIV/AIDS help-line was launched by a youth NGO and is being promoted through a campaign that includes newspaper ads, posters and stickers in nightclubs.
- In summer, Macedonian, Albanian and Roma school and university students took part in media-related projects as part of a new inter-ethnic volunteer programme, including a survey of youth Internet use and interviews with young people. The participants are contributing to UNICEF Macedonia's Situation Analysis 2000.

Moldova

- The network of student volunteers promoting child rights has been extended from the capital Chisinau, to four regions, including the separatist region of Transnistria. Training programmes and activities have been organized for more than 50,000 young people to date.
- Moldova's second Children's Parliament (2000-2001) started work in August. It's 101 junior parliamentarians were elected via a national contest, and, for the first time, 12 were chosen to represent children in institutions.
- The First Youth-Friendly Clinic, offering free consultations for adolescents on reproductive health and sexuality was opened in Chisinau in June.

Russian Federation

- The first Internet on-line conference on child rights issues in Russia was held on 1 June. The country's Vice-Premier, the Deputy Ministers of Education and Labour and UNICEF's Representative responded to questions from the 14,000 young people who visited the site.
- An All-Russian Conference on Problems facing the Younger Generation was held in Moscow for three days in June. Youth leaders and professionals from more than 50 NGOs and government institutions discussed the situation of young people and their prospects.
- 400 young journalists from 50 cities took part in the Youth Press Forum in August. The participants, who produce more than 80 newspapers, TV and radio programmes, discussed a wide range of child rights issues.

Tajikistan

- A Youth Week will be held in November, organized by NGOs and government ministries with support from international agencies. Backed by a mass communication campaign, the Week's activities will take place in schools, universities and specialized institutions. Highlights include a Self-Government Day,

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when students will replace teachers in the classrooms, and a Day of Goodwill, when activities will include community clean-ups.

Ukraine

- The first All-Ukraine Meeting of Mayors for Youth-Friendly Cities was held in Kiev in May, following a week-long gathering of 3,500 young people. Work began on an action programme to address the needs of young people at the municipal level, including youth participation in decision-making and programme implementation.
- The Ukrainian Arts Festival of Children with Special Needs was held in the Crimea in September. Some 300 children and adolescents with disabilities and their parents took part, plus governmental officials and leaders of NGOs working with disabled children. The event highlighted the right of disabled children to lead full and dignified lives.
- A child rights opinion poll conducted in September-October gave young people the chance to share their views about the implementation of their rights in Ukraine.

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