

EMBARGO: 10:00 GMT, 29 NOVEMBER 2001

Launch of the MONEE REPORT no. 8

**KEY POINTS ON
“A DECADE OF TRANSITION”**

- *A Decade of Transition* reviews the human impact of ten years of transition in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltics – home to over 400 million people, including 108 million children.
- The Report raises concerns that the two original goals of the transition – to improve the standard of living for everyone, and to build humane and democratic societies – have been neglected in the rush for economic growth.
- It looks at overall social progress since 1989, household incomes and child poverty, health, education, and children in public care, finding a mixture of success and failure. New freedoms have often gone hand in hand with new risks, such as growing poverty, with serious consequences for social development.
- There is good news. In most countries, IMR, teen birth rates, maternal mortality and adolescent deaths have fallen and most economies in the region are growing. But many people have been excluded from the progress that has been made.
- Disparities grew during the 1990s between rich and poor and also between different parts of the region. *A Decade of Transition* stresses very different experiences of transition in a region that contains four OECD countries, ten that are applying for entry into the European Union, and eight ranked by the World Bank as low income countries.
- UNICEF hopes that this report, with the UN Secretary-General's End-Decade Review of progress for children, will influence poverty reduction strategies and reform on health and education expenditure and quality, and on childcare systems to prevent child institutionalization. The Report feeds into a region-wide review process in preparation for next year's UN General Assembly Special Session on Children.

MAIN FINDINGS:

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (formally known as the International Child Development Centre) explores issues that contribute to the implementation of child rights in both industrialized and developing countries.

- Almost 18 million children in poverty across the region (living on \$2.15 per day);
- Around 1.5 million children in public care – an increase of 150,000 since 1989;
- An estimated 700,000 cases of HIV by late 2000;
- On average, tuberculosis incidence up by 50%, with big rises in poorer countries;
- High levels of child malnutrition in some parts of the region;
- Lack of legislation on salt iodization – or poor enforcement – in many countries;
- Lower pre-school enrolment in almost all CIS countries and almost nine million 15-18 year-olds out of school – up from six million in 1989;
- Fewer children. The number of under fives has fallen by more than one third;
- Conflict in around one third of countries since 1989. By late 2000, 2.2 million people registered as internally displaced and almost one million as refugees;
- 3.2 million ‘excess’ deaths in the 1990s – deaths (mostly among adult men) that would not have occurred if mortality rates had remained at 1989 levels;
- Threats to basic health services in some countries through low public expenditure;
- Education expenditures fell alongside GDP and there are concerns about the effective use of budgets and the pace of educational reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Overall recommendations on social and economic transition:

- Future economic growth must be harnessed to benefit everyone;
- The huge fall in births and in the number of children leaves no excuse for inadequate investment in children.
- Countries should make their public sectors more efficient and “pro-poor”;
- Public policies need to recognize the changing nature of the family, with more single-parent households, the breakdown of the extended family in some parts of the region, fewer marriages and divorces, and fewer and later births;

Child poverty:

- Child poverty should be moved centre-stage in national policy debate;
- Action is needed to tackle long-term disadvantage (such as the discrimination often experienced by women and minorities) that perpetuates child poverty;

- Family incomes need support via economic policy and tax and benefits systems.

Health and Education:

- Two main issues: access to services and the quality of those services;
- Health/education policies must address adequate finance, efficiency and equity;
- More focus is needed on preventive health care, health education and on public health programmes such as salt iodization and immunization;
- Education budgets could be used more effectively by cutting the number of teachers needed for smaller child populations and by paying teachers more;
- More progress is needed on the reform of curricula, examinations and teaching methods to produce a more child-friendly and flexible approach to learning.

Children in public care:

- Radical reform of the child protection system is crucial for family support;
- Expand family-based care alternatives, including those of NGOs;
- Immediate action is needed to: end the institutionalization of infants; set a date to close all large institutions; improve monitoring of the quality of care for children.

HOW THE REPORT WILL BE USED:

The MONEE Report is a key part of UNICEF's advocacy in the region, drawing the attention of policy-makers to children's issues. It informs the work of international organizations, NGOs, researchers and media in the region and beyond. UNICEF Country Offices in the region are making plans for this year's Report. UNICEF in Armenia, for example, will use the Report to promote dialogue between various partners including young people, women's groups, children, NGOs, academia, media and decision-makers. UNICEF Romania plans a media workshop in December where journalists will prepare articles on the issues raised by the Report. In Russia, the Report will be launched in early December in Moscow -- a group of young actors will use drama and music to highlight the main issues of the last decade. In Tajikistan, UNICEF will use the Report to stimulate a meeting with partners to review the current situation and assess existing projects. It will also feed into Youth Forum later this year to examine GMC activity in Tajikistan.

For more information, please contact

Patrick McCormick, IRC Communication Officer. Tel: 0039 055 2033354 e:mail: pmccormick@unicef.org or

Patrizia Faustini, IRC Communication Assistant, tel. 00 39 055 2033253 e:mail pfaustini@unicef.org or

Robert Cohen, CEE/CIS/Baltics Regional Office, tel. 00 41 22 909 5631 e:mail: rcohen@unicef.org