

# FACTSHEET



## Protection in Afghanistan

UNICEF works with local communities, NGO partners and government officials to ensure society provides children the legal and social frameworks essential to the realization of their rights. The need for the development of formal and informal mechanisms to protect children is more important than ever. Decades of conflict have eroded the physical and social fabric of Afghanistan and continue to impact the lives of children by hampering their access to school and basic services, exposing them to increased violence and abuses and jeopardizing their very survival.

UNICEF works to ensure that children have the space, freedom and safety to enjoy their childhood and to grow into healthy and engaged adults. Policy and legislative initiatives provide the institutional strengthening to enable advocacy efforts and programmes in preventing and eradicating violence, abuse and exploitation, with special attention to ending early and forced marriage, hazardous and exploitative labour and gender-based violence in Afghanistan.

## UNICEF in Action

UNICEF's long history in the country makes it uniquely placed to work at both the community and government levels. In 2003, UNICEF supported the government to set-up the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN). CPAN is a coalition of government, NGO, community

Child Protection in Afghanistan	
% Total child labour* (aged 7-14)	13
% Female child labour (aged 7-14)	17
% Male child labour (aged 7-14)	9
% Child marriage	39
% Total birth registration	6
% Rural birth registration	4
% Urban birth registration	12

Source: State of the World's Children, 2011  
 \*Child Labour is defined by a child who (a) did between one and 14 hours of economic activity or (b) at least 28 hours of household chores in the week prior to the survey

and religious leaders working to provide access to services for children in need of protection. Since 2006 CPAN has grown and increased in capacity, gaining the official endorsement of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

51 Districts across 28 Provinces now have a CPAN chapter. There is also a national chapter that offers guidance on a national strategy for policies and programmes to protect children. UNICEF provides technical support to the government's development of a juvenile justice system and to CPAN members providing legal aid for children. As co-chair of the UN-led Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF works towards holding parties to the conflict accountable for grave violations against children.

## Key Challenges

- Insecurity is rife throughout the country, making it difficult to access villages and cities, to monitor programme development and to follow-up with all parties on reported abuses.
- The lack of trained professionals in law and social welfare delays the institutional development that is critical to the advancement of child rights and protection services, particularly during emergencies.
- Long-held cultural norms and attitudes about women and children create barriers to the promotion and realization of legal protection to enable human rights.



Girls at play during a recreation period at the government primary school in Burshasoon Village in the central Bamyán Province. Students previously attended classes in a tent.

## National campaign for child protection

UNICEF is developing comprehensive outreach efforts to engage communities, NGO partners and local and national government counterparts to advocate for child protection. Activities in 2011 have included workshops with CPAN members on how to conduct community dialogues to encourage localized solutions to protection concerns. Additionally, working with the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and Al-Ahzar University, Cairo, UNICEF is developing training and outreach materials that engage religious leaders and scholars throughout the country to study and discuss the many ways Islam provides for the protection of women and children.

In July 2011, 40 religious leaders attended a workshop led by scholars from Al-Ahzar University, where they discussed topics including: early and forced marriage, child labour, breastfeeding, birth planning, under-age recruitment, domestic and sexual violence. These forums allow for honest and robust exchange of ideas on the relationship between religious teaching and cultural traditions, leaving participants better equipped to provide counsel that can foster behaviour change within their communities on issues that are particularly important to children and women.



Zahra, 11, and her brother Rajab Ali, 14, weave a carpet on a traditional loom in their home in Zargaran Village in Bamyan Province. Zahra spends most of her day caring for younger siblings, making carpets and doing other household chores.

**Children and Armed Conflict:** As mandated by Security Council Resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011) on the protection of children affected by armed conflict, UNICEF co-chairs the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) on grave violations committed against children by parties to conflict in Afghanistan. UNICEF deploys specialist protection officers to monitor, verify and facilitate appropriate responses on six conflict-related activities: recruitment and use of under-18s, killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks against schools and hospitals, abduction and denial of humanitarian access.

UNICEF led the establishment of Regional Task Forces on Children and Armed Conflict, for Provincial level advocacy to prevent attacks on schools, raise awareness on risks faced by children affected by armed conflict, and in monitoring of children detained in relation to national security charges. Further, UNICEF manages the MRM database, and contributes to reporting obligations to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, by providing evidence-based recommendations for the listing of parties to conflict in the Secretary-General's Reports on Children and Armed Conflict. In 2010, the Afghan National Security Forces were listed by the Security Council for the recruitment of under-age children. UNICEF has played a key role in engaging the government and the subsequent development of a formal action plan to end under-age recruitments.

## Key results in 2010 - 2011

**Social Protection:** UNICEF supports the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission's monitoring of child rights in 14 Provinces and the cross-border movement of children in two Provinces. Additionally, as part of the efforts to address the lack of social workers in the country, in partnership with Hunter College School of Social Work and the government, UNICEF has begun developing a formal curriculum and training programme for social workers on child protection.

**Juvenile Justice:** UNICEF partners with NGOs, UN agencies and the government to rehabilitate children in conflict with the law, including: offering training to more than 800 lawyers and paralegals on juvenile justice issues, providing legal representation to nearly 2,000 children in detention, crafting a National Child Act with the Ministry of Justice and developing procedural guidelines for use by the Afghan Police on diversion of children from the formal judicial system.

### For more information:

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