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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children: follow-up
to the outcome of the special session on children**

Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is issued in response to General Assembly resolutions S-27/2 of the twenty-seventh special session, held in 2002, 58/282 and 61/272, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report regularly on progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action contained in the annex to resolution S-27/2, entitled “A world fit for children”.

The report calls for a scaled-up response by Governments to specifically address barriers and bottlenecks to achieving results for disadvantaged children and marginalized communities.

* A/67/150.



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I. Introduction

1. The present report is the tenth update report on progress made in the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children, which was held in 2002. At that historic special session, delegations from 190 countries adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled “A world fit for children” (resolution S-27/2, annex), in which Governments committed themselves to a time-bound set of goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on: (a) promoting healthy lives; (b) providing quality education; (c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and (d) combating HIV/AIDS.

2. A commemorative plenary meeting on the commitments made in “A world fit for children” was held in 2007 to review the outcome and progress made in implementing the Declaration and the Plan of Action. In the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, entitled “Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, Member States made a further commitment to accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals. The present report, in follow-up to previous reports on this subject,¹ provides an analysis of progress made in achieving the goals set out in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in 2002 (see General Assembly resolution 65/1).

3. Although child mortality is steadily declining globally, the latest estimates reveal that in 2010 some 7.6 million children did not survive to see their fifth birthday and that nearly one in five children under age 5 in the developing world is underweight. During the same time period, while the global maternal mortality ratio was down to 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010, there were still an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths worldwide, 99 per cent of which occurred in developing countries. Despite meeting the Millennium Development Goals to halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water five years ahead of schedule, there are still 1.1 billion people practicing open defecation and 2.5 billion people who do not have access to improved sanitation. From 1999 to 2008, an additional 52 million children were enrolled in primary school, however, given current trends, an estimated 72 million children will remain out of school in 2015. An estimated 5 million young people between the ages of 15 to 24 were living with HIV in 2009, and the international community is unlikely to meet the targets for reducing the rate of infection by 2015. More recently, the drought and severe nutritional crisis in the Horn of Africa impacted over 13 million people, taking a particularly heavy toll on children and women.

4. When the Millennium Development Goals were conceived, the deep global financial and economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 and its consequences had not been anticipated. Despite significant setbacks owing to the crisis and the surges in food and energy prices, it seems that the developing world as a whole will achieve many of the Goals. However, some countries and regions are not on track to reach the Goals and intensified efforts are required to reduce poverty and child and maternal mortality rates and to improve access to sanitation. Many countries now need to devote substantial additional resources to programmes related to the Goals in order

¹ A/58/333, A/59/274, A/60/207, A/61/270, A/62/259, A/63/308, A/64/285, A/65/226 and A/66/258.

to overcome the effects of the global recession. This is beyond what many countries can mobilize on their own. Stepping up international support is, therefore, essential.

5. Today, as the world continues to confront a global crisis, broad inequalities and the challenge of urbanization and climate change, Governments need to re-energize their strategies to respond in the best interest of children, especially the most deprived. The fulfilment of commitments made in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled, “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex), is key to the implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action on “A world fit for children”.

II. Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children

A. Planning for children

6. In 2011, the analytical work carried out by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) provided important evidence informing policies focused on reducing child poverty and eliminating disparities. In the same year, a total of 52 programme countries conducted or substantially updated a situation analysis of children’s and women’s rights and 97 country offices produced major thematic studies or analyses relating to children and women, of which around 72 per cent explicitly used a human rights framework.

7. The Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities, launched in 2007, is an ongoing UNICEF initiative that looks at child deprivation in seven critical dimensions, namely: health; nutrition; education; water; sanitation; information; and shelter. Two countries (Kiribati and Mozambique) joined this initiative in 2011, raising the total number of countries covered to 54.

8. UNICEF is also engaged in supporting social budgeting in approximately 102 countries. Evidence and analysis is used to highlight the issues faced by the most deprived children and their families. In 2011, 117 Governments received support for regulatory, legal, institutional or financing reform.

B. Promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

9. On 28 February 2012, the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure was opened for signature during a signing ceremony in Geneva. The protocol was signed by 20 States on that day and since then by an additional three States. The protocol will be open to all States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (or any of its other optional protocols) and will enter into force after having been ratified by 10 States. The protocol adds a key procedural mechanism to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, allowing it to receive and review communications on cases alleging violations of the rights of individual children or groups of children and to conduct

country visits to investigate allegations of grave and systematic violations of children's rights. The Committee has drafted child-friendly procedural rules detailing the internal process for reviewing communications, which it hopes to adopt in September 2012.

10. UNICEF, in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) is undertaking focused research on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women. Building on the 2006 report of the Secretary-General on violence against children, in January 2012, the initial research findings were used as part of a technical contribution to the international expert group meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on the theme, "Combating violence against indigenous women and girls: article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" and also to the eleventh session of the Permanent Forum held in May 2012. When finalized in December 2012, the study will be used as a technical contribution to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held in March 2013. The overall objective of the study is to breach gaps in knowledge about the situation of indigenous girls, adolescents and young women encountering gender-based violence.

C. Collaboration and leveraging resources for children

11. According to the latest Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) statistics, in 2011, members of the Development Assistance Committee provided \$133.5 billion in net official development assistance. Such assistance amounts to 0.31 per cent of the gross national income (GNI) of members of the Committee, falling far short of the United Nations target level of 0.7 per cent. In real terms this represents a decrease (of 2.7 per cent) in contributions for the first time since 1997, primarily due to the ongoing economic recession in many OECD countries. At the same time, South-South cooperation and other non-Development Assistance Committee official cooperation for development purposes continues to gain momentum. Remittances are also playing an increasingly important role in financing development, even in the face of the financial crisis. In addition, a growing number of actors, private philanthropies, non-governmental organizations, private sector and global programmes, are engaging in development and leveraging additional funding for children worldwide, including through innovative mechanisms.

12. Increased collaboration with donors has led to greater coordination and leveraging of resources for children in emergencies. New donors have also provided funding to improve capacity for humanitarian response. New mechanisms incorporated into funding agreements, such as multi-year and country cycle-specific thematic agreements, have increased the flexibility and predictability of funding for programmes.

D. Monitoring progress

13. In order to improve results for the most disadvantaged and to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, UNICEF launched its “monitoring results for equity” strategy in 2011 to provide a platform for effective planning, strategic programming, decentralized monitoring and managing results. The platform: (a) promotes the use of data and evidence in advocacy and programming; (b) addresses the critical gap between routine monitoring of inputs/outputs; (c) facilitates the monitoring of high-level outcomes every three to five years; and (d) identifies the critical conditions or determinants which are either constraining or enabling the achievement of results for particular groups of children. The strategy is currently being implemented in 27 countries across all regions. The mainstreaming of the strategy in all cooperation programmes will build on the lessons learned, the tools developed and the capacities built in this first group of countries.

14. In the current round of multiple indicator cluster surveys supported by UNICEF, the total number of surveys reached 64, with a majority of the surveys having been completed in 2011. With the completion of the fourth round, a total of 230 household surveys covering more than 100 development indicators in over 100 countries have been conducted since 1995. In 2011, UNICEF initiated work to create a new data-driven website that will provide easier access to data, including through interactive visualization, and will allow users to download data in a variety of formats for their own analysis.

15. Data from national household surveys such as the multiple indicator cluster surveys (supported by UNICEF) and Demographic and Health Surveys (supported by USAID) and other sources were analysed in 2011 with an emphasis on evaluating equity issues through the use of disaggregated data. These data continue to inform major flagship publications of the United Nations system, including the *State of the World's Children* and the annual *Millennium Development Goals Report*. Substantive contributions were also provided to key inter-agency reports, including the Secretary-General's annual report on the Millennium Development Goals. The latest data on statistics for children and women are updated and maintained to provide information on technical and methodological tools, an overview of trends and current status, disparity databases, country statistical profiles and specific data-driven reports (see www.childinfo.org).

16. During 2011, a series of inter-agency groups harmonized monitoring work, developed new methodologies, standard indicators and monitoring tools and built statistical capacity at the country level to improve statistical reporting on children and women. In the context of the “monitoring results for equity” strategy, identifying and addressing the challenges faced by deprived children and families requires regular monitoring at a disaggregated level. Capacity-building initiatives to strengthen such monitoring will need innovative solutions and further work.

17. As at the end of 2011, the United Nations Development Group's DevInfo database system, was supporting adaptations in 138 countries. Currently DevInfo applications are used as national data repositories that inform national policymakers on status and progress against national development targets. An evaluation of DevInfo indicates that it plays a vital role in monitoring and evaluating capacity development at the country level.

E. Participation and self-expression of children

18. There has been an increase in children's and young people's participation in policy development at national levels, with many children and youth providing input to broad policy development and specific thematic areas through 2011. For example, in 2010 the UNICEF National Committee in the United Kingdom supported the creation of a youth panel within the Department of Energy and Climate Change to advise the Government on the development of a 2050 energy policy through research and through thousands of interviews with young people.

19. The meaningful participation of young people in international forums has also increased. At the seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa, marginalized young people were included in conversations about the impact of climate change and potential solutions to problems in their schools and communities. Five South African child representatives spoke powerfully at the session, while many more engaged in meaningful actions in their home countries. At the time of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, young people were engaged in identifying sustainable development issues through community resource mapping.

20. There was also an increase in young people serving as official country delegates to the United Nations and to specific conferences in 2011. The Social Policy and Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs published a document on the value and power of youth delegates, including guidance on how best to ensure that those delegates have a truly meaningful engagement, from the selection process to their time at the United Nations. Official youth delegates to the Economic and Social Council, the seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development represented a greater number of countries than previously, increasing their ability to collaborate, and increasing the level of communication between delegations and young people participating in civil society.

III. Progress in the four major goal areas

A. Promoting healthy lives

21. Over the past 40 years, the under-five mortality rate has dropped by nearly 60 per cent worldwide. In the past two decades alone, child deaths have fallen dramatically, from 12 million in 1990 to 7.6 million in 2010. This rapid progress is largely due to the high-impact interventions and tools for child survival, notably new vaccines and improved health-care practices.

22. The biggest achievement of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 2011 was the removal of India from the polio-endemic countries. WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International and their partners have supported India's vast network of social mobilizers to track and counsel vulnerable communities in order to ensure the provision of the universal polio vaccination to all children under the age of 5.

23. Even though the global number of polio cases fell in 2011 to half the level of the previous year, incidents of poliovirus transmission are still on the rise in Nigeria and Pakistan, putting the end-2012 target of eliminating global polio transmission at risk. In the coming year efforts will focus on building social mobilization networks similar to those used in India to build trust and to increase demand among local populations in the six priority countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Pakistan.

24. In relation to elimination of maternal and newborn tetanus, the United Nations system continued to take the lead in supporting countries by convening global partners to reaffirm their commitment to eliminating maternal and newborn tetanus by 2015. In 2011, four more countries (Ghana, Liberia, Senegal and Uganda) achieved elimination status, and Ethiopia and Indonesia achieved partial elimination status. Approximately 13 million women in the most underserved areas were reached with tetanus vaccines in 14 countries.

25. In 2011, more than 150 million children were vaccinated against measles through supplementary immunization activities in 28 countries. These efforts helped to sustain the 74 per cent global reduction in measles mortality, in line with estimates made in 2000. In order to integrate other high-impact interventions to reduce childhood mortality, in 21 (75 per cent) of 28 countries reporting data by March 2012, children were also offered vaccinations against polio (77 million doses) or rubella (23 million doses) or other interventions such as vitamin A (24 million doses), deworming medication (21 million) or long-lasting insecticide-treated nets when they received the measles vaccine.

26. Pneumonia and diarrhoea are leading killers of the world's youngest children, accounting for 29 per cent of deaths among children under age 5 worldwide, which means more than 2 million lives lost each year. UNICEF and WHO supported integrated community case management of childhood illnesses, the supply of essential medicines and the supervision of front-line workers to treat children for diarrhoea, pneumonia and malaria (in malaria-affected countries), using oral rehydration therapy and zinc, oral antibiotics and artemisinin-based combination therapy. In 2011, 11.3 million packets of oral rehydration salts, 3.3 million zinc treatment doses, 1.8 million antibiotics treatment doses and 1.5 million artemisinin combination therapy treatments were procured and distributed to community health workers for community-level treatment. In 2011, over 2.5 million children were treated for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea by community health workers in six countries, bringing the four-year total, as of that date, to over 4 million children treated.

27. In 2011, UNICEF also supported countries by procuring more than 26 million bednets, 19 million courses of artemisinin-based combination treatments and 11.5 million rapid diagnostic tests for malaria. As at 2011, an estimated 50 per cent of households in sub-Saharan Africa had at least one bednet and 96 per cent of persons with access to a net use them. The widespread distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets is already showing results, with drastic decreases in the number of cases worldwide. Eritrea, Madagascar, Sao Tome and Principe, Zambia and Zanzibar have shown reductions of more than 50 per cent in confirmed malaria cases and/or malaria admissions.

28. In many countries, stock-outs of key commodities, particularly in rural health facilities, can be a major impediment to combating high-burden diseases. The "SMS

for life” initiative is an example of an innovative approach to eliminate stock-outs of antimalarial drugs. The e-programme uses mobile phones, SMS messages and electronic mapping to track weekly stock levels of malaria medicines at public health facilities. Weekly stock requests are sent by SMS to health-care workers at each facility. Stock messages are then returned at no cost to the health-care workers. District managers access data on stock levels through a secure website. The preliminary impact in the United Republic of Tanzania has been promising. Stock-outs were reduced from 79 per cent to less than 26 per cent in three districts. Based on that success, additional medicines, such as those for tuberculosis, are now being tracked. The programme is expanding to other countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Uganda.

29. UNICEF and partners, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) supported nutrition programmes in more than 50 countries with effective programmes in vitamin A supplementation, salt iodization, promoting exclusive breastfeeding, food fortification and treatment of severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF is the leader of the global nutrition cluster and a key player in multiple partnerships promoting sound nutrition around the world.

30. Some 182 million children around the world are estimated to be stunted, 80 per cent of them in just 21 countries. In six of those countries, 50 per cent or more of all children under age 5 suffer from this condition. In the developing world overall, stunting rates declined slowly, from 45 per cent to 28 per cent over the 20 years from 1990 to 2010. Disaggregation of data is necessary in order to highlight disparities and understand better determinants of malnutrition.

31. In the developing world, an estimated 25 million children below 5 years of age suffer from severe acute malnutrition and are at high risk of dying without medical attention. While a significant number of those children are often in countries where cyclical natural disasters and protracted long-term crises further exacerbate their vulnerability, many live in countries not affected by emergencies.

32. United Nations agencies are intensifying their support for the Scaling Up Nutrition movement both at the national level and in global processes. The multi-agency Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH) initiative is working intensively with at least eight countries taking part in the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, building on the experiences of two country pilots in the preceding two years. UNICEF played a key role in the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, and in 2011 more than 24 countries declared themselves to be “early riser” countries, with improvements in sectors such as water, sanitation and hygiene, HIV/AIDS and health. The Scaling Up Nutrition movement, with 27 leaders from different countries, organizations and sectors, represents an extraordinary opportunity to prevent stunting in millions of young children as a result of poor nutrition in a child’s first 1,000 days.

33. With regard to micronutrient deficiencies, food fortification programmes were supported by legislation passed in 64 countries, an increase over the 33 countries with such legislation in 2003. Globally, 71 per cent of households in developing countries use adequately iodized salt. Vitamin A supplementation coverage remained high, at 66 per cent globally (excluding China, for which comparable data were not available) and 88 per cent in the least developed countries. Nevertheless, an estimated one third of preschool-aged children (more than 190 million) do not have enough vitamin A in their diet and can be classified as vitamin A deficient.

34. Globally, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding has changed very little since 1990, with only 37 per cent of infants less than six months old being exclusively breastfed. This is largely due to the lack of progress in the 10 largest countries, whose size significantly skews the global average. On the other hand, an analysis of data in 90 developing countries shows that breastfeeding is increasing in 53 of those nations, many of them facing significant development challenges and emergencies.

35. Following the release of the new infant and young child feeding indicators, data from 36 countries on the new indicator on quality of complementary feeding (the composite indicator “minimum acceptable diet”) has been analysed. The analysis shows that complementary feeding practices are far from acceptable and that strong support is needed for improvement in this area.

36. In terms of improving maternal health, new studies suggest that some progress is being made in reducing maternal mortality, although globally, and in most high-burden countries, progress is not sufficient to achieve Millennium Development Goal 5. An unacceptable number of women, estimated at around 287,000, still die in pregnancy and childbirth each year, a decline of 47 per cent from the levels in 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia accounted for 85 per cent of the global maternal deaths (245,000).

37. A universal determination to increase the opportunities for improving women’s and children’s health in high-burden countries has resulted in a number of global developments. The Secretary-General’s Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health was the culmination of many coordinated global efforts, including: the launch of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, as well as its strategy and workplan for 2009-2011; the high-level Task Force on Innovative Financing for Health Systems; the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa; the 2010 African Union Summit of Heads of State on Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development; and the Women Deliver Conference held in Washington, D.C. The adoption of the Secretary-General’s Global Strategy was an important step in the field of women’s and children’s health, and a key context within which to determine the role that the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health will play in the years ahead.

38. The latest WHO/UNICEF joint monitoring programme report confirmed that, as of 2010, the Millennium Development Goal target for drinking water had been met. In spite of that achievement, 780 million people are still without access to improved sources of drinking water. Of even greater concern is the fact that 2.5 billion people lack improved sanitation. The report projects that in 2015 some 605 million people will be without improved sources of drinking water and 2.4 billion people will lack access to improved sanitation facilities if current trends are maintained. Unless progress on sanitation can be accelerated, the target will not be reached until 2026.

39. Significant rural-urban disparities continue to be evident in both sanitation and drinking-water coverage. With regard to sanitation, for example, of the 1.1 billion people that practise open defecation, 90 per cent live in rural areas. Globally, only 47 per cent of rural populations were practising improved sanitation, compared to 79 per cent of urban populations. Out of the 2.5 billion people without access to improved sanitation, 72 per cent live in rural areas. As regards drinking water, only 29 per cent of rural populations have access to piped water on premises, compared to some 80 per cent of urban populations; and 653 million people use an unimproved water source in rural areas compared to 130 million in urban areas.

40. In June 2012, the Governments of Ethiopia, India and the United States of America, together with UNICEF, mobilized worldwide to achieve an ambitious, yet achievable goal: to end preventable child deaths. This action builds on the momentum created by the Every Woman Every Child initiative, launched by the Secretary-General, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies in 2010. By pledging to support the goals contained in “Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed”, partners vow to redouble efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 by 2015, to reduce under-five mortality in all countries to 20 or fewer under-five deaths per 1,000 live births by 2035, and to focus greater effort on reaching the most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children in every country.

41. Humanitarian crises continue to have a devastating impact on children and to put hard-won gains that have been made in reducing child mortality around the world at risk. Perhaps no other humanitarian crisis so dominated the world’s attention in 2011 as the drought and severe nutritional crisis in the Horn of Africa, which impacted over 13 million people amid armed conflict and which escalated into famine in parts of Somalia, causing a massive population displacement crisis. For the second straight year, in 2011, massive floods affected Pakistan, affecting 5 million people in Sindh Province. Floods also had deadly impact in Brazil and Thailand. A tropical storm killed many in the Philippines in December, and an earthquake hit Turkey in October. Elsewhere conflict and civil unrest continued to take a heavy toll on children and women. Social and political turmoil in the Arab world highlighted the need for better understanding of political developments and the adaptation of tools designed for more traditional responses, including on advocacy. The election crisis in Côte d’Ivoire peaked at the start of 2011, with Ivorian refugees fleeing into Liberia and other neighbouring countries. Many children and women were internally displaced and grave violations were committed against them. A referendum and independence created the world’s newest country, South Sudan, and also posed new challenges for the protection and fulfilment of children’s rights.

B. Providing quality education

42. Recent reports highlight significant progress in enhancing human development and striving for the attainment of the Education for All goals as well as Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3. From 1999 to 2008, an additional 52 million children enrolled in primary school globally, and a 31 per cent increase was noted in pre-primary education enrolment, benefiting 148 million children. In addition, the number of out-of-school children of primary school age was halved in South and West Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, despite a large increase in the primary school-age population, enrolment ratios rose by one third. To a large extent, such considerable progress demonstrates greater investment on the part of Governments. Low-income countries have collectively increased the share of national income spent on education from 2.9 per cent to 3.8 per cent since 1999.

43. As reported in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011 on the hidden crisis, armed conflict and education, in 2015 there could be more out-of-school children than today. School attendance and completion remains a challenge for millions of children and youth and is strongly influenced by such socioeconomic factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, language, poverty and location. According to recent data, an estimated 61 million children of primary school age, 53 per cent of which are girls, and 71 million adolescents of lower secondary school

age were still out of school in 2010. While the global out-of-school figure has declined over the past 15 years, falling from 105 million in 1990, the new data show that progress began to slow down in 2005 and stagnated between 2008 and 2010. Over 50 per cent of all out-of-school children live in sub-Saharan Africa; nearly 21 per cent live in South and West Asia.

44. Globally, 34 million out-of-school children are concentrated in 30 countries. Almost half of all out-of-school children live in conflict-affected countries. Household data from 42 countries show that rural children are twice as likely to be out of school as their urban counterparts.

45. Many of those attending school drop out and never complete a full basic education cycle. When they do, they often leave without acquiring the basic knowledge, competencies and skills, such as reading, writing, mathematics, problem solving and critical thinking, that enable them to continue to learn, grow into healthy adults and lead safe and productive lives. The problem is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, with 37 per cent of adolescents out of school, and 27 per cent in South and West Asia. Research reveals that fewer girls make the transition to secondary school (accounting in 2007 for 54 per cent of out-of-school adolescents), and that those who do are more likely to drop out. Despite increases in gender parity in school enrolment, more than 56 million girls are not attending primary or lower secondary school, missing out on important learning opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. The school enrolment rate is low among minority ethnic groups and indigenous people, and enrolment gaps between urban and rural students, and between rich and poor increase after primary school.

46. Gender, along with poverty, constitutes the strongest barrier to education. When combined with other factors, such as culture and language, it has a particularly negative effect. Being poor and female carries a double disadvantage in at least 49 countries, where the education of girls from the poorest households is not only below the national average, but also below the average for boys in the poorest households.

47. The barriers to education at the primary level are often magnified at the secondary level. These obstacles include the cost of education, the distance to school, labour demands and deeply ingrained social, cultural and economic barriers, which have a particular impact on girls. Reaching the remaining out-of-school children is not only more difficult but also more expensive as these children face multiple disadvantages and often experience subtle and hidden forms of social exclusion.

48. Many children are not acquiring the basic literacy, numeracy and life skills needed to survive, develop and thrive. About half of all children in the poorest countries who have completed grade 2 cannot read at all. Globally, 775 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, still lack basic literacy skills. Absolute levels of learning achievement are exceptionally low in many developing countries.

49. The policy of investing in quality early childhood education is an investment in human development. Evidence gathered through household surveys in 40 countries suggests that far too many young children live in households that are not conducive to optimal early childhood development. While an increasing number of countries have developed and ratified national policies in this area, many such policies are not realized owing to insufficient funding and fragmented planning.

50. The momentum and tools for improving basic education are available, as demonstrated by the increasing number of countries incorporating school readiness and child-friendly standards into their educational systems, and the growing number of international actors stressing the importance of attaining basic literacy levels. Because policies aimed at overcoming gender disparities are most likely to succeed as part of an integrated strategy, countries are addressing a range of challenges related to: availability of classrooms, teachers and school supplies; quality and relevance of education; direct and indirect costs of education; and strengthening tools to analyse the barriers and bottlenecks to school access, quality and equity.

51. Corporal punishment, gender-based violence, armed conflict and natural hazards impact the educational process for millions of girls and boys. Ninety countries out of 197 monitored by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children continue to permit teachers to use corporal punishment against students. Approximately 150 million girls and 73 million boys are sexually assaulted each year, many times en route to or at school. Gross enrolment ratios in secondary school are nearly 30 per cent lower in conflict-affected countries (48 per cent) than in others (67 per cent) and are far lower for girls. Increasingly worrisome are the trends indicating that many of the world's poorest countries and communities will face the double threat of climate change and violent conflict. Such threats are expected to exacerbate gender inequalities and threaten educational systems.

52. Statistics provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011 reveal that an additional 2 million teachers are needed if universal primary education is to be achieved by 2015. More than half of those teachers are needed in sub-Saharan Africa. Well-trained and motivated teachers and teacher deployment systems that distribute them equitably is key to addressing the learning disadvantages of marginalized children. This requires the development of more robust educational management information systems. Such systems are vital to policymaking as they help identify needs, track financial resources and monitor the effects of policy interventions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF and UNESCO have partnered to develop a regional online information system focusing on children's well-being and related policies.

53. Globally, UNESCO estimates an external financing gap of \$16 billion per year for basic education needs in low-income countries over and above what developing country Governments and donors currently resource. Aid cuts and the effects of the lingering financial crisis present additional challenges, as many developing countries depend on donor support to reach development goals such as Education for All. Even greater accountability and commitment are needed in order to improve progress in girls' education, education in fragile States, learning outcomes and educational access.

54. Despite the lingering impact of the financial crisis, 2011 was a year with particular international momentum. The prominent role of UNICEF within the Global Partnership for Education, combined with the organization's leadership agenda for equity, enabled the mobilization of political support and resources to reach the most marginalized and to focus efforts beyond access to quality learning outcomes. The recent pledge of over \$2 billion between 2011 and 2014 by the Global Partnership for Education is expected to: facilitate the enrolment of an additional 25 million children into classrooms for the first time; train 600,000 new teachers; provide educational supplies; and reduce illiteracy for primary school-aged children. UNICEF is the coordinating agency in 21 of the 46 countries participating in the Partnership

and the implementing agency in Guinea and Madagascar. In countries where the Partnership is not active, UNICEF is nevertheless taking an active lead in education sector planning.

55. Countries continued to strengthen their humanitarian response and preparedness in 2011, providing an estimated 8.7 million children affected by emergencies with access to formal and non-formal basic education. UNICEF's co-leadership of the education cluster in 52 countries and its joint collaboration in the steering committee of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack were pivotal to enhancing the capacity of education sector partners to effectively respond to emergencies. Emergency response included advocacy, preparedness planning, risk assessment, national and subnational back-to-school campaigns as well as the establishment of emergency education coordination and management units.

C. Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

56. During 2011, UNICEF initiated a number of concrete actions, building on the work it had undertaken over previous years that had resulted in improved protection of children. Recognition of the importance of strengthening the synergies and linkages between the prevention and response mechanisms used to address different child protection risks continues to grow. In 2011, more than 120 countries strengthened the mechanisms required to protect children, including: approximately 85 countries that improved birth registration rates; 95 countries that expanded alternative care for orphaned children; 60 countries that took action on trafficking and migration of children; and 50 countries that improved justice for children. As a result of work associated with UNICEF, approximately 23 million births were registered. National laws, policies and standards continue to align with global and international frameworks. UNICEF provided support to at least 30 Governments to promote effective frameworks for alternative care and to at least 26 countries to develop or monitor standards in order to align their systems with the 2009 United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

57. UNICEF supported technical innovations to enhance the effectiveness of systems and service delivery mechanisms, including the use of mobile phones to improve birth registration. In the area of documenting unaccompanied and separated children, the family tracing and reunification system is yielding positive results. A 2011 pilot programme in Uganda revealed not only that there has been a reduction in the transaction times needed to document children, but also that the interaction between children and staff has been enhanced. To promote South-South intergovernmental cooperation and learning, UNICEF facilitated visits to South Africa by Government representatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Liberia and the Sudan to learn about child justice systems. The Mexican Migration Institute trained Government officials from the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua in the protection of child rights. In addition, collaboration relating to birth registration took place between Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and between Madagascar and Uganda.

58. UNICEF continues to stimulate dialogue to reinforce social conventions, norms and values that favour the prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse of children. Important progress was achieved in 2011 by: (a) improving data collection and research on violence against children; (b) expanding programmes to address

violence in the home, in schools and in early childhood; (c) increasing awareness about sexual violence; (d) consolidating technical expertise for programmes to address harmful social norms such as child marriage in order to reach the most vulnerable children; and (e) halting female genital mutilation and cutting in a number of countries under the joint UNFPA-UNICEF programme. In 2011 there was also a marked increase in the level of engagement with religious leaders and communities as key stakeholders in the prevention of violence against children.

59. UNICEF continues to actively support the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. New time-bound action plans were signed in Afghanistan and the Central African Republic, while implementation of existing action plans in Nepal progressed. In addition, discussions moved forward with other Government forces and armed groups in five countries. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF helped the Government to develop four protocols on standards to be respected in the provision of medical, psychosocial, socioeconomic reintegration, schooling and judicial referral services. Four countries ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Five additional countries endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups.

60. Strengthened application of the systems approach in emergencies was evidenced during 2011 in response to the Horn of Africa famine and flooding in the Philippines. UNICEF continues to support scaling up of innovative, effective models of disaster preparedness for child protection, such as multi-sectoral programming in the Horn of Africa to develop the Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings strategy. In 2011, UNICEF led or co-led the child protection area of responsibility within the Inter-agency Steering Committee cluster in 23 countries and led or co-led in the area of gender-based violence in six countries. Drawing upon the Inter-Agency Child Protection Information Management System, UNICEF advocacy and support helped to establish or strengthen programmes for children separated from their families during emergencies in a number of countries. Evidence is also emerging on the value of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System. For example, in Northern Uganda, the data provided by the system was used to dispel myths that sexual violence offences are primarily committed by strangers. Evidence revealed that over 60 per cent of survivors reported knowing their alleged perpetrator.

61. The refocus on equity for accelerating child-related Millennium Development Goals is driving UNICEF and its partners to provide even more compelling evidence on the situation of the most vulnerable. As a result, in 2011 UNICEF took steps to strengthen quality and timely monitoring, research, evaluation and use of data, as well as to advance sector- and cross-sector-wide evidence-building through external partnerships. Systems mapping exercises took place in a number of programme countries, bringing the total to over 100 since 2005. Over 40 countries specifically generated data and evidence for their programmes related to system strengthening, while others applied the information they had already obtained.

62. UNICEF and its partners also monitored broader child protection concerns in specific contexts and coordinated across sectors on prevention and response activities in emergencies. For example in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNICEF worked through the inter-cluster response framework to coordinate emergency child protection and education responses to attacks on schools. One important new standard for 2011

is the development of the Child Protection Working Group's new minimum standards on child protection for humanitarian response, which now serve as the foundational standards for this specialized sector, building on the more general minimum standards in humanitarian response issued by the Sphere Project. The UNICEF Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict is currently being implemented in 15 countries.

D. Combating HIV/AIDS

63. Strengthening global, national and regional commitments to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS was a priority in 2011. This issue was given the spotlight at the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in June 2011 when Member States adopted the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (General Assembly resolution 65/277, annex) and the Secretary-General launched the Global Plan towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping Their Mothers Alive.

64. As of 2010, an estimated 34 million people were living with HIV worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by HIV. Women make up 50 per cent of those living with HIV globally, but account for a larger share of infections than men in sub-Saharan Africa (59 per cent) and the Caribbean (53 per cent). As of 2009, an estimated 17.1 million children had lost one or both parents to AIDS.

65. There is a significant expansion of access to life-saving antiretroviral therapy, especially in more recent years. In low- and middle-income countries, antiretroviral treatment has averted 2.5 million deaths since 1995. Annual AIDS-related deaths (1.8 million in 2010) have fallen by 18 per cent since the mid-2000s, and the number of children dying from AIDS-related causes (250,000 in 2010) has declined by 20 per cent since 2005.

66. However, in 2010, 2.7 million people (of whom 390,000 were children) were newly infected. Even though 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have reported a decline in new infections, the region still accounts for 70 per cent of all new infections of 2010. Providing antiretroviral therapy to the 6.65 million who are currently on treatment, and the millions more people who would require it, is not economically sustainable without a dramatic reduction in new infections.

67. In 2005, only 14 per cent of HIV-positive pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries received antiretroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission, while in 2010 that figure rose to 48 per cent. UNICEF, along with national partners, is playing a critical role in helping countries to develop national Internet-based scale-up plans to prevent mother-to-child transmission. It has leveraged funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS and from other donors to support this effort.

68. The number of new HIV infections among children stabilized in the early 2000s before decreasing steeply in the past few years as access to services to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased. An estimated 390,000 children were newly infected with HIV in 2010, 30 per cent fewer than the peak of 560,000 children newly infected annually in 2002 and 2003. The number of children under age 15 living with HIV globally has levelled off in the past few years, totalling 3.4 million

in 2010. More than 90 per cent of the children are living in sub-Saharan Africa. Deaths among children under age 15 from AIDS-related illness are declining, falling 20 per cent between 2005 and 2010, from 320,000 to 250,000. This trend is primarily due to the expansion of services to prevent HIV from being transmitted to infants and, to a lesser degree, to the expansion of access to treatment for children.

69. In 2010, an estimated 35 per cent of the estimated 123 million pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries received an HIV test, up from 8 per cent in 2005. Increases were observed in almost all regions, with the percentage of pregnant women testing positive for HIV growing around 10 percentage points or more between 2009 and 2010 in three regions. During 2010, in 65 low- and middle-income countries providing data, 28 per cent of infants were reported to have been tested for HIV within the first two months of birth, versus the 6 per cent who were tested in 2009.

70. Treatment availability for children increased from 21 per cent in 2009 to 23 per cent in 2010, an unacceptably low rate of progress. UNICEF is a strong advocate for getting infants tested for HIV early and promoting access for infants living with HIV to appropriate paediatric antiretroviral drug formulations. In collaboration with the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), the Clinton Health Access Initiative and other partners, UNICEF is promoting the development of low-cost paediatric formulations and making them available to children who need it.

71. Globally, an estimated 5 million young people aged between 15 and 24 were living with HIV in 2009, a 12 per cent reduction compared to 2001. In recent years, in collaboration with the Global Network of People Living with HIV and WHO, UNICEF, as a part of the co-sponsors of the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), has intensified its efforts to increase access and coverage of adolescents on antiretroviral treatment and to develop treatment, care and support guidelines.

72. Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for 42 per cent of new infections in 2010, yet there are some encouraging trends among young people in several countries with a high burden of HIV. Data from antenatal clinics from 2000 to 2010 showed that HIV prevalence declined among women from 15 to 24 years of age in 22 of the 24 countries with national HIV prevalence of 1 per cent or higher and with data available. In 11 of 19 African countries with data available, the percentage of young men with multiple partners in the last 12 months fell significantly. However, young women continue to become infected at higher rates than their male counterparts in many areas owing to their heightened physiological susceptibility to HIV and because of socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

73. Comprehensive and accurate information about HIV and AIDS is fundamental to the acceptance of HIV services and to behavioural change. Such knowledge remains limited, however, in sub-Saharan Africa, with an average of 26 per cent of young women and 35 per cent of young men (ages 15-24) having a clear understanding of the disease. In 8 of 11 countries with the highest numbers of new infections in the region, there was a reported condom-use rate of 45 per cent or greater among men. This relatively widespread use contrasts with low levels of knowledge among both young men and young women in the same countries. Condom use remains low among young women in most countries. The limited condom use may be linked with restrictions on availability. In sub-Saharan Africa, only eight condoms are available per adult male per year. Levels of access to HIV

testing in the region also remain low, particularly among young men. For this group there is no entry point comparable to maternal health programmes for young women, which provide testing and services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. In 9 of the 11 countries considered, fewer than 20 per cent of men were tested.

74. Adolescents living with HIV received greater attention in 2011. A global technical advisory group on HIV/AIDS was established in 2011 to draw on expertise from United Nations agencies, bilateral and research institutions. This collaboration resulted in the launch of a training initiative on adolescents living with HIV in eight countries. In West and Central Africa and in Latin America regional dialogues were held for young people living with HIV, with these meetings contributing to the development of national HIV care and support guidelines in a number of countries.

75. In 2009, about 17.1 million children around the world were estimated to have lost one or both parents to AIDS; 15 million of these children lived in sub-Saharan Africa. However, investment in protection, care and support are paying off as most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have made significant progress towards parity in rates of school attendance for orphans and non-orphans between the ages of 10 to 14. In 27 out of 31 countries in sub-Saharan Africa that report data, school attendance among children who have lost both parents (including those who died from AIDS-related illness) has increased.

IV. Ways forward

76. The Monitoring of Results for Equity System will be expanded as a part of the UNICEF-supported programmes of cooperation. The approach is applicable to all country contexts, whether in low income/high burden service-oriented settings or middle-income countries, where cooperation is focused on policy advocacy, and in both development and humanitarian contexts. Implementing the system calls for partnerships at all levels. Encouraging Governments, other United Nations agencies, civil society and donors to participate in this initiative to strengthen local-level monitoring will require capacity-building and a shared commitment to “learning by doing”.

77. As a follow-up to the “Child survival — Call to Action” event convened by Governments of Ethiopia, India and the United States, in close collaboration with a number of United Nations agencies, the partners in “A Promise Renewed” will periodically convene regional and global reviews to assess progress, celebrate successes and refine strategies for accelerating progress to the deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. In September of each year, a child mortality report will be issued under the banner of “A Promise Renewed”, including country profiles that track progress at national and subnational levels. In preparation for 2015, partners will bring together stakeholders to review and identify strategies to maintain the momentum and establish the process necessary to monitor progress effectively from 2015 to 2035. Such efforts need to be supported, and partners need to unite in a common cause that every generation in history has instinctively embraced: doing our best so that children may survive and thrive.

78. Recognizing that education is the main building block of society, the Secretary-General has made education one of the priorities of his action plan for the next five years. He has therefore decided to launch a new global initiative on

education, "Education First". The initiative is expected to give a stronger impetus to the global movement for education so that the existing momentum turns into concrete commitment and action in order to: (a) raise the political profile of education and rally together a broad spectrum of actors; (b) spur a global movement to achieve quality, relevant and inclusive education for all by 2015, with concomitant gains for the broad development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals; and (c) generate additional and sufficient funding through sustained advocacy efforts.

79. The three priority areas of the initiative are: (a) put every child in school; (b) improve the quality of education; and (c) foster global citizenship. The Secretary-General will launch the initiative on the margins of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.
