

## INTRODUCTION

Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by member states of the U.N. are milestones in support of Human Development, but not sufficient to insure effective implementation. This is particularly true in situations such as Iraq's where the capacity of the state to exercise its responsibilities for social welfare have been subjected to serious constraints over the past seven years because of economic sanctions.

Commitment to the CRC is also clearly expressed in UNICEF's Mission Statement.<sup>1</sup> Gender equity constitutes an outstanding, with support of the rights of the girl child and of adult females. More recently, in relation to the Fourth World Conference on Women, priority areas for the Platform for Action (PFA) are girls' education; adolescent girls' and women's health; children's rights and women's rights.<sup>2</sup> Advocacy in these domains has progressed to implementation, with the development of new concepts.<sup>3</sup>

The ratification of the CRC (in 1994) by the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the approval of the National Plan of Action for Iraqi Children by the National Assembly (in 1995), has created a broad-based platform for children, to be placed in the centre of the political and social agenda. The Government prepared the initial State Party Report of Iraq on its compliance for CRC implementation.<sup>4</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child met with UN Organizations and bodies to discuss the GOI report on 27 January 1998 in Geneva, to be followed by a plenary session in September 1998.

However, effective implementation of the CRC and the CEDAW in Iraq is constrained by the adverse economic situation following the war with Iran during the 80's and the continued sanctions since 1990. This has resulted in decreased social sector support and a direct cumulative effect on the Iraqi people, in particular on the well-being of children and women. Hence a dynamic and historical view of economic and social development in Iraq is essential for an appropriate situation analysis.

By 1990, the Iraqi GDP per capita had risen to US\$ 3,508 within the framework of an oil boom,<sup>5</sup> and enjoyed the largesse of the welfare state. The Economist Intelligence Unit remarks:

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<sup>1</sup> As approved by the Executive Board in January 1996 the Mission Statement reads: **"UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children."**

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF "Follow-Up to the Fourth World Conference on Women." (Item 10 of the provisional agenda of the Executive Board), January 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Urban Jonsson, Draft of "Realization of Children's Rights: Charity or Solidarity?" UNICEF South Asia Regional Office. Jonsson emphasizes the importance of addressing child rights which are respected, protected and fulfilled compared with considering child needs which can be met and fulfilled, but not necessarily sustained. Whereas rights imply a political choice, needs imply a less proactive political will.

<sup>4</sup> First Periodical Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - June 1996. Baghdad, 1996 (English translation)

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*The Iraqi welfare state was, until recently, among the most comprehensive and generous in the Arab World...It insured that Iraqis had the highest caloric consumption per head in the Middle East by the end of the (1980s)....<sup>6</sup>*

By 1990, Iraq's Human Development Index (HDI) had far surpassed that of the countries with which it now shares inadequate social sector support. The index also compared favourably with that of its regional neighbours and placed it among countries of the medium human development aggregates category in UNDP's first (1990) Human Development Report. This has now changed.

*What we have in Iraq is a situation of rapid decline ...on the part of a society that had previously experienced... over three decades of successful development....By the end of the 1980s, 92% of the population had access to safe water, somewhat less enjoyed modern sanitation, and an impressive 93% lived in the catchment areas served by modern health facilities. The government's network of health centers and hospitals was well disseminated, well supplied, well staffed, and effectively-if rather clinically-engaged with the populations in their jurisdiction.... Iraq had converted oil wealth into enhanced social well-being with considerable success...Education expanded, child mortality declined, and life expectancy increased all quite impressively.<sup>7</sup>*

Against this background, recent restrictions on the capacity of public institutions to protect Iraqi children's lives and promote their welfare constrains implementing the U.N.-mandated conventions of the CRC and the CEDAW/(PFA. Economic sanctions on Iraq over the past seven years have had a devastating effect on the majority of the Iraqi people, particularly children.

These international developments affect national, household and individual levels in the form of deprivation, malnutrition and disease. Commenting on this micro-macro linkage, Field remarks:

*Let me say a few words about the embargo and sanctions. This is not something that we as a professional team (of Tufts University-UNICEF) were mandated to do or to comment on, but somehow you cannot escape the issue...<sup>8</sup>*

Since Field made this remark in August 1991, the effect of economic hardship on a once prosperous society has resulted in a cumulated series of setbacks, such as reduced food supply, polluted water, soaring inflation and deteriorating standards of education, posing a series of risks to Child Survival, a core principle of the CRC.

The food which Iraq was allowed to import in exchange for oil, within the framework of Security Council Resolution (SCR) 986/1111/1143/1153, was expected to reduce widespread suffering, providing that supplies would be received in full, in a timely manner, and in conjunction with other health related imports such as water/sanitation commodities and medical supplies. This expectation is yet to be fully

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<sup>6</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit Iraq Country Report 1995-1996, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> John Field "From Food Security to Food Insecurity: The Case of Iraq, 1990-1991." *GeoJournal* 30(2):185-194. June, 1993, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> From John Field's August 1991 testimony at the hearing held before the International Task Force of the Select Committee on Hunger, House of Representatives, U.S. Congress. Washington, D.C.. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992.

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realized as of April 1998<sup>9</sup>

Commenting on the adequacy of food supplies in its July 1997 third quarter report, the Economist Intelligence Unit states: "*Food supplies have arrived in Iraq, but are not sufficient to meet demand, causing further currency depreciation and rises in inflation.*"<sup>10</sup> The Oil-for-Food Plan has not yet resulted in adequate protection of Iraq's children from malnutrition/ disease. Those children spared from death continue to remain deprived of essential rights addressed in the CRC<sup>11</sup>.

Iraq faces a significant challenge in its efforts of operationalizing the U.N. General Assembly's directive "to help children...reach their **full** potential."<sup>12</sup> Under the present circumstances a clearly targeted "Safety Net" is essential as a means of addressing the basic needs of the most vulnerable children in Iraq.

The basic objective of this Situation Analysis is to lay a foundation for programmes relevant to current conditions in Iraq. The most recent information will be highlighted and linked to the past to show trends. Emphasis is given to special groups affected by the evolving situation - children who are malnourished, disabled, in child labour, on the streets, and of families in women-headed households. The analysis will relate to the implications of the CRC, the PFA and the related convention on gender equity (CEDAW). Its timing allows a useful baseline and progress for the effects of the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 986/1111/1143/1153 based on the "oil for food" programme.

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<sup>9</sup> Resolution 986 by the Security Council on April 14, 1995 enabled Iraq to sell up to US\$ 1 billion worth of oil every 90 days for humanitarian needs. It went into effect on December 10, 1996. Resolutions 1111 and 1143 were made at six month intervals, while 1153 is now under consideration (for more details of the Oil for Food see section 1.5).

<sup>10</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit "Iraq Country Report, 3rd Quarter." London, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> For a critique of Child Survival strategies in general - N. Scheper-Hughes, ed. "Child Survival: Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children." Boston: Reidel Publishers, 1987.  
M. Nichter and E. Cartwright. "Saving the Children for the Tobacco Industry." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* Vol 5:236-256, 1991.

For the Arab World specifically - S. Morsy and J. El-Bayoumi, op.cit., 1993 (reference 5).

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF Mission Statement, emphasis added.