

News note

Statistics a powerful tool to drive change for the world's most vulnerable children

Ensuring every child counts

GENEVA/NEW YORK, 20 October 2010 – On the occasion of the first World Statistics Day, UNICEF experts are calling attention to the essential role that data and statistics play in the development of effective policies and programmes that help improve the lives of children and women around the world.

UNICEF supports countries in the collection, analysis and use of data generated by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) on the situation of women and children in developing countries. These surveys are among the most important statistical tools used by UNICEF and others to identify problems, evaluate programmes and monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

MICS are an excellent source of data because they are compiled through a household interview process, which means the surveys reveal what families actually use as they seek to meet their needs – where they get their water or what medical assistance they access -- rather than what officials or service providers indicate is available to them. Without such statistics, governments, the international aid community and journalists would have a much more difficult time mapping the characteristics of communities and the challenges they face.

Raw data collected from the surveys and other sources is analyzed, estimates are developed, and these are then reviewed to see what they reveal about health and other issues. These important findings are then communicated to humanitarian and development professionals and to governments so they can make more informed decisions as they design and implement programmes for education, nutrition, clean water and sanitation, protection of children from exploitation, domestic and sexual violence, and prevention and treatment of disease. Through this process, statistics enable UNICEF and others to target support where the need is greatest, and therefore more effectively address the problems faced by the world's most vulnerable children.

Over the past 15 years, 200 MICS surveys have been implemented in over 100 countries. Throughout this period, the collection and analysis of robust and comparable data has reinforced UNICEF's view that children must be at the top of the development agenda. Disaggregated data – data broken down by gender, by region or by other distinguishing characteristics -- also helps identify inequalities, disparity and neglect that are sometimes masked by global progress.

Major reports, such as the UN Secretary-General's MDG reports and UNICEF's flagships - *The State of the World's Children* and *Progress for Children* -- as well as sector-specific reports such as the *Stocktaking Report on HIV/AIDS* serve as means to distribute data and catalogue key findings. These reports and all the latest data compiled by UNICEF are available to the public via the Web site, www.childinfo.org.¹

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org.²

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