Promoting Equity and Legal Identity for Children in Yemen by Improving Civil Registration

The project aims to provide equitable and sustainable access for the most vulnerable boys and girls to protection services, particularly to birth registration.

"Together we can improve the civil registration system and ensure that all Yemen's children are equal and true citizens who have their rights fulfilled and protected."

Jeremy Hopkins, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Yemen

Context

Children and adolescents continue to be the most important segments of the community of Yemen; representing over 50% of the population, they are at the heart of any meaningful engagement for making a real change in Yemen. However, the low birth registration in Yemen (only 22.3% of children under five) limits access for children and families to social services and affects the protection of children. This project seeks to improve the birth registry in Yemen as a means of promoting equity among the population and legal identity for children.

Objectives

- To provide equitable and sustainable access for the most vulnerable boys and girls to protection services, particularly to birth registration.
- To strengthen system and capacities, increase awareness and demand for birth registration in order to increase the proportion of children registered and thus legally identified.

Impact

- 40 birth registration points have been established in the five targeted governorates of Taiz, Ibb, Hodeidah, Aden and Al Dhale.
- So far, 140 new staff from CRA, Health, Education and Justice Ministries have been trained on birth registration procedures through training workshops.
- A total of 13,216 conflict-affected, displaced and most vulnerable children (6,258 girls, 6,958 boys) have been provided with birth certificates through mobile teams as an emergency response.
- 120 faith based leaders (imams and male/female preachers) have been trained on birth registration and community awareness.
Testimony

Birth registration - a guarantee to child protection

If a child does not have a birth certificate, he or she cannot prove their identity or their age, which means that other rights cannot be protected. For example, today there are 38 people condemned to death for crimes they committed, allegedly before the age of 18. But as most children in conflict with the law do not have birth certificates, it is difficult to prove their age.

The EU believes that a comprehensive civil register is the cornerstone of a country that respects rule of law, as birth certificates are the only guarantee to protect Yemeni children from different forms of abuse, including recruitment into the armed forces, undue death sentences and early marriage.

A comprehensive review of the current system has already taken place in preparation for this project. The review looked at all the reasons why the system might not be working as well as it should, and a plan of action was developed.

"Now there is a strong focus on birth registration and a strong plan to work closely with health facilities, schools and child protection centres to collect more accurate data on births and deaths" said Mr Marwan Al Jarmousi, Civil Registration Authority Coordinator in Yemen.

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