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Children's Rights in United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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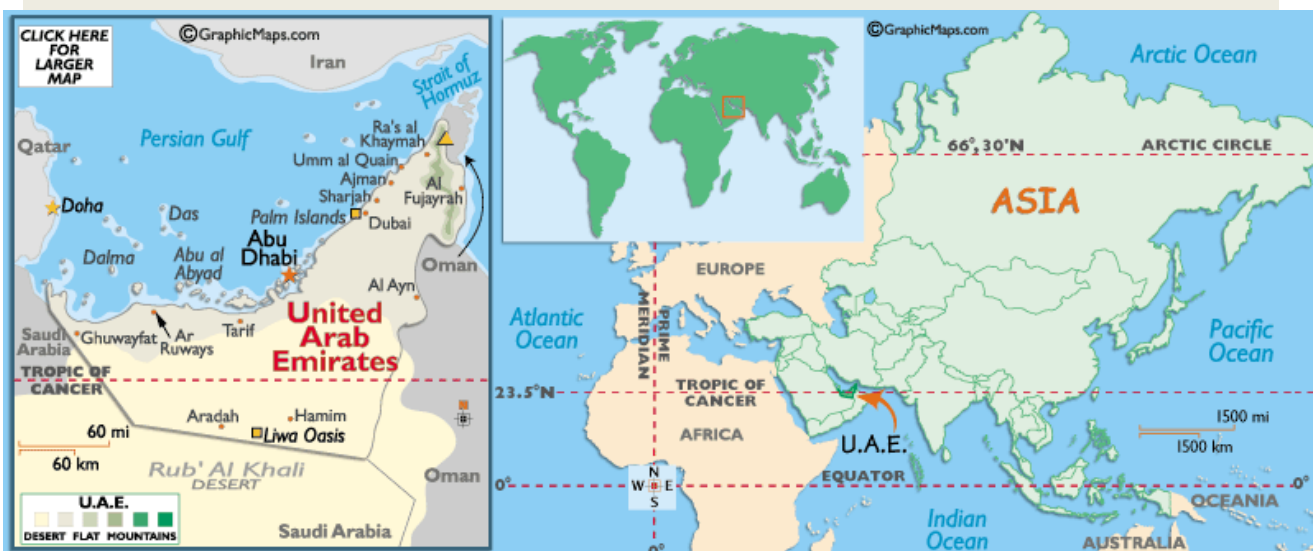
Course: Growing up in the Arab World

I. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven semi-autonomous emirates¹. The president and vice-president are elected by the Federal Supreme Council, which is composed of the rulers of each emirate.

In 2006, total population stood at 4.1 million, out of which only 21.9 per cent are Emiratis. It is estimated that more than 50 per cent of foreign workers are from the Indian subcontinent. 976,000 are under the age of 18, and 315,000 under 5.

The UAE is a "high development" country, ranking 39 out of 177 countries with Human Development Index data. Substantial oil revenues, massive construction boom and a successful financial and services sector are fuelling rapid economic growth and social development, especially in Dubai. To sustain and enhance socio-economic development, the country faces numerous challenges, including rising unemployment rates combined with the growing number of nationals ready to enter the labour market.²



¹ Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Qaiwain

² Child Rights Situation Analysis, for middle East and North Africa Region, Save the Children Sweden (MENA Region)

Population (2009 est., U.A.E. Government): 8.9 million.

Ethnic groups (U.A.E. Government): Indian (1.75 million); Pakistani (1.25 million); Bangladeshi (500,000); other Asian (1 million); European and African (500,000); and Emirati (890,000).

Religions: Muslim (96%), Hindu, Christian.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali.

Health: *Life expectancy*--78.3 yrs.

Work force (2008, World Bank): *Total*--2.8 million. *Agriculture*--5%; *industry*--60%; *services*--35% (rounded). *Female participation rate*--41.8%.

PEOPLE

Of the total 8.9 million residents, less than 20% are Emirati, more than one-third are South Asian, and a significant number are from Europe and North Africa.

The majority of Emirati citizens are Sunni Muslim with a Shi'a minority. Many foreigners are Muslim; Hindus and Christians make up a portion of the U.A.E.'s foreign population.³

II. Constitution and Laws

The family is the basis of society which shall be responsible for protecting childhood and motherhood. Laws shall be formulated in all fields to observe this protection and care in a way which safeguards the dignity of women, preserves their identity and secures for them the conditions appropriate for a prosperous life and suitable work which is in accordance with their nature and capabilities as mothers and wives and as workers. ***Article 1, UAE Constitution***

"Equality, social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the pillars of the Society." **Article 14, UAE Constitution**

³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5444.htm>, accessed 17-12-2011

The family, sustained by religion, morality and patriotism, shall constitute the cornerstone of society. The law shall guarantee the integrity of the family and shall safeguard and protect it against corruption. **Article 15, UAE Constitution**

“Society shall be responsible for protecting childhood and motherhood and shall protect minors and others unable to look after themselves for any reason, such as illness or incapacity or old age or forced unemployment. It shall be responsible for assisting them and enabling them to help themselves for their own benefit and that of the community.” **Article 16, UAE Constitution**⁴

Article 25 of the constitution provides for equality before the law without regard to race, nationality, or social status; however, there was institutional and cultural *discrimination* based on sex and nationality. For example, all male citizens can pass citizenship to their children at birth, whereas female citizens married to non-citizens do not automatically pass citizenship to their children.

Article 350 of the **Criminal Code** states that anyone who places a child in danger in a public place, either acting directly or through other persons, shall be liable to imprisonment and a fine. Most of the regulations, on the other hand, deal with child labor and child trafficking, which is a large problem relating to the use of children as camel jockeys in the UAE.”⁵

The **Civil Service Law** (Articles 55, 56) also allows for extensive maternity leave, and in 2005, civil service rules governing additional payments for children and housing were amended to eliminate any gender- based discrimination against employees. Employers in the UAE are prohibited from firing or threatening to fire a female employee on the basis of pregnancy, delivery, or parenting. Maternity leave in the public sector is two to six months. To address some of the issues that discourage some women from working, in 1999 the Federal National Council (FNC) revised the text of Article 55 to give women three months maternity leave with full

⁴ Women in the United Arab Emirates: A portrait of progress, pages 2-3

⁵ Representing children worldwide, <http://www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/summary.htm>, accessed 10-12-2011, 1:33pm

pay and another six months at half pay. A woman is now entitled to five separate periods of maternity leave during her employment with the right to return to work at any time. A woman may also take one paid hour break from work per day for 18 months to nurse her baby.

Women have protected rights of child custody that can be transferred to their mothers or direct female member of her family until the child reaches a certain age at which point the family courts will assess future custody. According to UAE Federal Law no. 6 of 2001 women who are divorced, widowed or supporting orphaned children are eligible for social welfare.⁶

There are no provisions in the law for the opportunity for children to be heard in proceedings affecting them, whether criminal or civil. Legislation affecting children's rights remains underdeveloped. More generally, however, some infrastructure does exist to deal with the issue of child abuse. The United Arab Emirates "*Women's Da'waa Administration*" recently established a telephone hotline for women and children, which has direct access to the Dubai Police if necessary and is open to requests for assistance from women.

It is generally the case that family law – which is not a part of the federal system – is ruled by Shari'a courts, over which each emirate administers. The Federal Supreme Court in Dubai has a special Shi'a council to act on matters pertaining to Shi'a family law (for Shiite Muslims as opposed to the majority Sunni Muslims). However, it is unclear if child protective proceedings are handled through this system or if such proceedings even exist. Some proceedings, such as custody decisions, which are handled through this system, are based on the child's age, therefore not leaving much room to take into account the child's wishes. Women are automatically granted custody of female children until they reach the age of maturity, and are granted temporary custody of male children until they reach the age of 12 (or 13, depending on the source). If the mother is deemed unfit, custody

⁶ Women in the United Arab Emirates: A portrait of progress, pages 2-3

reverts to the next able female relative on the mother's side. A woman who remarries may forfeit her right to the custody of children from a previous marriage. Like other Islamic countries, the UAE has reservations with respect to Article 21 of the CRC, as Islamic law does not allow for adoption.⁷

The government registered **Bidoon** births but did not grant citizenship to the children. Children of female citizens married to noncitizens do not acquire citizenship automatically at birth, but their mothers can obtain citizenship for the children after submitting an application, which the government generally accepts.⁸

United Arab Emirates enacted a law towards end of year 2001 making seat belt use compulsory for all drivers and front-seat passengers. They have also enacted another law banning children under age of 10 to sit in the front seat of the car.

Despite all these laws, statistics show that a large number of children were killed or injured while sitting in the front seat and many of them not wearing seat belt. In order to substantiate these claims, during April 2005, an observational survey of 400 vehicles was conducted in the Emirate of Dubai using two intersections near local schools. Findings of this survey indicated that nearly **8%** of children sitting in the front of a vehicle were not wearing seat belts while only **4%** of Adults were not wearing seat belt. These figures could be underestimated as at the same time in Dubai there was a Road safety campaign with financial rewards (RoadStar) in progress and hence more people would have been aware of safety problems.

During 2001, Government statistics showed that a large number of children were killed or injured while sitting in the front seat. Studies have also shown that majority of children casualties were caused by the impact of safety air bags . Air bags could seriously injure or kill an unbuckled child or adult who is sitting too close to the air bag, or who is thrown toward the dashboard during an emergency when brakes are applied suddenly. Despite all these laws, road safety campaigners

⁷ <http://www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/jurisdictions/asw/unitedarabemirates/frontpage.htm>, accessed 10-12-2011

⁸ Country Report on Human Rights Practices, US Department of State, page 13, 40-8-2011

and visual observations indicate that unsafe practices of young children sitting in the front seat together with not Wearing are still evident on Dubai roads.⁹

III. Status of the Rights of the Child

The UAE acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 2 February 1997 and expressed its reservations on Articles 7, 14, 17 and 21. It has yet to submit its Second Periodic Report, which was due on 7 March 2004. The UAE has not signed the Optional Protocols to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Upon review of the Initial Report in 2002, the Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed efforts made by the UAE in reviewing its legislation, particularly the draft laws on the Child Protection Act, the Disabled Person's Act and the Juvenile Delinquency Act. However, it expressed its concern that the principles and provisions of the CRC, such as non-discrimination and best interests of the child, are still not adequately reflected in the domestic law. It also recommended the UAE to withdraw its reservations and interpretative declarations to the CRC, to prepare and implement a National Plan of Action, ensure better cooperation between national and local levels of government, and develop a database on children, including the most vulnerable groups, establish an independent monitoring body, and involve civil society more in the implementation of the CRC.

United Arab Emirates has ratified International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions N. 138 and 182 on the minimum age for admission to employment and on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

⁹ Observation Survey of Seat Belt usage among young children in Dubai, UAE, First International Conference on Traffic Accidents University of Tehran, Ali M Darabi Golshani, Hamid Nikraz, pages1-2

The reservation to Article 7 states that "nationality is an internal matter whose terms and conditions are established by national legislation"; the UAE will be bound by Article 14 (relating to children's rights and freedoms) only to the extent that the provision "does not conflict with the principles and provisions of Islamic law"; Article 17 (on access to information and the functions of mass media) is to be applied in light of the requirements of domestic statutes; and the UAE does not consider itself bound by the provisions of Article 21 "given its commitment to the principles of Islamic law" in accordance with which "the UAE does not permit the system of adoption"

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed its concerns that traditional attitudes towards children in society may limit the respect for their views, especially within the family and in schools. In particular, it is concerned that children are not adequately informed about how to have input into policies that affect them, nor about how their views will be taken into consideration once they have been solicited.¹⁰

IV. Health

It is important to note that child malnutrition is still significant even in High Income Countries (HICs) such as Oman (18%), United Arab Emirates (UAE) (14%) and Saudi Arabia (14%). In UAE, a significant initiative with UNICEF addressing HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among young people was launched in partnership with the Ministry of Health, universities, media and others.¹¹

Environmental health: The rapid growth and urbanization have caused air quality deterioration in the large cities increasing the incidence of respiratory diseases.

¹⁰ Child Rights Situation Analysis for Middle East and North Africa Region, Save the Children Sweden (2008), page 128

¹¹ Middle East and North Africa Regional Analysis Report, 2010, pages 7-18

Healthy Cities and Healthy Environment for Children can assist to improve the environment.¹²

Children with disabilities: A child with Downs Syndrome was supported by the British Institute for Learning. **A mainstream school** was developed in 2001 in Sharjah. This was new for the UAE and has in the end been successful however it was challenging in the beginning as some of the teaching staff were against this child's inclusion in the school. This can often come from fear and lack of knowledge of how to manage the needs of a child with developmental delay. Also, there isn't an appreciation that children can grow and develop their independence and skills in life.

The majority of Private Schools in the UAE don't provide appropriate programmes for these children. The worst scenarios are schools that accept children with learning difficulties but don't have the skilled staff or resources to meet their needs. In some cases the schools are looking to increase their population and when that population target has been achieved children who are not coping in that school environment are asked to leave.

Children with learning difficulties do not always have access to private schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Of the many private schools in the UAE only a few have a learning support section, the rest will not accept children who present with any indication that they may find learning a challenge. The schools who have a learning support section address the child's academic delays. For Example if the child finds reading a challenge, the learning support teacher will practice and use a variety of reading programmes for example. A child with 'learning difficulties' will not succeed in school with an educational approach alone. Appropriate referrals are frequently not made to occupational therapists using sensory integration

¹² World Health Organization, Country Cooperation Strategy at a glance, United Arab Emirates, updated May 2007

therapy and speech and language therapists and a child with learning difficulties does not get the support they need.¹³

The UAE Federal Law 29 (2006) Concerning the Rights of Individuals with Special Needs seeks to address the issue of discrimination of people with special needs and provide and promote equal opportunities in health care, employment, sport and education. Law 29 adopts a very broad definition of special needs to include people with temporary or permanent incapacity in physical, sensory, mental, communication, educational or psychological abilities. The definition incorporates a range of conditions and impairments that cause learning difficulties. With particular regard to education, Federal 29 means that schools, public and private, can no longer refuse entrance to children they deem to have 'learning difficulties' or 'special needs'. That is, Federal Law 29 introduces compulsory inclusion for private schools in the UAE. While the Law was written in 2006, in 2009, several education authorities drafted policy and regulation documents that will have direct impact on private education in 2010.

Under Law 29, all schools will be required to have children with learning difficulties and special needs in regular classes. Now, there are no acceptable criteria for denying a student's admission other than the school being full.

The introduction of Federal Law 29 has not occurred in a vacuum. The impetus for Federal Law 29 comes from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, also of 2006. The purpose of the Convention is to encourage governments to take "appropriate measures" to enable people with disabilities to have access, opportunities and equality. As a signatory to the Convention, the UAE has institute Law 29. Accordingly, the logic of the Federal Law is based on the Convention. The Federal Law, as a reflection of the Convention, picks up the directives of the convention in such phrases as: "The State shall guarantee to ensure

¹³ Equal Opportunities for All, The British Institute for Learning Development, Sheena Reynolds, pages 5-7-8

equality", and "the State shall guarantee to take all the necessary measures to ensure the entitlement of an individual with special needs". While the Federal Law also picks up the challenge in the Convention to establish government committees, the Federal Law makes it absolutely clear that responsibility for implementing this law lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

On the issue of education, Article 12 reads: "The State shall provide for an individual with special needs equal educational opportunities in all educational institutions..... in regular or specific classes where necessary. ... Special needs do not present an obstacle preventing an individual from applying to or joining any government or private educational institution of any kind." Schools, in implementing these undertakings are specifically charged with carrying out a number of measures: To provide educational diagnosis of the needs of students; to provide suitable and differentiated academic curricula; to provide teaching assistive devices and technologies; to develop alternative strategies for learning; develop methodologies for educational programmes and plans; and provide in-service training to teachers in areas of early diagnosis and detection of learning difficulties and special needs requirements, as well as providing the latest knowledge and experience for teachers to do their work.

Given that in addition to the provision of services to special needs children, there are about 15% of children in regular schooling who need help for their learning difficulties, schools are, indeed, challenged to broaden their provision of education services and facilities.

In all this, schools are not left to implement all these changes by themselves. Perhaps the most impressive feature of Federal Law 29 is the introduction of the concept of public private partnership in advancing the implementation of the Law's provisions. In Articles 9 and 36 the ministry of social Affairs is charged with licensing non-government institutions in the care, education, training and qualification of individuals with special needs. The Ministry, in cooperation with such institutions

can grant them responsibility for the provision of special education programmes, the training of parents and professionals working with children with learning difficulties and special needs. Thus, private companies (institutes and centres) are to be directly licensed by Ministry of Social Affairs to work with schools for training, assessment, implementation of new learning strategies, and to facilitate schools in their provision of special needs and learning development services.

In the foreseeable future, the Ministry of Social Affairs could very well begin inspections of schools to see what services for children are available and what strategies are in place to help children develop at school. Allowing schools to use private specialist services as part of their education programme is certainly a good proposal and will allow many schools in the UAE to move more easily into an inclusive approach to education than would otherwise been possible. In reading Federal Law 29, it is to be noted that schools are not ordered to comply with regulations by the Ministry of Social Affairs, or other ministries. To the contrary, Federal Law 29 is a very positive move to see that there is equality within UAE society and children are given the help they need to reach their potential.¹⁴

UAE Efforts in Inclusion of Special Needs Students:

- Establishing an Assessment Team in each zone to evaluate and follow up on the needs of special education students.
- Preparing administrative and teaching staff, parents, and the schools to accept students with special needs.
- Preparing and Implementing Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) to meet the needs of each student.
- Cooperating with other agencies to provide the related services for students with special needs; the new law requires a "Special Needs Educational Committee," specialized in setting up special education programs to be implemented in early childhood, regular or special classes.

¹⁴ Federal Law – The implications for private schools in the UAE, Dr Christopher Reynolds, pages 2:4

The UAE is currently writing and implementing new Special Education Standards to ensure nondiscrimination, physical accessibility, economic accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability in education.

Future plans in inclusion of Special Needs Students in the UAE:

- Plans are being developed at the Ministry and Council levels to reform high schools leading to higher levels of student engagement and lower levels of student drop outs.
- Alternative pathways including vocational/technical education will be provided.
- Differentiation training has been taking place in schools to assist teachers in meeting the needs of all students, from low to high achievers. This training will expand to all schools in the UAE.
- The Schoolwide Enrichment Model is being adopted to increase all students' interest in learning and to challenge high achieving students. This will help to engage students, thus lowering the dropout rate and raising achievement levels in the schools.
- Professional training for teachers and supervisors to address inclusion.
- Awareness for the schools and community and Ad campaign.
- Assistive Technology- Implementation/Training Programs such as Special Olympics¹⁵

V. Education

The **Constitution** states that education is compulsory at the primary level and free of charge at all levels. All children at (pre-university) school age, regardless of their nationality, gender or religion, are entitled to enroll at government schools.

¹⁵ 48th International Conference on Education, WORKSHOP 3, Inclusion in the UAE, presentation by Hanif Hassan.

Education is free of charge and the schools provide the requisite books and stationery at nominal prices. The official age for enrolment at primary schools is 5.9 to 6 years and the primary stage of education lasts for six years. However, compulsory education is not enforced, and some children do not attend school. Despite extensive government spending, school enrolments are still low. Net primary school enrolment rates reach 71 per cent for boys and 70 per cent for girls, while net secondary school enrolment rates are 56 per cent for boys and 59 per cent for girls. In addition, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern about the focus on learning by rote education rather than on developing analytical skills, and about the absence of awareness on human rights from the educational curricula.

Non-citizen resident children are not permitted to enroll in free of charge public schools unless they live in rural areas that lacked private schools. Many foreign workers in private sector employment receive education allowances as part of their salary packages. For those who do not receive the extra salary benefit, the government provided an annual subsidy of approximately \$1,600 per family to its non-citizen employees for private school tuition. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed its concerns at the disparities in the enjoyment of economic and social rights, particularly to health and education, experienced by non-national children.

Early Childhood Care and Education:

The administration of kindergartens and primary schools is mainly responsible for the provision of educational services for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). It is one of the administrative units under the department of educational affairs in the Ministry of Education and Youth and thus, it is financed from the Ministry's annual budget, comprising three subdivisions: wages and salaries; services; and special expenditures.

There are also independent kindergartens financed by the women's federation and associations. The curricula are the same as those applied in public kindergartens. The annual coordination with the Ministry of Education and Youth helps to define the needs of the administrative, technical and teaching personnel. An employee from the Ministry is therefore delegated to work in the federation or association concerned.

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	64.0	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	45.0	2003/04
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	80.0	2005

Kindergarten Development Centres have been set up in recent years. They are considered as a permanent scientific laboratory in the Gulf area to prepare and train teaching and administrative staff. They adopt a developed curriculum that depends on diverse educational sources and the resources library provides all the references and assistance that form the cornerstone of the Centres.¹⁶

Universal Primary Education:

The net enrollment rates declined in several countries and territories of Arab States, including Lebanon, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and the United Arab Emirates *"The declines in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates are partly explained by changes in the duration of primary schooling, by one year more in the former and one year less in the latter"*.

¹⁶ Country profile prepared for the education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2007. Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education, United Arab Emirates, IBE/2006/EFA/GMR/CP/86, pages 2-4

Some Arab countries faced serious shortages of trained teachers. The percentage of trained primary teachers was only 14% in Lebanon and 60% in Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. In the United Arab Emirates, where primary female teachers accounted for 84% of the total primary teaching staff in 2005, just 58% were trained, compared with 69% of the men.¹⁷

The Hidden Gender Gap in Education in the UAE:

While the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) ranks the UAE a low 105 out of 130 countries in regard to gender equality, it places the UAE at first place in terms of secondary and tertiary education gender parity due to the tremendous strides Emirati women have made in regard to educational enrollment. In fact, this first place ranking is misleading, as it fails to take into account a significant gender gap that exists in the United Arab Emirates, with males performing markedly lower than females in several key areas. While the WEF's *Global Gender Gap Report* highlights the "large gains in educational attainment" made by the UAE, it fails to note that men have not been making the same gains as women and in some cases are being left behind.

Gross enrollment figures for the UAE reveal that while there has been an unprecedented increase in overall enrollment for both boys and girls in the last 30 years, there are growing inequalities. Table 1 shows that at the preparatory and secondary education levels, enrollment rates are notably higher for girls than boys. At the tertiary level, only 12 percent of males have attended school compared with nearly 40 percent of females.

¹⁷ Regional Overview Arab States: UNESCO

Table (1) UAE Gross Enrollment Figures, 2007

School Type	% of males	% of females	Gender Parity Index	Total
Primary	85	82	0.97	71
Preparatory and secondary	62	66	1.05	64
Tertiary	12	39	3.24	22

The gap between boys and girls is even more pronounced in data that includes only Emirati boys and girls. The National Admissions and Placements Office (NAPO) of the Ministry of Higher Education states that only 27 percent of Emirati males are attending higher education, compared with over 70 percent of Emirati females.

Emirati males are also performing poorly in school and university compared with females.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that girls had outperformed boys in all subjects in the final Grade 12 exams held at the end of the 2006/07 academic year. The same data show that ten percent of boys from grades 10 to 12 failed their examinations in comparison to only five percent of girls. In the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, the MOE reported that girls outperformed or equaled boys in every grade and subject, while in the Emirate of Sharjah the failure rate for boys was twice that of girls.

In addition to underperforming, males are also dropping out of school and university at greater rates than females. For instance, 14 percent of boys dropped out of Grade 10 in Ras Al-Khaimah in 2007, while in Sharjah there was a dropout rate of around eight percent for males in secondary schools in 2004. High dropout rates are associated with particular grades and sections. Dropout rates for males peak in Grade 10, the first non-compulsory year of schooling, making this an ideal

year in which to target boys to help them stay in school. In Grades 11 and 12, the differences between male and female dropout rates in the science section are negligible. However, in the arts section, which is typically chosen by less able students, a large gap between male and female dropout rates is evident. This distinction points to the need for intervention targeted at less academically able boys, rather than at boys in general.

The main reasons males in Ras al Khaimah gave for dropping out were either to find work or for “extended absences.” While it is not clear what these absences relate to, it could be that they are due to family obligations or to schooling being perceived as an increasingly irrelevant activity. Coupled with high “no-show” rates at the higher education level for admitted males, these figures present a worrying picture of male participation in both secondary and tertiary education, particularly since a significant percentage of males will not even have the option of considering higher education.

The male gender gap in education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) results from factors related to schooling, family background and the perceived economic returns to education. Each of these is explored below.

Schooling: The role of schools in creating an environment in which boys want to succeed should not be underestimated. Studies on school quality in the UAE have found boys’ schools to be places lacking in warmth, creativity and engagement, with teachers expecting little from students and giving back little in return. The relationship between the mostly expatriate teachers and local students was found to be ambivalent at best and openly hostile at worst. In contrast, girls’ schools were welcoming places of engagement, with high expectations of students. Lower dropout rates and higher grades for girls are evidence that something is being done better, or at least differently, in girls’ schools. In a survey of 250 students, Ridge (2008) found that girls were more likely to rate their school as “excellent” than boys, who were more likely to rate their schools as “good” or “average.” A survey of students in Sharjah also found

that boys reported lower levels of motivation and liking for school than girls.⁶ Much of this can be attributed to teacher quality, so policy makers must consider the impact of factors such as teacher training, teacher salaries and teacher gender upon student achievement and engagement in UAE schools.

Family Expectations: In the United Arab Emirates, the family, not the individual, is the primary building block of society. This means that communal interests usually override individual ones. The role of the male in this society is typically that of the “breadwinner,” and males are expected to provide not only for their immediate family but also for their extended family, in particular for unmarried sisters and widowed, divorced or marginalized mothers.

Gender roles and expectations are changing as women start to work more outside the home.

However, expectations for men to provide for their families still exist, despite an increase in the number of working women. For young men from poorer regions in the UAE, this may require leaving school early to get a job to support their family or going straight into paid employment as soon as they complete school rather than continuing their education. The impact of polygamy and/or divorce on young males also deserves attention. Some studies have shown negative effects of polygamy on prior wives and children, including poor performance at school. If the father leaves an earlier wife or adds a new one, there is often a burden placed on the oldest son of the previous wife to look after his mother and siblings, especially in poorer families. Ridge (2008) found that male students from outlying villages in the Northern Emirates lived in families with up to 23 siblings. Many students reported that their father was either retired or unemployed, with 25 percent of students reporting that their father had two or more wives. In these cases, the eldest son may face greater pressure to find work in order to ensure the well being of the family, unlike his sisters who will usually be encouraged to complete school to improve future prospects of work or marriage.

Family socioeconomic status also influences whether males stay in school or go on to higher education. Young men from the poorer regions of the UAE, in particular the rural areas of the Northern Emirates, face the double challenge of familial/cultural expectations and the disadvantages of coming from low income families. Males from Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah tend to score lower on the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) examination than young men from the wealthier, more urbanized emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The CEPA is used for university admittance, and students who fail to score 150 or higher will either not be admitted or forced to take a foundation year.

Coupled with school quality concerns, family and cultural influences can add to the burden that young men—especially those from poorer families—face. In turn, this means that young men may have to leave school early or be unable to continue their education.

Perceived Returns to Education: Perceptions of the potential returns to education also contribute to poor retention rates for Emirati males. Returns to education are typically measured in the form of income; that is, given every additional year of schooling, how much extra income will a person earn?

For the individual—in this case young males—the perception of the returns to education is shaped by the attractiveness of alternative choices, and most importantly by the possibility of obtaining work without further education.

Studies have shown that in societies where the quality of education is low and public sector employment is high, individuals often make distorted educational choices, as they perceive that there are no real gains to further education.

In the UAE, nationals account for roughly 85 percent of the public sector workforce but only around one percent of the private sector. This ratio may offer some explanation for the low enrollment and high dropout rates of Emirati men in school and university.

The attraction of the public sector for UAE nationals is a result of both high wages and superior working conditions. Nationals tend not to enter the private sector, where there is much greater competition for jobs due to an abundance of cheap foreign labor and, as a result, lower salaries.

According to 2005 statistics on no-shows to public universities from the National Admittance and Placement Office (NAPO), the largest percentage (33 percent) of Emirati men who did not pursue higher education joined either the police or military, both of which require minimal education, while the second highest percentage (30 percent) were “staying at home or looking for work.”

In simple terms, there is no clear link for Emirati men between wages and education, especially in the public sector. When public sector employment options are plentiful and education is seen to be of little relevance, it is only natural that young men will forgo education past a certain point. As a result, enrollments fall and the percentage of males entering the workforce rises.

For national women, the situation is different. Their high enrollment in tertiary education indicates that they and their families perceive real returns to education as compared with the alternatives. Women do not have the same access to jobs in the military and police, or in other highly male-dominated fields such as the petroleum industry. It would appear that greater competition for scarce jobs prompts women in the UAE to place greater value on higher education, as evidenced by higher tertiary enrolment rates.

The Importance of Addressing the Male Gender Gap: Despite their low education levels, unemployment rates for males are still much lower than for females. The question often asked then is: “If men are finding opportunities in the labor force, why is educational inequality problematic?” There are two reasons: first, males matter in terms of enhancing economic competitiveness, and second, there are social gains from educating males that benefit all who live in the UAE.¹⁸

¹⁸The Hidden Gender Gap in Education in the UAE, Dubai school of Government, Policy Brief No.12.

VI. Status of the Right to Protection

The UAE has drafted legislations aimed at putting an end to all forms of exploitation and abuse of children. A number of legislative measures have been enacted to ensure protection of children from *violence and abuse*. In 1974, a law was adopted prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in educational establishments. Criminal charges could be brought against any teacher found guilty of inflicting corporal punishment. In 2006, Law Number 3 was adopted to ensure 'the care of destitute children', including children repeatedly subjected to violence by one or both parents. However, *corporal punishment* is lawful at home and there is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in alternative care settings. In addition, corporal punishment is lawful as a sentence for crime, and there have been accounts of minors being punished by flogging for example.

UAE reports that there have been no reported cases of children being subjected to physical or mental abuse, neglect, or violence by one or both parents. There is very little information on the prevalence of abuse and violence against children, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended UAE to conduct a study to assess the nature and extent of ill treatment and abuse of children.

The law also protects children from *economic exploitation*. The labour law prohibits employment of persons under the age of 15 and has special provisions for employing those 15 to 18 years of age. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for enforcing the regulations. The government does not issue work permits for foreign workers under the age of 18 years. The law does not specifically prohibit *trafficking* in persons, although child smuggling, forced prostitution, kidnapping, fornication, and pornography are regarded as crimes. In practice, trafficking in women and girls used as prostitutes and domestic servants continues to be a serious problem.¹⁹

¹⁹ Op: Child Rights Situation Analysis, page 129

VII. Trafficking of children in camel jockeys

In 2005, the Government of the United Arab Emirates recognised the seriousness of this problem and announced the introduction of a new law prohibiting the use of children as camel jockeys under the age of eighteen. Under this law, brought in on 5 July 2005, offenders face up to three years in prison and/or a fine of at least 50,000 dirhams (US\$13,614). This is a significant step forward and one that has been called for by human rights organisations, including Anti-Slavery International, for many years.

In 2005, the UAE Government also reached an agreement with UNICEF over the repatriation of child camel jockeys. When this agreement was announced the UAE's Ministry of the Interior estimated that some 3,000 children were being used as camel jockeys in the UAE and that around 2,800 of these children (93 per cent) were under 10 years old. The Government will provide US\$2.7 million to help with the return and reintegration of child camel jockeys in their countries. The Government also held an amnesty for camel owners releasing underage jockeys, the deadline for which was 31 May 2005.

UAE supports UNICEF in safe return of camel jockeys to home countries, UNICEF, 8 May 2005,

The repatriation process

Firstly, there is a major discrepancy between the Government's estimate of 3,000 children working as camel jockeys in the UAE, and the number of children who have been repatriated, which was 1,070, as of March 2006. These figures clearly indicate that many more children continue to work as camel jockeys and still need to be identified and repatriated.

Secondly, there is a discrepancy of approximately 350 between the numbers officially repatriated to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sudan and the numbers that Anti-Slavery International's NGO partners report as having been returned. While there may be a simple explanation for this, it is vital that all cases are properly tracked

and documented, so that the child is protected from being re-trafficked and that their welfare needs are properly addressed. These figures are also needed so that the numbers of children repatriated can be accurately matched against those estimated to be working as camel jockeys.

Thirdly, while the UAE Government estimates that 93 per cent of camel jockeys are under 10 years old, the information received from Anti- Slavery International partners indicates that most of the children being repatriated are over 10. For example, of the 145 children documented by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association as having been repatriated between 1 August 2005 and 23 February 2006, only 42 out of 145 children were under 10 years old.

Finally, testimonies from children gathered by our partner organisations in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sudan suggest that some children have not been properly prepared for their repatriations. This is important because children are commonly anxious about returning to their countries and even their families, which are strange to them now, having been taken away at such a young age.

For example, in Sudan, Peace and Development Volunteers, interviewed several children who have been repatriated since the new scheme began in May, but who arrived in Sudan via unofficial routes, and therefore without accessing the repatriation and rehabilitation care that the UAE has promised to provide.

It is imperative that the UAE fully documents each case and provides evidence of the standards of care being provided to these children prior to repatriation. The UAE authorities should take steps to ensure that all children receive full rehabilitative care and that every repatriation is carried out appropriately and sensitively. Rehabilitation must include: medical care for injuries suffered; psychiatric care and counselling to deal with the traumatic experiences children have been through and to help them adjust to their freedom; and bridging education to bring them up to speed with their peer group.

Steps must be taken to try to trace parents before the child leaves the destination country to confirm their origins and assess their full reintegration needs. Solutions

must be found for those children whose parents cannot be traced or for whom family reunion would be inappropriate.

This should help guard against further abuse and the risk of re-trafficking of children on return to their country of origin. Full child protection and rehabilitation services must also be made available at home country. The UAE should support poorer countries of origin in providing such services, where appropriate.

The UAE Government should also provide details of how the \$2.7 million has been spent so far. For example, what proportion of this has been used to compensate child camel jockeys for the period of time that they have worked in the UAE and what assessment has the Government made of the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration services provided so far.

Implementing legislation prohibiting the use of child camel jockeys

The use of young children as camel jockeys had been prohibited in the UAE for decades and under numerous regulations:

The Government reported to the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards that the employment of any child under the age of 15 has been prohibited in the UAE since 1980 under the Federal Labour Code.

The UAE's independent Camel Jockey Association has had a rule since the early 1990s that using children younger than 14 or lighter than 45 kilograms as camel jockeys is prohibited.

In July 2002, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Emirates Camel Racing Federation and Minister for Foreign Affairs, promulgated Order No.1/6/266, prohibiting children under 15 or weighing less than 45kg from being employed in camel racing. It also specified that all camel jockeys must have proof of their age through their passports and be issued with a medical certificate by the Camel Racing Federation. A fine of 20,000 dirhams (US\$5,500) will be imposed for a first offence and a second offence will lead to a ban from camel racing for one

year. A prison sentence of three months along with a fine of 20,000 dirhams will be imposed for subsequent offences.

The ban came into effect on 1 September 2002. Despite all this, reports of very young children being used as camel jockeys in the UAE have been consistently documented between 1997 and 2005. Indeed the Ministry of Interior's own estimate that there were roughly 2,800 camel jockey under 10 years of age in the UAE in May 2005 shows that these laws have never been effectively implemented.

The UAE Government is proposing to use robots to replace child camel jockeys. This seems a complicated alternative to implementing fair labour conditions for adult jockeys. Furthermore, the use of robot jockeys in races will not preclude the need for people to exercise, feed and care for the camels in camps.

Indeed, Anti-Slavery International has received reports from credible sources that, while there are no longer signs of major public races involving children in the UAE, races with child jockeys are still taking place, but in smaller, camp-based venues.

The principal monitoring mechanisms designed to prevent and prohibit the practice is the Special Commission. The Commission is composed of policemen and is responsible for, amongst other things, controlling camel racing, considering the issue of child camel jockeys and responding effectively to any new problem faced in this regard.

The Government reported to the ILO Committee of Experts "that it envisages training the police and other relevant bodies on child rights as laid down in international conventions." The Government should ensure that this training take place as a matter of priority, especially with regard to child trafficking and the use of children in hazardous work. This is especially pertinent considering a documentary broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on 25 February 2003 showed police, during a camel race, escorting very young camel jockeys to a bus while other officials attempted to stop filming. This despite regulations prohibiting the use of children under 15 years of age as camel jockeys in force at the time.

The Committee of Experts (2006) has asked the Government to provide information on the activities of the Special Commission and its findings with regard to the use of child camel jockeys, their working conditions and the number of infringements reported.

This information is particularly important as prosecutions of those exploiting camel jockeys remains extremely rare. The Committee of Experts (2006) notes just five cases brought to the Courts under the July 2005 law, although cases were still being investigated at the time of writing.

Given the official statistics which indicate that there are still approximately 2,000 child camel jockeys in UAE and the expiry of the amnesty for camel owners in May 2005, the figure for prosecutions under the new law is very disappointing and raises questions as to whether existing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are adequate.

Anti-Slavery International is keen to know how the Government will ensure that the 2005 legislation is properly implemented, given the failure of previous laws and regulations which prohibited the use of child camel jockeys.²⁰

VIII. UNICEF Role in UAE

In order to raise awareness of UNICEF work, as identified by a market survey in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE, a well-structured fundraising and partnerships function was established in Dubai and Saudi Arabia and a communication unit was set up in Dubai, with a redesigned website to support these functions. The development of a more comprehensive fundraising strategy helped to extend corporate alliances and leverage \$33.5 million, besides the \$8 million committed by UAE for the second phase of the joint project for protection of child camel jockeys (2007-2009).

²⁰ Information on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Compliance with ILO Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ratified in 2001), Trafficking of children for use as camel jockeys, May 2006

Awareness campaigns and training on children's rights, conducted in collaboration with UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO), yielded breakthroughs in public discourse on sensitive issues, such as child abuse, trafficking, and HIV/AIDS. With UNICEF leading the United Nations country team (UNCT) Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in UAE, prison officers were given an orientation on HIV/AIDS prevention. A partnership continued with the Dubai Police for the Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS campaign. Journalists and reporters in Dubai and Kuwait were introduced to the CRC and to the principles and guidelines for ethical reporting on children. Awareness campaigns on obesity and diabetes were conducted in UAE, besides child safety campaigns in Saudi Arabia and UAE. To facilitate documenting and monitoring the status of children through a comprehensive child database system, DevInfo was established in Saudi Arabia and UAE.

The Child Protection Unit in Abu Dhabi provided technical support to all five countries. Besides advocacy and information dissemination, the UAE Child Camel Jockeys protection project, which had gained positive recognition as a model, received a concrete monitoring system, and was extended until 2009, with additional UAE funding.

Partnerships are also well established between UNICEF and the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation in UAE and the Kuwait Charity Fund. Besides traditional partnerships, new funding alliances are developing, as evidenced by donations of the Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People and the emerging partnerships with red crescent societies in all Gulf Area countries as well as business corporations. Gulf Area Office will explore new options while continuing to reinforce resource generation alliances with existing government and private-sector funding agencies.²¹

²¹ Gulf Area, Sub regional programme document 2010 – 2012, pages 5-10

In 2010, Gulf Area Office (GAO) conducted Situation Analysis "SitAns" in UAE and Bahrain as a first step toward developing National Childhood Strategies. The SitAn analyzes the situation of vulnerable groups of children who need protection. Negotiations to implement Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys "MICS" in Gulf countries are underway. DevInfo work has been initiated in UAE and KSA and will be strengthened.

As part of GAO's support to UAE and Bahrain in SITAN and childhood strategy development, GAO conducted training workshops on CRC and strategy development for 45 representatives from UAE, in addition to 25 representatives from Bahrain.

In UAE, the Red Crescent was engaged in supporting the UNICEF Pakistan flood emergency appeal. UNICEF's ongoing strategic partnership with Dubai Cares Initiative continued with focus on preparations for the next phase of the partnership due to launch in 2011. The Pakistan flood emergency also led to the expansion of GAO's partnerships with new major donors in the region, Saudi Arabia in particular, with AGFUND & the Saudi Development Fund.

To fulfill GAO's commitment to mainstream gender equality concerns and advocacy for the rights of women and girls into country analysis, the SitAn of children in UAE preparation process relied on consultations with children and adolescents to engage them and hear their voices on various issues that bear on their education, health, protection, and participation. The consultations were gender sensitive and used various techniques: eleven hearing workshops were held with 215 children of both sexes from all Emirates (126 females and 89 males); focus group discussions were held with 77 children (43 females and 34 males); and interviews were conducted with 9 children as part of the life stories series of interviews. Moreover, 5 children (3 females and 2 males) were asked to keep daily diaries to follow their lives for a week.

GAO ensured the adoption of age/gender focus in the SitAn analysis based on disaggregated data where available. During SitAn preparation a training workshop

on CRC took place for all members of SitAn committees with attendance mainly favouring females (45 females and 3 males).

GAO is partnering with the GWU and the HCMC to develop the first NCS for children in UAE. The NCS encompasses prioritized strategic directions on legislation, policies, and programmes; aiming at improving the wellbeing of children in UAE by creating a safe environment conducive to developing children's capabilities that cater to the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being of children. Her Highness Sheikha Fatmeh Bint Mubarak issued a decree to establish the NCS higher, steering and executive committees. The higher committee is represented by the Ministry of Social Development, the National Center of Research and Studies, the National Statistics Center, UNICEF, the GWU and the Supreme Council for Mother and Child. A steering committee and four thematic working groups were formed including representatives from relevant 45 governmental and non-governmental institutions drawn from academia and the media. Capacity building enabled the members of the committees and working groups to more effectively analyze the situation of children and women in the context of CRC and CEDAW, and devise childfocused strategic directions.

Child Obesity Programme in UAE - Phase II: The project aims at reducing the prevalence of child obesity among school students through implementing a quality school health programme in selected schools. The programme strengthens and modifies policies, resources, services, and activities that contribute to the overall vision of healthy students. Available funds will be used for the production of an animated movie about child obesity. The script of the movie is finalized and will be ready early next year. The government and the corporate sector will be approached to secure funding.

Child Injury Prevention in UAE: The project will be implemented aiming at fostering a culture of safety among school children (12-15 years) in the UAE. The objectives of this project include:

- Enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers and students on injury prevention using relevant WHO and UNICEF tools and guidelines in selected schools of Dubai.
- Engaging and involving teachers and students in actual/hands-on interventions for injury prevention in selected schools of Dubai.
- Ensuring sustainability and replication of the project, after its evaluation, in other schools in Dubai and possibly UAE and other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

An MOU was signed with Dubai Health Authority (DHA). WHO is in charge of providing technical support. A detailed project document was prepared in consultation with WHO and DHA, and a training package was developed and finalized. The training package will be tested among students during the training workshops and the final version will be produced based on the feedback obtained from the participants. DHA officially contacted the Ministry of Education for their involvement in the selection of schools that will participate in the workshops, which are to take place from Mid January till Mid February. Four workshops will be conducted, each consisting of 25 participants.

HIV/AIDS Project in UAE: UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNDP, is in the process of conducting a knowledge, attitude, behavior, and practice study to assess the level of knowledge and identify risk behaviors of university students in the UAE. The study aims to assess the youth level of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS, identify risk behaviors pertaining to HIV among youth and their reliable sources of information, and determine the scope and format of behavior change communication interventions. After the completion of the data

collection process, culturally appropriate interventions and messages will be prepared to raise the awareness about HIV/AIDS among young people in the UAE. GAO and American University in Dubai "AUD", with MENARO's²² support, celebrated the World Aids Day and launched the awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS targeting university students on their campus with high-level attendance. For the campaign, leaflets tackling modes of transmission and means for prevention were distributed.²³

IX. General Women's Union

Amongst its many duties, the General Women's Union (GWU) is responsible for suggesting new laws and amendments to existing laws in order to benefit women. The GWU pursues policy research related to women's issues and makes recommendations to the relevant ministries and government departments based on their findings.

The GWU was in fact instrumental in the realization of the new civil service law of 2001 extending maternity leave, as well as the law establishing the Supreme Council for Mother and Child in 2003 which is directly affiliated to the Office of the President. The GWU also played a key part in reviewing the country's draft social status law governing family relations.²⁴

Emirate of Dubai

The social context of early Childhood in Dubai

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was created in 2006 to develop all education and human resource sectors in Dubai. What follows is a description of the social context in Dubai in relation to the early childhood education sector.

²² MENARO - Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (UNICEF)

²³ UNICEF Annual Report for Gulf Area Subregional Programme, pages 3-4-9-12-13

²⁴ Women in the United Arab Emirates: A portrait of progress, page 6

Population

The total population of Dubai in the year 2008 was 1.646 million, making up approximately one-third of the population of the UAE. Of this population, 1.48 million (89%) are expatriate and 158,000 (11%) are nationals.

Population growth rate is 1.52% annually. The total fertility rate of national women is 3.57. In recent census of the Emirati population, male births (54%) outnumber female births (46%). In Dubai, national household size is large, with on average 7.45 persons: 49% have 6-10 persons and 30% have over 10 family members.

The current child population by year of age (from birth to 6 years) in Dubai is as follows in Table 2 below:

Table (2) Dubai's 2009 child population by age, from 1 to 6 years

Age	Emirati	Expatriate	Total
1-2 years	4,954	12,331	17,285
2-3 years	4,005	11,753	15,758
3-4 years	3,980	11,951	15,931
4-5 years	3,738	10,849	14,587
5-6 years	3,675	11,030	14,705

Source: DSC, 2008

Data related to child well-being and status:

The UAE infant mortality rate is 8.5 per thousand (EU-25 average = 5.72 per thousand. Luxembourg = 2 per thousand). Public expenditure on education is 1.3%

of GDP in the UAE1 (EU average 4.72%). The actual 1.3% of GDP provides a relatively high per capita investment

Early Childhood Education and Care services in Dubai

The first kindergarten in the United Arab Emirates was established in Abu Dhabi in 1972. Shortly afterwards, three kindergartens were established in Dubai. Developments thereafter were rapid: from 7 kindergartens in the 1970s to 97 by 2004-2005. In 1980, a department in the Ministry of Education (MoE) was designated to establish public kindergartens in the UAE. By 2004, the ministry had created two units within these departments, one to take charge of existing kindergartens and a second unit dedicated to program development.

Up to the establishment in 1980 of the first kindergarten section at the Ministry of Education in the UAE, governance of all KGs in the UAE was affiliated to the Directorate of Education in Kuwait. In 1987, the UAE Ministry of Education established a department responsible jointly for KGs and primary education. Ten years later, a separate KG Department was established, the main responsibility of which was to inspect, set standards and curricula for KGs, as well as to hire and train KG staff. Growth in the sector has been remarkable: the initial number of children (2,135) enrolled in seven public kindergartens in 1973/1974 has risen to 22,219 children enrolled in 97 kindergartens in 2004/2005. In parallel, the number of teachers increased from 73 teachers in 1974 to 1,372 teachers in 2004-2005.

The first licensed nursery in Dubai was established in 1984, following the issuing of a new federal law to regulate the licensing and functioning of nurseries in the UAE. Over the last three decades, rapid economic growth has brought large numbers of expatriates from varied cultural backgrounds, nationalities and languages to Dubai to fill the many posts available in the labour force. Private nurseries and kindergartens have been established to provide the pre-school services required for these incoming families. The governance of these private services was divided among different ministries.

Responsibility for nursery services was first taken in charge by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 1983 and after the separation of these ministries in 2004, was ascribed to the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The greater part of the early childhood sector is privately owned with 82 private nurseries, and two public nurseries, serving a total enrolment of 7,594 children.

More than 90% of children in Dubai are enrolled in kindergarten – which suggests a very positive appreciation of kindergarten services. The Dubai Strategic Plan: Social Development Sector Plan (2006) notes that almost 90% of nursery users are non-nationals: many expatriate women work and believe that nurseries provide better developmental opportunities for their child than an in-home nanny or maid. By contrast, the national culture in Dubai is based on extended families and homecare services, a tradition that probably lessens demand for extra-domestic care. Another reason for homecare among Emirati families is their comparative wealth and the abundance of inexpensive housemaids/nannies who are employed to help with rearing children and other tasks. Research is required to provide information regarding the type of care provided by the extended family, the quality of learning of children aged 0-6 within the care of the extended family and whether this care is provided mostly by nannies/maids or by members of the extended family.

Considering the importance of early childhood education and care as evidenced in this report, further consideration should be given to ensure:

- The awareness of all parties involved of the critical importance of the early stages of a child's life to the development of the individual and of society.
- Achieving a desired level of quality of early education is an activity that is better achieved with all parties involved.

The current governance and structure of early childhood education in Dubai brings a key advantage of knowledge, expertise and resources already available in various

authorities. A forum among these would bring great opportunities for building a framework based on global best practices.²⁵

1. Dubai Foundation for Women and Children

Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC) was established in July 2007 as a humanitarian initiative and was the first licensed nonprofit shelter in the UAE for women and children victims of *domestic violence, child abuse, and human trafficking*.

DFWAC provides free services to women and children victims of violence, including a helpline, safe shelter, case management, medical care, psychological support, counseling, legal, consular and immigration assistance. In addition to those core services, DFWAC also provides secondary support services including children's education, recreational activities, vocational services, physical fitness, empowerment, and skills training.

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Types of Received Clients

All Internal & External Clients: DFWAC received and served a total of 294 internal and external clients during the reporting period January 01 – December 31, 2010. Of the total **294** clients, 46% were victims of "Domestic Violence". DFWAC received equal numbers of "Human Trafficking" and "Child Abuse" victims, 22% each. The remaining cases, were "Others", and made up 10% of all DFWAC internal and

²⁵ Early childhood Education and care in Dubai, an Executive Summary 2009, pages 9-12-46

external clients .These "Other" cases were accepted by the Foundation for exceptional humanitarian reasons or sheltered with the victim as dependent or attendant client, but did not receive and/or were not aware of any kind of violence.

Total Internal Clients: A total of 135 internal clients received services at DFWAC during the reporting period (January 01 – December 31, 2010). Of the total internal clients (112 new cases + 23 existing cases =135), 45% were victims of "Human Trafficking". More than one quarter of the sheltered clients (27%) were victims of "Child Abuse" and 18% were victims of "Domestic Violence". The remaining cases, referred to as "Others", totaled 13, and made up 10% of all DFWAC internal clients admitted during that period. These "Other" cases were accepted by the Foundation for exceptional humanitarian reasons or sheltered with the victim as dependent or attendant client, but did not receive and/or were not aware of any kind of violence.

New Internal Clients: Of the 112 new internal clients, 46 cases were counted under the category of human trafficking; 31 cases were victims of child abuse; and 22 were cases of domestic violence.

Existing Internal Clients: In addition, of the 23 existing cases (cases that entered the Foundation prior to 2010 but continued to receive services in 2010); 15 cases were victims of human trafficking; 5 cases were victims of child abuse; and 3 were victims of domestic violence.

Nationality: From 2008 to 2010, the percentage of National served by DFWAC has increased by 8%, reflecting the effectiveness of DFWAC's awareness programs.²⁶

Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS)

Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS) is a local non-profit organization founded in 1979 as a branch of the Arab Family Organization in the Gulf region,

²⁶ Dubai Foundation For Women and Children (DFWAC) annual report 2010, pages 13:17

aiming to advance the Arab family and develop the social services it needs. SCHS was authorized under decree number 6/1981 issued by the Government of Sharjah on March 11th, 1981. On October 10, 1995, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammed Al-Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, issued a decree under edict number 4/1995, declaring SCHS as an independent organization in the Emirate of Sharjah aiming at serving people with disabilities in the UAE.

Today, under the umbrella of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Sharjah, SCHS serves annually more than three thousand persons with disabilities from different nationalities and age groups.

Due to the great importance of the cooperation and exchanging experiences between the different countries of the international community in empowering the disabled and claiming their rights, SCHS has been working hard to activate the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons 2004-2013 which has similar objectives and strategies to SCHS's.

Helping the disabled has been always a priority of SCHS. Therefore, it has been adapting plans and projects on the basis of education, precaution, therapy, and precision in order to serve humanitarian and patriotic purposes such as informing the public about the issues of the disabled in order to prepare them to accept the idea of living together in complete harmony.

This insightful attitude of the wise commandment of SCHS has achieved many great successes in such short time. The negative attitude of the society towards the disabled has changed. In addition, the negative perspective of the disabled about themselves has changed. This took years and years of hard work by SCHS to become a reality. Here are some initiatives made by SCHS to help activate the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons:

These are the initiatives of SCHS to activate the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons:

1. Legislations

Issuing, activating, and improving the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons, SCHS helped in educating the public about the matter

2. Health Care

Taking precautionary procedures to prevent disability and providing diagnoses, therapy, and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities

- Providing health insurance
- Audiology Unit
- Blindness section
- Early intervention section

3. Education

Providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities to learn and attend public private schools

- Integration
- The memo of understanding with Microsoft
- Publishing a dictionary for sign language
- Providing early intervention text books for the age of 5 years old

4. Rehabilitation & employment

Rehabilitation is done according to the latest trends of technology and science

- Finding jobs and opportunities for people with disabilities in private and public sectors
- Vocational rehabilitation & training department

5. Sports and entertainment

Achieving full development for people with disabilities by allowing them to participate in sports and entertaining activities which is safe and amusing according to their capabilities

- Establishing Al Thiqa Club for Handicapped
- Al Amal Camp
- Summer camp for the siblings of the disabled

6. Transportation

Working to facilitate the traveling of people with disabilities

- Training them on special cars
- Helping them to get driving licenses easily
- Trying to remove obstacles and barriers by coordinating with Sharjah Public Works Department
- A memo of understanding with Etisalat
- A memo of understanding with Air Arabia to reduce tickets prices
- A memo of understanding with the GATTES
- Working with the GATTES to translate some publications

7. Children with disabilities

Working to provide disabled children with the equal opportunities in education, rehabilitation, and health care

- Early Intervention
- The School for the Intellectually Disabled
- Fathers' Board
- Mothers' Board
- The Siblings of the Disabled Board

- UAE Special Art Group
- A membership in Inclusion International
- Parents of Disabled Association
- A membership in local and international organizations
- Providing early intervention text books for the students under the age of 5 years old
- Manzil Center for foreigners

8. Women with disabilities

- Informing the public about the issues of women with disabilities
- Correcting the negative attitudes of the society
- Supporting Al Thiqa Club for Handicapped Ladies
- Empowering SCHS's female students via education
- Allowing them to participate in international sports events and contests

9. Mass media

- Working to change the negative attitude of the society towards disabled people
- Removing any offensive material from mass media
- SCHS's web site
- 'Mashal Al Amal' TV show
- Al Manal Magazine
- Hiring a sign language interpreter for Sharjah Satellite Channel
- SCHS's environmental association

10. Globalization, poverty, and disability

- Reducing the bad reflections of globalization on the lives of people with disabilities
- Stepping into poor neighborhoods to fight disability

- Supporting poor disabled financially
- Participating in the researches done by Conference on Poverty and Disability in Tunis
- SCHS is providing free services for people in remote places
- Providing donations for poor families
- Providing volunteers to treat some cases²⁷

Conclusion:

It was difficult to measure the progress made towards enhancing the Rights of the child in UAE for several reasons:

1- The UAE submitted one report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee presented the Concluding Observations on the State's report in June 2002. Then, it is almost ten years since the UAE submitted its reports; it is vital to say that the Concluding Observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child provides a holistic overview of the children's situation in the State.

2- In the Gulf Region the States' Area is not big and the number of population is not too high, that is why UNICEF has one office for the Gulf Area. This made the UAE reports and studies for children very rare.

3- As a federation of seven emirates, whose rulers retain absolute power within their emirates, but with a UAE president, it was difficult to find an integrated approach that tackles the UAE's children because each emirate has its own circumstances. For example, we can see that Sharjah focuses on disability issues because of its Bedouin nature which encourages marriages within the same family; while Dubai focuses on trafficking of children and women because of it is a touristic emirate with rich resources of income.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):

The UAE introduced five reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; in the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the state's initial report in

²⁷ http://www.schs.ae/accessibility/al_amal.aspx

2002 the Committee welcomed the information by the delegation that the reservation to article 21 will be withdrawn. However, all reservations are still there.

Domestic Legislation:

Although the UAE is still working on issuing a compiled Child Law for the Emirati Child, there are several articles in the Criminal Code, Civil Services Law and Federal Law that address and organize the Child Protection issues (Child Labour, Child Trafficking, child custody...).

There is a need to have a unified legislation for children because in Shariah courts federal and local laws are considered as secondary sources, and Shariah judges allegedly do not follow Supreme Court interpretation of United Arab Emirates law.

Childhood Strategy in UAE:

Work on the National Childhood Strategy is being developed since 2009 but the strategy is not yet issued.

It is developed under the supervision of General Women Union. The strategy will focus on four main issues involving children in the UAE "survival, development, protection and participation of children". The strategy will also help boost the achievement of UN's Millennium Development Goals that includes the achievement of universal primary education and reduction of child mortality.

"The initiative is a holistic approach to the development of children. UAE would develop appropriate strategic direction and analyze what areas UAE should focus on and how to implement the right plan. The strategy work will revolve around the health, safe environment, education, early childhood development, culture, and protection of children under difficult circumstances. Children's participation in addition to the role of families and communities will also be addressed.

The strategy is based on a UN convention called "A World Fit for Children" and recommendations of "The Arab Childhood Plan 2004-2015", issued by the Arab League.

In January 2009, the women's union launched the child database project to collect all the data available in the country on children. The data collected from statistical,

health, educational and similar sources will then be merged to form a single database abiding by the internationally accepted developmental rules and standards.

The work of the strategy will begin with upgrading the analysis study of the situation of children in UAE prepared earlier in 2003 by GWU and UNICEF to create a scientific and comprehensively planned and researched strategy. Strategy will be developed through a consultation programme with the government and non-government organisations, the society and the media. "The higher committee will be represented by the main partners and we will have a steering committee encompassing childhood related governmental and non-governmental organisations to create the strategy."²⁸

Coordination Mechanism:

Although there is Higher Council for Maternity and Childhood in UAE which is established under the patronage of Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, the Council doesn't have a website and no data is available about its programmes and activities.

Recommendations

- **Nationality:**

The State has to ensure the right of a child to a nationality without discriminating on the basis of his or her parent's sex, in accordance with articles 2 and 7 of the Convention.

- **Legislation:**

The minimum age of criminal responsibility under criminal law is seven. This age needs to be raised.²⁹ The law should explicitly prohibit all inhuman sentencing of

²⁸ http://www.uaeinteract.com/docs/New_strategy_to_focus_on_child_welfare_/36848.htm

²⁹ Juvenile Delinquency and Vagrants Act, article 7; Penal Code, article 62

child offenders – defined as persons under 18 at the time of the offence – including capital and corporal punishment under Shari’a law.³⁰

- **Gender gap in education:**

Research the Factors Driving Young Men away from Education: Serious investigation is required into the impact of family and social factors on young males and their decisions to forgo higher education in favor of entering the workforce. What effects do divorce or polygamy have on young men with regard to their educational choices?

What impact does a family’s socioeconomic background have, and how can interventions be targeted to help the most needy (and vulnerable to drop out) in Emirati society?

Policy makers also need to have a better understanding of the role of schools in helping students to reach their full potential. Further studies should be undertaken to determine the less obvious aspects of girls’ schools in the UAE that foster a positive learning environment, as well as how these can be replicated in boys’ schools. Why is schooling so unpopular for boys, and how can we make schools enjoyable and inspiring places of learning?

Raise Expectations of Boys: Without high expectations from parents, teachers and the education sector in general, boys will continue to perform poorly in line with existing low expectations. Higher expectations require taking pride in schools and appropriate discipline for poor behavior, cheating or incomplete work. It also means adopting more rigorous assessment methods in order to ensure that the boys are really achieving, and assisting them if they are not.

Improve Male Teacher Quality: In the current educational system, boys past Grade 10 are taught only by male teachers; however, there is a serious shortage of male Emirati teachers. This leads to a heavy reliance on poorly trained Arab expatriate

³⁰ Inhuman sentencing of children in the United Arab Emirates, Report prepared for the Child Rights Information Network (www.crin.org), September 2010, page 3

teachers in boys' secondary schools. In order to improve the quality of male teachers in the UAE, there needs to be better recruitment standards, the introduction of performance-related salaries, and more effective professional development for expatriate teachers focused on pedagogy once they arrive in the UAE. This is particularly important in the case of male English language teachers, many of whom are currently unable to speak, let alone teach, English.

Finally, more attention needs to be given to attracting high-quality Emirati males to the education sector. Selection of teachers and administrators should be based on academic performance, as in countries like Finland (the top performing country on the PISA), where teachers are selected from the top-performing graduates. Appropriate salaries and continued training should be given to exceptional teachers in order to encourage them to stay in the education field and to encourage others to join.

To conclude: Low male participation rates in higher education, combined with high dropout rates and poor performance at the secondary level, should give cause for concern in the UAE. The male gender gap in education should be addressed not only in order to improve competitiveness but also due to the many resulting social benefits. If this problem is not given the attention it requires, there could be serious long-term consequences, not only for Emirati males but for everyone living in the UAE.

The prolonged economic downturn now facing the world has prompted an increasing number of layoffs of expatriate workers in the UAE. This is likely to lead to a greater demand for motivated, well-educated Emiratis than ever before. There is hope for all young UAE men to be productively employed, but this requires substantial attention to policies which will improve the school learning environment while motivating them to pursue higher levels of educational attainment.³¹

³¹ Op: The Hidden Gender Gap in Education in the UAE, Dubai school of Government, Policy Brief No.12.

- **Education:**

The State has to undertake a process of curriculum and teaching methodology reform - with the full participation of children - which stresses the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills development. As well, direct education towards the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.³²

- **Trafficking of children in camel jockeys**

The ILO Committee of Experts (2006) called on the Government of the UAE to "redouble its efforts to improve the situation and to take, without delay, the necessary measure to ensure that no children under 18 years are trafficked to the United Arab Emirates for labour exploitation, including camel racing." In this context it asks the Government to provide information on police investigations and offences registered; on measures taken to ensure that prosecutions and dissuasive penalties are imposed against those exploiting children in camel racing; and on cooperation with other countries in combating child camel racing.

Anti-Slavery International would also urge the Government of the UAE to:

1. Take urgent steps to trace, rescue and provide the necessary protection and rehabilitation services for the approximately 2,000 child camel jockeys who, according to the Government's own estimate, are still working in the UAE.
2. Provide official numbers and detailed documentation for children being rescued, rehabilitated and repatriated, to help verify that all children are receiving proper care.
3. Ensure that measures taken to rehabilitate and repatriate child camel jockeys provide children with all the psychiatric and medical care, counselling and education they require, that family tracing is carried out before repatriation, and that services are put in place to care for the child if family reunion is not possible.

³² Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: United Arab Emirates. 06/13/2002. CRC/C/15/Add. 183, page: 8

4. Take urgent steps to implement the legislation prohibiting the use of camel jockeys under the age of 18, including carrying out regular unannounced inspections to identify, release and rehabilitate all child camel jockeys. This should include those camps where children have already been released to ensure that no other child camel jockeys remain there or have been brought to the camp in question since. Child camel jockeys should also be compensated for the period of time that they have worked in the UAE.
5. Ensure that all those responsible for trafficking and employing underage jockeys are prosecuted, including Gulf citizens, and provide full statistics, broken down by year, of all the prosecutions brought, successful convictions obtained and the sentences passed against those trafficking and employing camel jockeys since 5 July 2005.
6. Ratify and implement the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), supplementing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime.³³

- **Migrant Children:**

The State needs to consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

³³ Op: Information on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Compliance with ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ratified in 2001).

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