



POLICY, LEGISLATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMME

This programme tries to strengthen national and local capacities to review, develop, implement and sustain child-friendly rights-based policies, legislative frameworks and social services with a particular focus on early childhood development and girls' education.

The *Policy and Legal Analysis Project* aims at reviewing relevant policies and legislation to determine their compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international child rights instruments, in particular the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The *Integrated Early Childhood Development Project* seeks to create a consensus on the need for integrated early childhood development. In 2004, intense advocacy was undertaken to build momentum to activate the National IECD Framework of Action, generate resources and implement pilot projects.

The *Integrated Girls Education Project* attempts to make sure that all students, but especially girls, enrol, stay and succeed in school. UNICEF has helped to make local schools child-friendly places of learning through an ongoing project that brought people living with HIV/AIDS to classrooms to interact with students.

Policy, Legislation and Social Services Programme Partners: Ministry of Local Government (MLG), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs (Department of Youth and Culture), Office of the Ombudsperson, Vision 2016 Secretariat, Administration of Justice, Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ditshwanelo (Botswana Human Rights Association), Botswana Network on Ethics and Law (BONELA), Ikago Centre, Parliament Select Committee on Law Reform, Attorney General's Chambers, Botswana Police, National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Botswana Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (BONEPWA+), Children's Information Trust (CIT), Girl Child Alliance, University of Botswana, Childline, among others.

Policy and Legal Analysis Project

A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUND POLICIES AND LEGISLATION:

"We, the Governments participating in the special session, commit ourselves to implementing the Plan of Action through consideration of such measures as: a) Putting in place, as appropriate, effective national legislation, policies and action plans and allocating resources to fulfil and protect the rights and secure the well-being of children; b) Establishing or strengthening national bodies, such as, inter alia, independent ombudspersons for children, where appropriate, or other institutions for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child; c) Developing national monitoring and evaluations systems to assess the impact of our actions on children; d) Enhancing widespread awareness and understanding of the rights of the child"

– Article 31, The World Fit for Children Declaration, United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, May 2002.

Children have rights. It seems natural that their rights should be safeguarded, but too many times children's rights become casualties of conflict, poverty, or HIV/AIDS. The youngest generation needs protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and discrimination. Violations of their rights can result in illness or psychological problems, shorter life expectancy, lower school attendance, limited access to social services, homelessness or just plain hopelessness.

In 2004, in its efforts to help create a Botswana fit for children, UNICEF prioritised support for the finalisation of the Children's Act review. By the end of the year, a report on the complete review of the Act was endorsed by all Permanent Secretaries of relevant Ministries and also district level Executive Officers. It was then handed over to the Ministry of Local Government (MLG). It is hoped that this important piece of legislation will be enacted by the end of 2005.

As a follow up to the UN Special Session on Children in 2002, the Government of Botswana in 2004 began drafting a National Programme of Action for Children. When finalised, this document should provide a long-term strategy that will guide national actions for the well-being of children and will cover the period up to 2016.

Customary law carries a great deal of weight, both in tradition and in the judicial system in Botswana. In 2004, as a part of UNICEF's Global Initiative on Legislative Reform, a study was launched on how Botswana's customary law impacts on children's rights and to what extent it is compliant with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. As with the Children's Act review, UNICEF promoted the use of the Human Rights-based Approach to Legal Reform in this exercise. The results will help identify opportunities, gaps and mechanisms to initiate reform so that Botswana's children will enjoy full protection under customary law.

As a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Botswana is required to submit progress reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2004, UNICEF helped GOB with technical assistance to draft the follow-up report and sponsored two participants to the Plenary Session with the Committee in Geneva, Switzerland, in May 2001, where their first report was discussed. The UN Committee has responded with concluding observations, recommendations and specified timeframes for them to be carried out. (See inside front cover)

In 2004, UNICEF started work on a framework that would gauge the child-friendliness of government policies. Until now, there is no guide in Botswana to systematically assess a policy's compliance with the CRC and other human rights instruments and make sure that it is designed to make a maximum contribution to the well-being of children. This framework will help to set standards in child friendliness for all government policy makers.

UNICEF continued to emphasize the Human Rights-based Approach to Programming (HRAP) as a means of empowering communities and individuals by allowing them to participate directly in development projects. To this end, UNICEF has trained 20 UN staff, government officers and NGOs and started discussions with the University of Botswana (UB) on how to build in-country capacity in HRAP. Ultimately, it is hoped that HRAP training can become an integral part of university studies.

The completion of the Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAISII) was a significant accomplishment in 2004. UNICEF supported the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) in its analysis of the data. The study sought to survey behaviour patterns and levels of HIV/AIDS prevalence across the Botswana population, including, for the very first time amongst children.



Integrated Early Childhood Development Project

TESTIMONY ON GIVING CHILDREN THE RIGHT START IN LIFE:

"Before, what we used to see was that traditionally parents were caring for their young children – they were present to help them to learn how to socialise, they were teaching them right and wrong; life skills really. We have a strong oral tradition in our culture and from one generation to another our children would be taught about the right behaviours. Now we see that the situation has changed, that parents are not always able to be the ones to help their children, they have to work or they are absent. And in some cases, the parents are depending more on the schools to teach the children, they are waiting for the children to go to school to be taught those things. We find this is too late, children need more attention earlier. This is why IECD is so important."

-Mrs. F.S. Bakwena, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

It is recognised that the first three years of a child's life are critical for its overall development and well-being. Because of the continued high rates of HIV/AIDS, ensuring that Botswana's youngest generation survives and thrives is crucial. Early childhood development (ECD) is a complex issue, made even more challenging by the presence of HIV/AIDS and poverty.

In 2004, UNICEF and the Government of Botswana (GOB) focused on building on the accomplishments of previous years to establish a national Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) programme that is based on operationalising the IECD Framework for Action developed in 2003. The framework will provide guidance and a holistic approach that places the child at the centre of a protective and enabling environment. This environment brings together the elements needed for the child's full development, including: health, nutrition, hygiene, water and environmental sanitation and protection within the broad context of HIV/AIDS and other development concerns.

The concept of IECD in Botswana is still a new phenomenon. Establishing a consensus on the need for IECD, therefore, continues to be a top priority. In 2004, UNICEF continued its advocacy initiatives by organising a national workshop that brought together district level pre-school

education supervisors from the Ministries of Local Government (MLG) and Education (MOE). This meeting led to the drafting of an IECD national workplan for 2005 that is aligned with the National IECD Framework for Action. Prior to this, an advocacy meeting was held with high-level government policy makers to disseminate the summary report of the Framework and share global ECD experiences as well as the outcomes stipulated in the report.

As recommended in the IECD Framework for Action, the current ECD coordinating body is to be upgraded to a national IECD coordinating structure. This will ensure that experts from all sectors offering early childhood development are represented in the structure. Inter-ministerial dialogue is now at an advanced stage and will ensure well-coordinated IECD efforts.

Successful fundraising of approximately US\$300,000 through UNICEF's Global Set-Aside at the end of 2004 will help facilitate the experimentation of IECD at pilot sites in Mahalapye and Ghanzi districts in 2005. The pilot projects will target already existing ECD centres and strengthen them to provide quality ECD services and increase access to both sites. The pilot projects will run on a parallel track with the baseline study on IECD in Botswana which will inform future IECD interventions countrywide.

Integrated Girls Education Project

TESTIMONY ON REACHING THE GIRL CHILD:

"The girl child in particular is more vulnerable than the boy child due to traditional laws and practices, and socialization values that places her in an inferior and subordinate social position. She lacks self-confidence and she is vulnerable to sexual and emotional abuse by adult men in the family and the community at large. Thus we need the support structures and networks for girls to educate and empower them."

- Elsie M. Alexander, Chairperson, Girl Child Network/Alliance

TESTIMONY ON REACHING CHILDREN WITH HIV/AIDS INFORMATION:

"I made an impact. When I first went to the schools the children were a bit shy. They couldn't even open up, they couldn't even answer questions and they couldn't even pose questions to me. But now, they talk freely to me."

-Zolani Kraai, person living positively with HIV/AIDS and Field Educator with the "Ring the Bell" project in Mochudi

Botswana can be proud that it has already met the third Millennium Development Goal: the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary schools. However, assuring that girls go to school and stay there remains a priority. It is estimated that 54 percent of girls who drop out do so due to pregnancy. UNICEF's aim for this project is to improve overall completion rates, scholastic results, and to create a child-friendly learning environment where life skills services are also readily accessible, especially for girls.

Girls in Botswana are at a disadvantage when it comes to completing school. They are often the ones who are obliged to stay home to take care of the sick, or become the head of household when parents die. Teenage pregnancy also forces girls to drop out, and girls between the ages of 15 to 19 years are 3 times more likely to contract HIV/AIDS than boys of the same age. Capitalising on the country's high enrollment rate and gender parity in education, schools are the perfect setting to empower young people, especially girls, with knowledge of HIV/AIDS and avoidance of risky behaviours.

The project, *A Re Tsogeng, Ringing the Bell*, seeks to do just that. Launched in 2003, this tri-partite initiative between the Ministry of Education, BONEPWA and UNICEF, aims to make schools HIV/AIDS resource centres for primary school children and their immediate communities. This groundbreaking project has brought 27 people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAS) into schools as field educators and resource persons. For many youngsters it was the first time they came face to face with someone who has the virus. The field educators have since become role models and their experiences and courage may help to reduce the stigma of HIV/AIDS. By the end of 2004, "Ringing the Bell" had reached 37 primary schools across the country and benefited more than 10,000 students. A "Ringing the Bell" video was created as a fundraising tool and more than 200 copies were provided to MOE. The videos were distributed to all stakeholders who participated in the pilot phase of the project. An evaluation of the pilot phase was also completed to determine its effectiveness and possibilities for taking it to scale. In 2005, UNICEF aims to train another 33 field educators bringing the total number to 60.



Cultural traditions often hamper girls' attempts to succeed, both in school and socially. In 2004, UNICEF helped to facilitate a support system for girls through the Girl Child Network/Alliance. The network includes several groups involved in girl-related projects. The Girls' Education Movement (GEM) is part of this network, and in 2005 GEM aims to embark on a project to relate the experiences of girls and the challenges they face. The "Telling the Story" project will allow girls to express their hopes and fears on a variety of issues, from equality in education, to gender violence, from poverty, to intergenerational sex. Their stories will be used to sensitise government policy makers, stakeholders and the public on the difficulties confronted by girls in Botswana.

It was the HIV/AIDS epidemic that first raised the alarm for the need for education in life skills for young people. Life skills are seen as essential tools for making changes in behaviour, for avoidance of risky sexual encounters, and to navigate in a society where HIV/AIDS impacts all aspects of life.

Educators now realize that life skills are also needed to address a much broader range of ages, situations and actors. As a result, in 2004, UNICEF met with the MOE to build consensus on this issue and highlight the need to develop a standardized national life skills framework. It is anticipated that NGOs, educators and other stakeholders will meet to develop a broad based National Life Skills Framework in 2005. This will be achieved in tandem with the Adolescent Empowerment and Mobilisation Project.

A situation analysis of the girl child in urban areas was completed in 2004 by the Botswana Nurses Association. The study looked at the girls' attitudes towards school, their knowledge of health issues, and their family situation. Through the support of UNICEF, the study was printed, distributed and communicated to relevant stakeholders in the form of a workshop. Its findings will be used as an entry point to determine the scope of the planned 2005 National Situation Analysis of the Girl Child.

