

One Billion Children In Poverty



TEHRAN, Oct. 27—A landmark study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) indicates that more than one billion children around the world are suffering from the debilitating effects of poverty.

It shows that one in three children lives in a dwelling with either a mud floor or more than five people per room, and that one in five does not have safe water sources.

The study—which analyzes survey data taken in late 1990s on almost 1.2 million children in 46 countries—is the largest of its kind and uses innovative methodology to assess the effects of poverty.

The report dubbed Child Poverty in the Developing World measures poverty not just in terms of income, but also in access to such basic human rights as shelter, food, water, sanitation, health, education and information.

The report also shows that more than 90 million children in South Asia have to go hungry every day and, across the globe, 134 million children between the ages of seven and 18 have never been to school.

Girls suffer the most—they are much more likely than boys to miss schooling, especially in North Africa and the Middle East.

Sports a Means of Generating Jobs

TEHRAN, Oct. 27—The National Youth Organization and the Physical Education Organization are to formulate a joint committee to promote sporting activities for the youth.

Director of the NYO and Presidential Advisor, Rahim Ebadi, told the Sporting and Employment Conference

that his organization attaches special importance to youth's sporting programs and potentials with the help of NGOs.

He put the rate of youth's participation in economic operations at 39.1 percent and their unemployment growth rate at 27.5 percent (13.2 percent for the whole population), ISNA quot-

ed. Ebadi pointed to a rift between the educational system and the job market as a parameter leading to unemployment and called for an amendment of the former.

He stressed that joblessness would affect the social and cultural behavior of young people. "In advanced soci-

eties, sports is a prime sector where jobs are created and NGOs play an important part in this," he added. "More than 33 percent of Iranians are aged between 15 and 29. Young people are energetic and fond of athletic programs, which makes investment in the sector a necessity."

Youth Unfamiliar With Married Life Skills

ARDEBIL, Oct. 27—Deputy head of the Office for Women and Family Affairs affiliated to the State Welfare

Organization said the majority of Iranian youth do not know how to handle their lives when unexpected problems show up.

Parviz Zarei cited a study by the National Youth Organization which suggests the problems adolescents between 15 and 19 years experience with regard to self-confidence, intellectual independence, anxiety and depression often stem from unfamiliarity with right methods to ward off difficulties.

"Teaching skills required in married life to the youth is very important and can prevent a lot of social problems. Inattention towards youth who are approaching the marriage age can aggravate the social

of social maladies such as divorce," he said, adding the divorce rate has increased to 14.5 percent in the current year.

"Many young boys and girls who do not live with their parents, have either had or no guardians will fail in their married life because they lack proper role models," he mentioned.

Presently, 120,000 families with women breadwinners and 42,000 young people in the marriage age are under SWO's coverage.

Some 30,000 young individuals under SWO coverage have been provided with pre-marriage training on skills required to manage pressures, responsibilities and expectations of married life over the past three years. A similar scheme has been launched in 14 provinces this year.

Caffeine Drinks Can Affect Bone Density

TEHRAN, Oct. 27—Excessive caffeine contributes to bone breakdown and may be a factor in the development of osteoporosis.

A nutrition expert, Dr. Saeed Hosseini, told IRNA that carbonated soft drinks often contain caffeine—a substance that can increase calcium loss and affect bone density.

He pointed out that consumption of fizzy drinks can be the cause of obesity as well.

Also a faculty member at Tehran University, Hosseini advised that milk be substituted for carbonated non-nutritious beverages.

Caffeine is present in beverages including coffee, tea, soft drinks and chocolate.

Turning to tea, he said tea is sometimes prescribed for people suffering from obesity but advised against drinking it shortly after the meal.

He then referred to the growing num-

ber of fat children and said, "Similar to many other countries, in Iran too, child obesity is rising due to the spread of computer games and lack of sufficient physical activity. This coupled with poor dietary practices can lead to osteoporosis."

Stressing that children and youngsters need to have a sufficient energy intake, the specialist insisted that the energy must be taken from a healthy diet.

He also criticized the media for advertising junk food which can harm the health of our children and adolescents.

According to figures released by Tehran University of Medical Sciences, 70 percent of Iranian women and 50 percent of men above 50 are affected by osteoporosis or have low bone density and are at risk for the disease.

Osteoporosis can lead to hip fractures and physical decline, and it is a major cause of nursing-home admissions among the elderly. The disorder is more prevalent in women.



Students Learn Traffic Safety

TEHRAN, Oct. 27—A traffic park designed to familiarize school students with traffic regulations was opened concurrent with the start of the new academic year.

Tehran Transport and Traffic Organization's PBO announced that primary students from first to fifth grade can learn traffic rules in Pounak Traffic Park in western Tehran.

Possessing facilities such as a hall for holding competitions, classrooms where children are taught on how to cross the streets and other traffic safety regulations, and simulated environments such as streets where driving and cycling rules are drilled, the park can receive 500 students daily in the morning and afternoon.

Amblyopia Preventive Plan Underway

BANDAR ANZALI, Gilan, Oct. 27—A preventive plan for amblyopia (eye laziness) among children in pre-primary education centers throughout the country was put into effect as of October 23rd.

Deputy head of the State Welfare Organization for preventive and cultural affairs, Roshanak Vameqi, explained that the plan would be implemented in SWO's stations and its representatives at kindergartens to evaluate the sight of children between three and six years old. "The project has been executed in Iran for several years now. Last year, 1.2 million kids were covered by the plan," she noted. "About 2 percent of Iranian children suffer from eye laziness. The global figure is 5.2 percent. The disorder does not have any physical symptoms and can be cured permanently before the age of six. Otherwise, it would cause impaired vision or even blindness in one or both eyes."

Carl Sandburg:

A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on.



Moments of Innocence in nature

Protecting Kids Against Cyber Pedophiles

Take a billion people and a given number of them are bound to be the kind of criminal any parent wants to keep their children well away from. But while we can teach children to beware of "strangers" on the street, it is a very different danger when they are inviting them into the home, via the Internet.

I was fascinated by a recent feature and the insight it gave into the perils that lurk in cyberspace, where millions of unsuspecting children like to play.

What kind of species are we I wonder that there are among us people who will "groom" a child for years to get them into a position of trust, through which they can lure them away and assault them, or worse.

What saddens me is that parents must now teach their children to be suspicious of everyone, in order to protect themselves from pedophiles and others who camouflage themselves amongst the decent people of society. For pedophiles and child killers look just like the rest of us and many of them know how to make themselves attractive to children—how to win their

trust. They are even more dangerous on the Internet, where they can pretend to be something they are not, while they befriend children who are playing in a world outside parental control. Gulf Daily wrote.

It is impossible to look over a child's shoulder all the time and, as Bahraini Internet Society founder Waheed Al Balushi rightly points out too much policing will simply drive young web surfers to their friends' homes or into Internet cafes.

I like his idea of a partnership, in which the child feels he or she has a responsibility to keep their part of the deal, that they can surf the Net at home, provided they follow certain rules. It has to be all about education and making children aware of the dangers in life, without frightening them so much that they can't enjoy anything.

It is a sad reality that we must teach our children to protect themselves, for no parent can be there all time to safeguard them. How shameful also that the Internet, which should be such a fantastic source of learning and fun, has been so horribly corrupted.

Unruly youngsters run away from home to turn their back on what they call intolerable living conditions. Still, some of them view escaping as a lever to pressure their families and get what they demand. However, a common point among the majority of runaway teenagers is that they have rarely experienced parental love.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than one million young adults in the 13-19 age bracket flee from home yearly, of whom 74 percent are female.

In an interview with the Persian daily Nasim-e Saba, Dr. Esmat Danesh, a psychiatrist, said in larger cities, like Tehran, parents spend most of their time away from their children. "Therefore, they do not have enough time to bring up children in a lively and caring family environment," she analyzed.

Families set the cornerstone of every society. Needless to say, secure and supportive families are needed to build up a safe society. Most parents in Iran and many other countries ought to work overtime to break even. In the past, only men used to work outside and women handled the task of bringing up kids. In today's world, though, things have changed and many working mothers are bound to spend several hours away from their kids every day.

In some families, fathers have to work from dawn to dusk to get by—a condition that is strongly disliked by women. The situation can trigger quarrels between the parents, often eye-witnessed by innocent kids who have difficulty analyzing such angry encounters.

In families with working fathers and mothers, children mostly

spend their time watching television. This way, they grow without adequate parental care and support that they would receive otherwise.

On the other hand, in societies like ours, girls are more vulnerable than boys. Many of them are not even allowed to go out or spend time with friends as do boys—this being one key reason why the number of runaway girls overwhelms that of boys.

Danesh reiterated that people are neither good nor bad at the time they are born, but are likely to turn out to be good or bad individuals later on. "So, parents play a crucial role in forming the personality of their newborns," she stressed.

She added that economic factors, particularly poverty, are extremely decisive, saying the Iranian society is plagued by sky-rocketing inflation.

The psychiatrist further said many young adults, by watching the comfortable life of wealthy people on TV screens, wish they would find a way out of their penniless lives. "Some even resort to violent acts, such as robbery and murder, to gain enough money to translate their dreams into reality," she said.

Danesh warned that many of those who flee home are mentally ill and so they pose a potential threat to the society.

She recommended pre-marriage counseling for young couples, adding the future parents must be educated on how to deal with their children most appropriately.

Why Teens Run Away



Successful Snack Times

Whether you care for children in a center or in your own home, it is likely that you plan and provide snacks. Daycare providers are often challenged to plan for a nutritious snack that is appealing for children ages 2-5. It is well recognized that proper nutrition is crucial for a child's optimal growth and development. And yet, 50 percent or more of the snacks eaten by children are sweets, desserts, or salty snacks like potato chips. It is recommended (and often required) that the

snacks you serve young children in daycare consist of selections from at least two of the following food groups: grains and cereal, fruit and vegetables, dairy, and protein. A selection is also based on portion size. It is important to remember that a child-sized portion is smaller than the adult serving size.

It has been found that on the average, snacks eaten by children include fruit 16 percent of the time and snacks include a vegetable serving only 1 percent of the time. When children are served fruits

and vegetables, the menu is quite limited. Here are top three favorites in each category. Fruits: apples, bananas, and oranges; vegetables: corn, green beans, and carrots (potatoes did not make the list because the survey did not count French fries as a legitimate potato choice). Young children are not known to be adventurous eaters and are often downright picky. And so the challenge remains: how can you plan for a successful and nutritious snack time?

First, there are some basic safety considerations. Upon enrollment, be sure to ask if the child has any food allergies and post this information in a place that would be visible to anyone serving food. Some common food allergies include eggs, nuts, fish, citrus and milk. Also, you may wish to avoid any food that may present a choking hazard such as whole hotdogs, grapes, nuts, cherries, or hard candy, said the website daycare.about.com.

Serve food at appropriate temperature, but avoid serving items as hot as adults may like them. Avoid foods that are too spicy or strong flavored. When introducing something new, offer a small portion for starters. Try adding the new food with something familiar. Serve food in bite size pieces. Finger foods are always popular. Add interest by using a variety of flavors, colors and textures. Remember, visual presentation can make food more appealing. Many children will find a sandwich "tastes" better when cut into different shapes with a cookie cutter.