

## UNIT 1:

# Lesson 1: Understanding Child Survival

**Suggested Class Time: 50 minutes**

## Objectives:

- Determine why the first five years of life are so critical;
- Define *child survival* and *under-five mortality rate (U5MR)*;
- Be able to define how the U5MR is calculated;
- Appreciate the U5MR as an indicator of a country's well-being.

## Session Plan:

- Opening Activity: The First Five Years of Life — 20 minutes
- Class Discussion Activity: Understanding the Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) — 10 minutes
- Group Activity: Regional Variations in Child Survival — 20 minutes

## Vocabulary:

60 priority countries, donor, mortality, sub-Saharan Africa

## Materials Needed:

- Copies of the *Youth Report*, Chapter 1 and Glossary
- Copies of Handouts 1 and 2 for the whole class

## Opening Activity: The First Five Years of Life

### Directions

1. Explain to students that during the first five years a child grows and changes faster than at any other time of life. Ask students to recall their first day of kindergarten. Ask: What skills had you developed by the time you were ready for school?
2. Facilitate a general discussion by encouraging students to recall developmental skills learned in the first five years: physical (*walk, get dressed, brush teeth*) emotional (*trust, attachment, empathy*), social (*self-confidence, eagerness to learn, creativity, friendships*), language and thinking skills (*speaking complex sentences, recognizing letters, basic understanding of numbers, problem solving, asking questions*).

3. Distribute Handout 1. Review the list of essential skills with students. Ask: Are there any skills you would like to add? Were there any skills you were surprised to see listed? How did your family contribute to the development of these skills?
4. Direct students' attention to the front cover of the *Youth Report*. Ask:
  - How do families help children get ready for school?
  - How do communities help children get ready for school?
  - Why do many families and communities have trouble meeting the essential needs of young children?

## **Class Discussion Activity: Understanding the Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR)**

### **Background for Teachers**

The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) is a useful tool for measuring the health of children. The U5MR is known to be the result of a wide variety of factors: nutritional status and health knowledge of mothers; the level of immunization and oral rehydration therapy; the availability of mother and child health services; income and food availability; the availability of safe drinking water; and the overall safety of the child's environment, among other factors.


Another strength of the U5MR is that it tells us whether children under age five are actually benefiting from available nutritional and health resources. (If children are dying, they are not benefiting.) Often, health or nutritional status of a country is measured by the availability of resources such as food, doctors, or medicine. But just because resources are available doesn't mean that they are used.

The U5MR presents a more accurate, if far from perfect, picture of the health status of the majority of children.

### **Directions**

1. Prepare by having students read pages 2, 3, and 5 of the *Youth Report* before class. This will help familiarize them with UNICEF and the *Youth Report*.
2. Ask: What is the focus of the *Youth Report*? Remind students of the four bullet points on page 3 describing its content related to challenges and successes in child survival:
  - *What has been achieved*
  - *What has been learned*
  - *What actions must be taken*
  - *What you can do*
3. Review the concept of the "Child Survival Revolution" (page 5, paragraphs 2 through 4).

4. Introduce the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) as one of the ways in which UNICEF attempts to measure the progress of child survival in countries around the world. Define the under-five mortality rate (U5MR): The U5MR indicates the probability of dying between birth and exactly five years of age, expressed per 1,000 live births. It is a measure of child well-being in general and child health in particular.

 **Tip: Present this U5MR calculation problem to students: In a town of 5,261 people with a mortality rate of 5 per 1,000, how many children under the age of five will not survive? (26.31)**

## Group Activity: Regional Variations

### Background for Teachers:<sup>1</sup>

Far fewer children are dying today than in 1960. Over the past 46 years the annual number of child deaths has halved from roughly 20 million in 1960 to under 10 million in 2006. In a number of regions child mortality rates have declined since 1990. Child mortality rates have been cut roughly in half in East Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin American and the Caribbean — bringing the under-five mortality rate for each of these regions below 30 per 1,000 live births in 2006.

Other regions are falling behind. The Middle East and North Africa region has seen steady progress in reducing rates but still had an under-five mortality rate of 46 per 1,000 live births in 2006. This is equivalent to 1 in every 22 children dying before age five. South Asia is making progress. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most troubling area. In 2006, 49 percent of all deaths of children under age five occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, despite the fact that only 22 percent of the world's children are born there. In this region, on average, 1 in every 6 children dies before age five. The region as a whole has shown the least progress since 1990, managing to reduce child mortality by only 14 percent between 1990 and 2006.

### Directions

1. Divide the class into six groups, one for each of the regions defined in the chart on page 6 of the *Youth Report*. The groups represent: sub-Saharan Africa; Middle East/North Africa; South Asia; East Asia/Pacific; Latin America/Caribbean; and the Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS).
2. Ask each group to identify how many under-five deaths occurred in their region in 2006. Then ask them to calculate what percentage of the global under-five deaths in 2006 (9.7 million) that figure represents?  
(Example: sub-Saharan Africa:  $4.8/9.7 \times 100 = 49.48\%$ )

---

<sup>1</sup> *The State of the World's Children 2008*. UNICEF, 2007. pp. 6-7

3. Ask students to review the graph on page 7 of the *Youth Report*, “Trends in Child Mortality.” Have students in each group describe the trend for their region since 1960. Ask: How do child mortality trends in your region compare to those in industrialized countries?
4. Distribute Handout 2. Ask each group to calculate the percentage decrease in the U5MR for their region between 1990 and 2006, using the information on Handout 2.
5. Group presentations: Ask a member of each group to briefly describe the main trend and percentage decrease found in the group’s assigned region. Students should fill in the chart on Handout 2 and answer the questions based on each group’s presentations.

## **Extension Activity 1: Experience Early Childhood Education**

### **Directions**

1. Explain that helping children get ready for school is an important job of early childhood teachers. For over 40 years, the Head Start program has helped prepare millions of children in the U.S. for kindergarten.
2. Encourage students to learn more about early childhood education by observing a classroom, interviewing an educator, or volunteering in a classroom.
3. In each case, students should be prepared to discuss their findings.

## **Extension Activity 2: Alternative Presentations**

Ask students to generate alternative presentations for the data on pages 6 and 7 of the *Youth Report*. Encourage them to consider PowerPoint presentations; graphs made out of three-dimensional materials; and short videos. Students can compare and contrast the effectiveness of the different visual representations.

### Off to School: Five Categories of School Readiness

A wealth of research has shown that a child's readiness for school includes the following five separate but connected categories of development.<sup>2</sup>



#### Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

This category covers factors such as health, growth; physical abilities including the skills for using both large motor (walking) and small (hands) motor development.



#### Social and Emotional Development

This category combines social development (children's ability to interact with others and their capacity for self control) with emotional development (children's perceptions of themselves, their abilities to understand the feelings of other people, and their ability to interpret and express their own feelings).



#### Approaches to Learning

This category refers to children's inclination to use skills and knowledge. Key components include enthusiasm, curiosity and persistence in tackling tasks.



#### Language Development

This category includes communication and early literacy. Communication includes listening, speaking, and vocabulary. Early literacy includes awareness of print stories, early writing and the connection of letters to sounds.



#### Thinking and General Knowledge

This category refers to thinking and problem-solving as well as knowledge about objects and the way the world works. Mathematical knowledge, abstract thought, and imagination are included.

<sup>1</sup> Getting Ready. Findings from The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: A 17 State Partnership. Prepared by Rhode Island Kids Count. February 2005.

## HANDOUT 2

### Understanding the U5MR

The table below shows the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) per 1,000 births in various regions and among industrialized countries in 1990 and 2006. By 2006, for the first time since these records were kept, the total number of children in the world who died before their fifth birthday fell below 10 million — to 9.7 million.

#### Directions

Using **sub-Saharan Africa** as an example, compute the “decrease” and “approximate percentage decrease” for the other regions listed.

Region	U5MR 1990	U5MR 2006	Decrease	Approximate % Decrease
Sub-Saharan Africa	187	160	$187-160=27$	$27/187 \times 100=14\%$
Middle East/ North Africa	79	46		
South Asia	123	83		
East Asia/ Pacific	55	29		
Latin America/ Caribbean	55	27		
CEE/CIS*	53	27		
Industrialized Countries	10	6		
World	93	72		

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children Statistical Review*, UNICEF, New York, December 2007, p. 18.

Answer these questions, based on the information on the chart:

1. Which region had the lowest U5MR in 1990? 2006?
2. Which region had the highest U5MR in 1990 and 2006?
3. Which two regions had the highest percentage decrease in U5MR between 1990 and 2006?
4. Where do you think additional intervention by UNICEF is most needed? Why?
5. What are some conclusions you can make from looking at this chart?
6. Why is this information important?