

**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW – HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**UNICEF INPUTS – United Arab Emirates**  
**July 2012**

This report was prepared by UNICEF Gulf Area Office. Source of Information of this report is mainly from the Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010, the draft of the National Childhood Strategy 2012, the second UAE National Millennium Development Goals report 2007, Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2012, briefing notes prepared by UNICEF for internal use.

**I. Background and Framework**

**A. Scope of International Obligations**

1. The UAE ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1997 and published the ratification in the Official Gazette in May 2009. The ratification states reservations on certain articles that conflict with Islamic law and national legislations: Article 7 concerning registering a child immediately after birth, the right from birth to a name and the right to acquire a nationality; Article 14 concerning the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; Article 17 concerning the child's access to information and material from a diversity of national and international source; and Article 21 concerning adoption. Moreover, the UAE has not endorsed the two optional protocols to the CRC yet: the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

2. The UAE ratified/acceded to several conventions related to child rights:

- International Labor Organization Convention 111 of 1958 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (endorsed in 2001)
- International Labor Organization Convention 138 of 1973 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (endorsed in 1998)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (endorsed in May 1997 with reservations on certain articles)
- International Labor Organization Convention 182 of 1999 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (endorsed in 2001)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (December 1979) (endorsed in 2004 with reservations on certain articles)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966) (endorsed in June 1974)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) (signed in 2008)
- Convention on Cybercrime (November 2001) (endorsed in 2010)
- Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols (2000) (endorsed in 2007)

## B. Constitutional and Legislative Framework

3. Article 16 of the UAE Constitution states that: “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, disability, old age or forced unemployment. It shall be responsible for assisting and enabling them to help themselves for their own benefit and that of the community. Such matters shall be regulated by welfare and social security legislations”.

4. As per Article 125 of the Constitution<sup>1</sup>, steps have been taken to ensure human rights in general and the rights of women and children in particular in accordance with the international Conventions. To this end, the following legislations have been promulgated:

- Personal Status Law
- Social Security Law
- Human Resources Law
- Anti-Human Trafficking Law
- Anti-Drug Law
- Early 2012, two draft federal laws prepared by Ministry of Social Affairs were passed: a) the care of children of unknown parentage and b) the foster care system for children of unknown parentage and others of similar status.

A draft Child Protection Law was recently finalized and is awaiting the approval of the federal Cabinet. The Law covers CRC principles and sets out mechanisms, measures and penalties for protection of children’s rights.

## C. Institutional and Human Rights Infrastructure

5. In 2003, the UAE promulgated a Federal Decree establishing the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood (SCMC). The SCMC was created as a national umbrella for childhood that ensures attainment of children’s rights for survival, development, protection and participation. SCMC aims at ensuring the protection and safety of the mother and the child, through monitoring and evaluating development plans to achieve the aspired wellbeing.

## D. Policy Measures

6. Children and women issues have been incorporated in the UAE’s sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, strategies and mechanisms such as:

---

<sup>1</sup> “The governments of the Emirates shall take the necessary measures to implement the laws enacted by the Federation as well as all international treaties and agreements concluded by it including issuance of all laws, regulations, decisions, and local orders necessary for this implementation. The Federal Authority shall supervise the implementation by the governments of the Emirates of all laws, regulations, international treaties and agreements and Federal judicial decisions. The competent administrative and judicial authorities in the Emirates shall extend in this respect all possible assistance to the Federal authorities”.

- UAE's ten year National Childhood Strategy (NCS) 2012/2021 was developed in cooperation between the SCMC and UNICEF. The Strategy covers four interdependent child rights themes, namely: survival, development, protection and participation.
- The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE was formulated in 2002 to confirm State obligations towards the CEDAW and its commitment to the recommendations of the World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.
- National Education Strategy 2010/2020 aims at delivering a student-centered model focused on improving students' outcome, school life, and equality to meet world class standards as well as promoting national identity<sup>2</sup>.
- Healthcare Strategy 2011/2013 that aims at enhancing and developing the health system in compliance with international standards through effective legislation and strategic partnerships with local and international participants.

## **II. Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanisms**

### **A. Cooperation with Treaty Bodies**

7. The UAE has submitted its first national report on the implementation of CRC to the Child Rights Committee in Geneva in 2002. The second periodic report due in 2004 is delayed; a first draft was developed but still not completed. It is expected to be submitted soon.

8. Shortly after the UAE's ratification of the CEDAW in 2004 the State has started preparing its first report. The report was delayed due to many significant positive changes for women that took place between 2004 and 2008 mainly in terms of national legislation and enabling them to join new fields such as the Federal National Council (FNC) and the Cabinet.

9. The UAE submitted its report regarding the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in 2008.

### **B. Cooperation with special procedures**

10. Latest visits and mission reports:

- Mission of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, April 2012 (No reports yet)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, November 2010
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, March 2010.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Education Strategy 2010/2020 available on the Ministry's webpage [http://www.moe.gov.ae/Arabic/Docs/MOE%20\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.moe.gov.ae/Arabic/Docs/MOE%20_Strategy.pdf)

### III. Implementation of international human rights obligations , taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

#### Equality and non-discrimination

11. Article 25 of the Constitution states that, "All persons are equal before the law, without distinction between citizens of the Union in regard to race, nationality, religious belief or social status".

12. The UAE is ranked in 30th place in the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) out of 187 countries. The Gender Inequality Index score is 0.234 placing the country at 38 out of 146 countries. The UAE is ranked 103<sup>rd</sup> (out of 135 countries) in the 2011 Global Gender Gap Index.

13. Upon ratification of CEDAW, the UAE has made reservations on articles that do not comply with Islamic Sharia<sup>3</sup> and those inconsistent with the sovereignty of the State. The Articles are related to matters of inheritance, marriage and family relations and nationality.

14. "Sharia law provides for detailed calculations of inheritance shares. Women may inherit from their fathers, mothers, husbands or children and, under certain conditions, from other family members. However, their share is generally smaller than that to which men are entitled. A daughter, for example, inherits half as much as a son. It is unclear as to whether women are able to exercise their inheritance rights in practice"<sup>4</sup>.

15. Early 2012, a decree was passed concerning granting citizenship to children of Emirati mothers married to foreigners. This allows Emirati women to pass their UAE citizenship to their children once they are of legal age. Article 2 of Federal Law 17/ 1972, amended by law 10/ 1975 concerning the regulation of nationality in the country, considers a child to be a citizen if he/she is born in or outside the country and the mother is a citizen by virtue of the law and the child's attribution to the father has not been legally ascertained; and if a child is born in the country to unknown parents, the abandoned child will be considered born within it unless proven otherwise.

16. The UAE has committed itself to the 2001 United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Although HIV/AIDS does not represent a national health problem in the country, the State, since 1985, has adopted national strategies to effectively fight it. No new information has been released on the number of HIV infected patients in the UAE or those affected by the disease. It was recently announced that work was finished on the formulation of a draft law to:

---

<sup>3</sup> Sharia, or Islamic law, influences the legal code in most Muslim countries. Also meaning "path" in Arabic, Sharia guides all aspects of Muslim life including daily routines, familial and religious obligations, and financial dealings.

<sup>4</sup> Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2012, UAE country profile available on the following link [http://genderindex.org/country/united-arab-emirates#\\_ftn23](http://genderindex.org/country/united-arab-emirates#_ftn23)

define the employment and education rights of HIV infected people, their integration into society under health rules and controls; and ensuring the rights of those living with the disease.

### **Right to life, liberty and security of the person**

17. The Federal Law 3/ 1978 (Articles 339 and 340) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (article 289) issued by federal law 35/1992 set out the right of the child to life (the right of the child to protection against possible death). The UAE has achieved important steps and transformations in securing this right to children and women. Life expectancy at birth has risen from 72 in 1990 to 76 in 2010. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) dropped from 18 (per 1,000 live births) in 1990 to 6 in 2010. And the Under-five Mortality Rate (U5MR) (per 1,000 live births) dropped from 22 in 1990 to 7 in 2010<sup>5</sup>.

18. The UAE Personal Status Law 28/ 2005 upholds the principles of respect among spouses, and the care for children and their sound upbringing. The Law also requires husbands to provide for their wives, and to refrain from any act that may cause them material or moral damage. The Federal Penal Code provided protection to children against danger and against sexual abuse. Cases of abuse are rarely reported in the UAE. Therefore data and official reports contain insufficient information about the nature and extent of this problem in the country. No data on the state level<sup>6</sup> is available on males or females of 18 years of age and below who have been subjected to violence. A main challenge in this regard is the absence of an integrated system and a comprehensive national framework to protect children and families from violence, dealing with and rehabilitating child victims of violence, and persecuting perpetrators of abuse.

19. Previously, the use of child jockeys in camel racing was a major issue in the UAE before the Government moved to ban the practice by the promulgation of Federal Law number 15 of 2005 that regulates participation in camel racing and bans the employment of children under 18 in these racing; and subsequently by issuing Law 51/ 2006 prohibiting human trafficking, and prescribing penalties which could include a life sentence for human traffickers, especially those trafficking women and children.

20. Ministry of Labor (MoL) statistics show that no persons under 18 years of age working since the Labor Law was issued and until 2007 because the MoL does not grant work permits to children and adolescents. Moreover, Immigration Laws do not permit entry of persons under 18 to work in jobs where the Labor Law does not apply, such as domestic workers, farmers and

---

<sup>5</sup> Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010, Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, General Women's Union, UNICEF and concerned stakeholders.

<sup>6</sup> A report issued in 2009 on the Dubai Police efforts to raise awareness about women and children's rights indicated that the number of child victims reported to the police between 2002-2009 was 48, including 32 cases of sexual assault (making up 67% of the total number of cases), in addition to 13 cases of physical abuse and 3 cases of neglect. The number increased noticeably over the years, especially in 2008 and 2009.

domestic drivers, thus preventing economic exploitation of children and adolescents. The report of a 2008 survey of the workforce in the UAE issued by the Central Statistics Department at the Ministry of Economy indicated that the percentage of workers aged 15-19 was 0.9% of the total workforce.

### **Administration of justice and rule of law**

21. The Federal Law 9/ 1976 concerning Delinquent Juveniles and the Homeless and the Federal Criminal Code number 3 of 1978 are the laws related to juveniles. The definition of a juvenile in Federal Law 9/ 1976 is stipulated in Article 1 as follows: "For the purpose of this law, a juvenile is a person who has not yet reached eighteen years of age" and hence children up to 7 years are not charged with criminal acts while children from the age of 7 to 18 are considered juveniles. The Concluding Observations of the CRC recommended that the UAE raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. The Juveniles Law also adopts special measures for juvenile offenders. It gives the judge the power to take any measures he deems necessary according to the crime instead of imposing strict and pre-set penalties.

22. The government appoints a legal representative for children who are unaccompanied, separated from their families or in need of legal aid. Juveniles are separated from adults in detention facilities according to the Federal Law 43/ 1992. There are special detention centres for felony and misdemeanors juvenile offenders who have committed felonies or misdemeanors, these are called "rehabilitation centres".

### **Right to privacy, marriage and family life**

23. Islamic Sharia rules on marriage apply only to marriages between Muslims, or between a Muslim man and a Jewish or Christian woman. Hence Muslim men can freely choose their spouse, but Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men unless they convert<sup>7</sup>. Polygamy is legal and men may marry up to four wives, providing they obtain permission from their existing wife/wives, and are able to financially support all wives.

24. It is unclear what the minimum age for marriage is in the UAE and up-to-date figures are not available.

### **Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly, and right to participate in public and political life**

25. While Islam is the official State religion; the UAE allows for the exercise of religious rites in the respective places of worship for each religion. Article 32 of the Constitution states that "Freedom to exercise religious worship shall be guaranteed in accordance with established

---

<sup>7</sup> Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2012, UAE country profile available on the following link [http://genderindex.org/country/united-arab-emirates#\\_ftn23](http://genderindex.org/country/united-arab-emirates#_ftn23)

customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals". Islamic studies are mandatory in public schools as well for Muslim children, and adolescents attending private schools. Private schools are also free to teach other religions.

26. State laws guarantee the freedom of opinion and expression: Article 30 of the Constitution states that "freedom of opinion and expressing it verbally, in writing or by other means of expression shall be guaranteed within the limits of law"; i.e., the Constitution did not make this right absolute, but placed restrictions on its exercise to serve public interest. Article 98 of the Press and Publications Law states that "the press is free within the law". The Press and Publications Law imposed restrictions on the freedom of the press, prohibiting crimes; prejudice to the rights and freedoms of others; harm to their reputations and integrity; or undermining security, public order and morality.

27. Male and female citizens can vote and run as candidates in Federal National Council (FNC) elections. In 2006, a major constitutional revision was undertaken to consolidate democratic practices and enable the participation of the Emirati population in the political development and the selection of national council members in a way that combined elections and appointments at a first stage. Women have been also participating in elections since then and their representation in the FNC reached 22.3%.

### **Right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work**

28. The UAE adopted many laws and legislations to protect women and uphold their rights in all areas, including the right to public participation, freedom of expression, equal opportunities and equity pay. Article 35 of the UAE Constitution guarantees that the door to all public office is open to all citizens without any discrimination. The percentage of female nationals joining economic activities in the UAE has reached 27.5% of female nationals in 2009.

29. The Civil Service in the Federal Government Law of 2005 was amended by Decree 11/2008 regarding Human Resources in the Federal Government. As such, the current legal status of maternity leaves and nursing breaks as stipulated in Article 53 of the Federal Law provides full-time female employees with a 60-day paid maternity leave, in addition to a paid two-hour daily nursing break for a period of four months from the date of their return to work. Additionally, in accordance to the executive regulations of this law, she is also entitled to unpaid leave amounting to 100 days which will be considered as part of her annual leave.

30. The UAE has ratified ILO Convention 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. Labor Law 8/1980 incorporates a special chapter on child labor entitled 'Employment of Children' and sets out strict provisions regarding child labor by banning their employment before the age of 15 or their employment between eight o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in the morning. The Law also sets the maximum hours of work and rest breaks, while banning employment of children in hazardous work.

## **Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living**

31. The UAE government has invested its oil wealth in developing society to achieve social and economic welfare for its people. Individuals enjoy high incomes and rural areas have witnessed significant development and the access to various social benefits. In addition, the State was able to provide free education, health, housing, culture, recreation, sanitation, and infrastructure, among other services.

32. Social security is guaranteed by the Constitution. The State has undertaken a number of measures to preserve the dignity of its citizens in general and that of women in particular. As such, in 2008, 6.5% of the State budget was allocated for social security. The UAE has also initiated the Social Responsibility Fund and allocated required financial resources to support limited-income families in improving their livelihoods<sup>8</sup>. The government has also implemented several successful programmes and projects to maintain women's and families' good standard of living such as:

- Implement an Expenditure and Household Income Survey at the State level in 2007/2008;
- Increase the wages of federal and local government employees in 2008;
- Adopt a pension system;
- Encourage the creation of investment opportunities for both males and females by granting interest-free loans for small and medium enterprises;
- Support basic food items, and assisted productive families financially as well as with marketing support;
- Exempt social security beneficiaries from service fees such as electricity and water consumption;
- Grant 100 million shares of Arkan National Company for Construction Materials, which was founded in 2006, to about 10,000 national family beneficiaries of social security;
- Grant housing and land loans, free housing for all citizens, including women;
- Organise annual job fairs;
- Encourage the public and private sectors to provide job opportunities for citizens;
- Support training programmes to respond to labour market needs.

## **Right to health**

33. The UAE has prioritized the right to health in several of its legislations namely in Article 19 of the Constitution: "Medical care and means of prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics shall be ensured by the community for all citizens. The community shall promote the establishment of public and private hospitals, dispensaries and cure – houses".

---

<sup>8</sup> Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010, Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, General Women's Union, UNICEF and concerned stakeholders.

34. The State has established an extensive network of hospitals and health centres to provide all types of healthcare covering all levels across the country.

35. The UAE commissioned delivery rooms in all hospitals, and special maternal and child care units with advanced medical equipment to ensure safe and comprehensive care. As a result, 99.9% of births took place under the supervision of a qualified health staff. The UAE has already achieved the fifth Millennium Development Goal (MDG) regarding improving maternal health where its Maternal Mortality Rate per 100,000 live births is 0 since 2004.

36. Health institutions in the UAE offer various services to maintain the health of pregnant women and care in the postnatal period. The State laid down plans and strategies geared to meet nutritional deficiencies facing women during pregnancy like the implementation of a Prenatal and Postnatal Nutrition Policy for women which incorporates nutrition education programmes during and post pregnancy.

37. The UAE's policies in the expansion and spread of immunization and the eradication of infectious diseases, as well as the promotion of health programmes for children have succeeded. Polio has been eradicated since 1994, and diphtheria since 1990. In addition, the UAE was proclaimed free of malaria by the WHO in March 12, 2007<sup>9</sup>.

38. Appropriate strategies have been developed to raise coverage rates of basic vaccines to prevent and reduce the incidence of diseases through the National Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). The overall coverage for all vaccines exceeded 92% during 2000 and registered the highest in the vaccination against tuberculosis, reaching 98% in 2006<sup>10</sup>.

39. The UAE still faces some challenges with regard to child health, such as underweight children (14% of mild and severe cases), children who suffer from wasting (15% of mild and severe cases), and children who suffer from stunting (17% of mild and severe cases) for the years 2000-2007. In addition, the rate of children under- five below the median height reached 15.5%; and underweight infants reached 15% for the years 1999-2006. Moreover, according to WHO figures and with regard to iodine deficiency, the UAE has low rates of hyperthyroidism<sup>11</sup>.

40. The International Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the UAE ensure the education of adolescents on reproductive health and other issues relating to their health in addition to the provision of confidential consultation services, besides exerting efforts to provide health education to adolescents (within the school system). However, the Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010 affirms that information regarding reproductive health in schools is limited and inadequate.

---

<sup>9</sup> Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010, Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, General Women's Union, UNICEF and concerned stakeholders.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community**

41. The UAE adapted educational legislation to conform to the principles of child rights. This is indicated in Article 2 of the Federal Law 11/1972 which states that primary education is compulsory once a child reaches six years of age. Article 7 of the Federal Law mandates the MoE with promoting and providing education to all citizens, making primary education compulsory and free of charge within the Federation to all citizens. The State is currently considering introducing a legislation to raise the level of compulsory education to the end of the secondary stage.

42. The State demonstrated a strong political commitment towards achieving the MDGs of universal education and capacity building. As a result, illiteracy rates in the age group 15-19 years reached 2.8% in 2009/2010. The female net enrolment ratio in primary education reached 97 and the male net enrolment ratio 98 between 2007 and 2010. The net enrolment rates in secondary education for the same years reached 82 for males and 84 for females. Nonetheless, many problems are still facing the education sector in the UAE like the inadequacy of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in nurseries; the education of individuals with disabilities; the high percentage (94%) of students who need to go through a foundation year at university before starting their specialized studies<sup>12</sup>.

43. The right to education in the UAE does not discriminate between males and females. At the contrary, females record higher rates than males in all educational phases making the UAE on track to achieving gender-based equality in primary and secondary education. The female net enrolment rate in primary education reached 76.4% (the same as the rate for males) in 2005, which brings the Gender Equity Index (GEI) to 1.00. The same applies to the secondary level, where net enrolment rates in 2005 reached 98% for both males and females, bringing the GEI for secondary education to 1.00. Furthermore, women's educational achievements have risen higher in record time than by world MDGs targets. The State has made tremendous efforts to eradicate illiteracy, which for women has declined to 2.4%<sup>13</sup>.

44. The State allocated sustainable financial resources for the development of the educational process and thus achieved quantitative and qualitative progress in education by providing appropriate educational opportunities to all individuals throughout the country, creating a paradigm shift in the content of education, and pursuing overall education reform. Focus to improve the quality of education was done through implementing a number of initiatives.

45. The State allows private schools, Arab and foreign alike, to exercise their educational roles. Article 18 of the Constitution stipulates that private schools may be established by individuals and organizations in accordance with the provisions of the law, provided they are subject to the supervision of the competent public authorities and their directives.

---

<sup>12</sup> Situation Analysis of Children in the UAE 2010, Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, General Women's Union, UNICEF and concerned stakeholders.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

46. Work is underway in the UAE to build the foundation for effective participation of children and adolescents in planning and implementation of initiatives in areas which directly affect their lives. Examples of such initiatives include the Sharjah Children's Parliament<sup>14</sup>, the institution of school based Student Councils and encouragement of children to participate in national and regional events. However, real participation by children and adolescents in decision making and activities which affect their lives and future is still weak. Even in regards to the Student Councils participation of children is limited to minor decisions on the uniform for instance and not on bigger issues like the curricula.

47. On the national level in 2008, dropout rates among males reached 2.8% compared to 1.1% among females. The UAE's MDGs report for 2007 attributes the increase in male dropout rates to the desire to join the labor market, the army or public security forces early on in life<sup>15</sup>. To encourage retention in school, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued educational conduct regulations to control truancy. The MoE also formulated regulations to guarantee the rights of students and protect them from all forms of corporal punishment in schools.

48. Education of people with special needs remains a challenge especially tertiary education as it is not open to people with special needs. In addition, no specialized colleges or universities cater to students with disabilities. There are no special schools for gifted children; instead there are programmes in regular schools.

### **Persons with disabilities**

49. The UAE issued Federal Law 29/ 2006 related to the Rights of People with Special Needs, it signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Protocol in 2008, and it also issued Law 2 / 2004 on the establishment of Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Special Needs (ZHO)<sup>16</sup>. The Federal Law of 2006 provides free medical insurance for citizens with disabilities and ensures equal educational opportunities in all educational institutions, vocational training and continuing education. According to article 21 of the law, "special sports, culture and recreation committees for people with disabilities shall be formed" under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the Youth and Sports Commission.

50. In addition, to providing rehabilitation and health care, tax exemptions and litigation rights, the law has also stipulated building standards for facilities and public areas, exemptions from licensing fees of transport means used by disability societies and centres and the licensing fees of buildings dedicated to people with disabilities.

---

<sup>14</sup> The Children's Parliament was established in 1997 in Sharjah Emirate and it is the most important initiative at the local level in the development of institutional mechanisms to ensure children's rights to social and political participation, and enable them to participate in the decision-making process. Due to its success, the implementation of the Children's Parliament on the national level was considered.

<sup>15</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> UAE MDGs Report, Ministry of Economy, UAE, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> ZHO serves as an umbrella for all humanitarian bodies, social services, orphanages, special needs institutions and any future bodies established in Abu Dhabi for humanitarian goals. It provides a range of integrated services that aim at rehabilitating people with disabilities for inclusion into the community.

51. At the school and classroom levels, the State established specialized care and rehabilitation centres providing specialized educational services, taking into account modifying curricula and customizing teaching methods to suit the individual abilities of all students. However, the integration process is still facing many challenges. For despite concerted efforts, the school system is not fully ready for early detection or to effectively deal with students with disabilities.

52. Challenges still persist such as the uneven distribution of specialized services across the country, inconsistency in the quality of services, in addition to the failure to provide appropriate employment opportunities for people with special needs within the country's job structure. The laws and procedures for obtaining health insurance by expatriates and individuals with disabilities who cannot afford the costs of services still need to be improved.

### **Minorities and indigenous peoples**

53. There are no statistics and data on stateless persons (*al-bidoon*) nor on the issues facing them however a Ministerial Decision (167/ 2006) was issued under which the committee charged with stateless persons (*al-bidoon*) will be re-established in order to reach a decision on the number of those entitled to citizenship, who were living in the country prior to the foundation of the Union and were previously included in a census. Priority is given to those employed in the public sector and have spent long time in service.