UNICEF unveils new movie on HIV/AIDS
“Mana” continues story of “Born with AIDS”

After the success of “Born with AIDS”, a movie that looks at the social aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic by telling the story of a young woman who is trying to find out about her HIV status, UNICEF Iran has launched a new film that continues to follow the lives of some of the film’s protagonists. “Mana” was produced in cooperation with the Documentary and Experimental Film Centre and the Visual Media Institute in Tehran.

In “Mana”, Alireza Razazifar, journalist, author and film director, spins the story further by introducing a young family into the narrative. Mana is an eight year old girl who finds herself in hospital after she experienced a seizure in school. When she is discovered to be HIV-positive, her parents become deeply embroiled in an emotional battle on how to cope with Mana’s illness, find out how the disease has become introduced into the family, and to survive as a family in an environment that is uninformed, prejudiced and deeply hostile.

Alireza Razazifar can look back at a long career that intertwined journalism with movie-making. Already his first book – actually his M.A. thesis – looked deep into the cinema scene. Later, he was awarded the “Golden Pen” for his journalism work at Tehran’s press festival, and started making movies. His work includes a number of social and scientific documentaries for Iran’s public broadcaster, IRIB, such as “Inner Injury” about mental disorders. He also directed feature movies in Iran and abroad, including “Music and the Seine” in France, “Soltude of a singer” in Syria, and “The 40th”, in Iran. In 2005, “born of AIDS” won the honorary diploma in the documentary section of Iran’s first AIDS Film Festival.

In an interview with UNICEF Iran’s Media Officer Bahareh Yeganehfar, Alireza Razazifar speaks about his experience when embarking on his new movie project, “Mana”.

Bahareh Yeganehfar: Mr. Razazifar, how did you have the idea to direct “Mana”?

Alireza Razazifar: In 2003, after the first part of “Born with AIDS” was done, I was left with the experience, research results and stories that I had collected during the making of the movie. So when the Resanehaye Tasviri (Visual Media) Institute recommended to me to put together a feature movie on AIDS, I didn’t waste any time and used my research for this movie. It is interesting to note that it took four years from the day when the plan to produce “Mana” was approved, until the actual day of shooting. All this time was spent on researching and consulting for the film script, and to obtain the support of sponsoring organizations, such as UNICEF.

BY: Did you consult people living with HIV before the production?
AR: I must say, Mana’s script is based on real life stories that I came to know while making the first part of “Born with AIDS”. Some of the words have been the real ones of a person living with HIV, whom we interviewed during our research. UNICEF gave the final script to a number of people living with AIDS.

BY: How do you think we can mix scientific facts and health messages with dramatic arts?
AR: This is quite difficult. I’ve done it a couple of times and gained valuable experiences through it. On the one hand, we have experimental science, and arts...
Why would UNICEF be present at a food fair? A question posed by many at this year’s International Food, Beverage and Packing Technology Trade Fair in Tehran. The answer, however, became plain enough when walking up to the central area occupied by Tak Makaron, Iran’s market leader in producing pasta and other food stuffs, and of Golestan, a household name for tea in Iran. Both companies are UNICEF Iran’s latest corporate partners, which is clearly visible throughout Tehran by the large billboards carrying the companies’ and UNICEF’s logo and dominating many inner-city highways. Profiting from the thousands of visitors the trade fair usually draws, both companies decided to prominently show their support to UNICEF, in pictures – the fair ground itself was plastered with Tak Makaron/UNICEF posters – and an information stand with child animation programme.

While parents thumbed through brochures on child rights and their children had their faces painted, we asked Ali S. Gerami, managing director of Golestan, why his company had decided to go into partnership with UNICEF.

“We are proud to cooperate with the Children’s Fund,” he said. “We do want to make a difference and support the goals of this organization – helping Iran’s children, in particular in the country’s disparity areas.”

Mohammad Kermanian, member of Tak Makaron’s board of directors, echoes these remarks. “Through this partnership with UNICEF, I wanted to generate more interest for the support of children.”

UNICEF works with corporate partners all over the world. Support comes in many different forms, from direct donations, sales of UNICEF greeting cards, marketing promotions and in-kind donations.

BY: What was UNICEF’s role in the movie?
AR: Since the movie was a continuation of “Born with AIDS”, one can say that UNICEF was quite effective in forming the story and providing spiritual support. We had meetings with UNICEF and the producer, the Documentary and Experimental Film Centre, in summer 2007, and signed an agreement then. UNICEF also facilitated consultations with a group of youth and HIV-positive people.

BY: Will you have any other project in the field of AIDS?
AR: I have some stories about AIDS, especially some real life stories. I hope in future to work on them, with the help of colleagues and friends.

To read the full interview, please visit unicef.org/iran/media_2064.html
In a new report published by UNICEF in May, Iran’s exemplary success in eliminating iodine deficiency in the country over the last two decades has been highlighted. “Just 50 years ago, iodine deficiency disorders were endemic in Iran. Since the IDD National Committee was established in 1988, the country has all but eliminated IDD,” the report states.

“Sustainable Elimination of Iodine Deficiency” (ISBN: 978-92-806-4304-6), which looks at the progress made in this field since the 1990 World Summit for Children, has set itself three ambitious goals: to review global and national efforts to eliminate IDD, to show the progress made by governments, the salt industry and communities, with UNICEF’s help, and, finally, to propose an agenda against IDD as a vital step to prevent a negative impact on international development and human potential.

In Iran, the dramatic turnaround since 1988 – away from a society in which goitre afflicted many parts of the population – has been based on strong political will leading to a coherent, far-reaching and sustainable policy to promote awareness and provide iodized salt to virtually everyone.

“Another crucial element of Iran’s achievements is cooperation,” explains Dr. Seyed E. Asaeei, early childhood development specialist with UNICEF Iran. “Without efficient and committed collaboration between health care providers, IDD experts, salt producers, communication specialists and consumer associates, the IDD initiative could not have been as successful.”

The report is available at UNICEF Iran or in electronic form (English) at unicef.org/publications/index_44271.html.

Handbook on Child Protection for Social Workers

A handbook and a training module on “Principles of Child Protection in Emergencies for Social Workers” are now available in Farsi. The handbook modules include Child Rights; Child Protection and the Role of Social Workers in Emergencies; Assessment and Contingency Planning on Child Protection in Emergencies; Separated and Unaccompanied Children; Preventing and Protecting Children from Abuse and Exploitation; Psycho-social Support for Children and Families; and Coping under Pressure.

The materials were used in a Training-of-Trainers workshop for 25 social workers from Tehran and provinces, held in partnership with the State Welfare Organization (SWO) in 2007. Selected trainers will, in 2008/9, train 150 social workers in five of Iran’s provinces, thus creating an emergency roster of social workers within the SWO.

The handbook can be obtained through UNICEF Iran’s Communication Unit or online at unicef.org/publications/index_42166.html (English version) and unicef.org/iran/resources_1609.html (Farsi version).
Children’s lives in pictures
UNICEF Iran’s Photo of the Week

Pictures of children from around the world are one of UNICEF’s most well-known features. Over the years, world-famous photographers, such as Sebastião Salgado, have contributed with their work to the vast UNICEF photo archive. The portraits of children, of the surroundings they live in and their day-to-day struggles, have become an important element in the effort to raise awareness of their problems and the ways how we can help them.

For several years, UNICEF’s office in Iran has been building up its own archive of children’s photographs. Professional photographers were hired to travel the country and document UNICEF’s work in Iran and the lives of children – first on film, later on digital memory cards.

In an effort to share the results of this artistic endeavour with a wider audience, UNICEF started a new initiative in June: the Photo of the Week. A weekly email message sent out to hundreds of its regular subscribers and others includes a photograph taken in Iran’s provinces and cities and a short description of the scene. The photos mostly display children and women living in those remote areas of Iran where UNICEF is running projects or is otherwise directly or indirectly involved. Several Iranian media, such as Hamshahri Online (hamshahrionline.ir), have enthusiastically picked up the initiative, and have reproduced the photos on their own website.

The Photo of the Week is also carried on UNICEF Iran’s website unicef.org/iran or, in Farsi, unicef.org/iran/fa. The photo and brief story can (and should!) be reproduced and forwarded by anyone interested, but credit should be given to UNICEF and the photographer. Please email UNICEF’s Communication Unit at tehran@unicef.org if you want to subscribe to the Photo of the Week.