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## - Yemen's religious leaders increase support for children

Contributed by Author  
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SANA, 3 July 2007 – UNICEF's goal of partnering with religious leaders received a strong boost yesterday when the Minister for Endowment and Guidance, Hamoud Bin Abdulhamid Al-Hitar, offered unequivocal support for the well-being of children. Responding to UNICEF Country Representative, Aboudou Karimou Adjibade's desire to take the existing partnership with religious leaders and imams to a higher level, Judge Hammed said his Ministry is "equally eager to bolster this partnership" as "Islam enjoins upon us the responsibility to take care, development and protection as a duty towards children."

The Ministry of Endowment and Guidance already works closely with UNICEF in the key areas of promoting behaviour change for better health, education, protection of children from abuse, neglect and violence and creating awareness creation around HIV and AIDS. The new Country Programme Action Plan carries an important component for mobilizing the support of religious leaders and imams to help realize the rights of the child. UNICEF Representative Aboudou Karimou Adjibade reinforced the vital need to bring the most influential leaders on board to promote positive behavioral change for ensuring the best interests of the child.

The religious leaders are highly regarded and influential in the community and their voice of support can foster a behavioural change in a sustainable manner, the UNICEF Representative emphasized.

Judge Hamood Bin Abdulhamid Al-Hitar pledged his Ministry's increased support and said, "Islam underscores the care, development and protection of children and urges parents to be responsible for their children."

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