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## UNIFEM PARTNER PROFILE

# The CRADLE

When Brian Weke, Programme Manager of The CRADLE – The Children’s Foundation, Kenya, steps into the bare-walled room in Ngara Girls High School in Nairobi’s City Center, 60 pairs of eyes look up to him expectantly. The SCAR club is about to hold another session. SCAR stands for Students Campaign against Rape, and is just one of ten clubs that The CRADLE is currently supervising in Girls Schools all over the country as part of its “Girls SHALL” project. Every year, thousands of Kenyan girls drop out of school due to poverty, early marriage or pregnancy. “Girls SHALL” offers leadership skills, mentorship and protection of female students from abuse through discussion, training and provision of free legal services.

The CRADLE, a UNIFEM partner as part of its Gender and Governance Programme, is a Nairobi-based civil society organization committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, especially girls, through court representation, advocacy and law reform. Launched in 1998, the organization has been active in mainstreaming child rights into government programmes, and was a key player in drafting the Children Act, passed in 2001, and the Sexual Offences Act, which passed in 2006. A Counter Trafficking in Persons Bill is currently pending in Parliament.

In cooperation with UNIFEM and as part of its community outreach, The CRADLE is conducting training of teachers and community leaders as paralegals all over the country. In Suba District, Nyanza Province, where poverty forces many young girls into transactional sex in exchange for food, police forces have been trained in dealing with cases of gender-based violence and sexual abuse.

The CRADLE runs the first Legal Aid Clinic of its kind in Kenya, with 100 lawyers offering services to hundreds of children on a pro bono basis each year. Psycho-social support is given to children who have been traumatized by physical or sexual violence. It also runs a special programme in the Nairobi Children’s Court where it maintains a duty advocate and has established a Child’s Help Desk and a Teddy-Bear Clinic for children in conflict with the law, child protection cases and family law matters. It was also able to establish “Children’s Voices,” an annual conference for child survivors of abuse.

According to its 2008 report, the Legal Aid Clinic provided assistance to a total of 559 children and handled 232 new cases, among them 60 cases of child sexual abuse. Forty-one percent of survivors of child sexual abuse were children aged between 1 and 9 years, 39 percent girls between the ages of 13 and 15 years. Ninety percent of sexual abusers were male; in 3 percent of reported cases the abuser’s identity remained unknown. According to The CRADLE, numbers of child sexual abuse are on the rise, with more cases being reported and brought to court.

On an international level, The CRADLE has contributed to The UN Study on Violence against Children and participated in the UN Special Session on Children.

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