

Review of implementation of the “World fit for children” Declaration and Action Plan in the Republic of Uzbekistan

1. Introduction :

This document is the result of the ongoing work of the Government of Uzbekistan in partnership with civil society and the international donor community. Specifically, in 2005, the Government with the support of UN agencies completed the MDG monitoring report which presents an analysis of the likelihood of Uzbekistan’s national MDGs being reached. Also, this report highlighted and articulated an array of interventions critical for ensuring the achievement of these national MDGs. Since the majority of the MDGs concern the wellbeing of children, the interventions covered in the report also address issues relating to this.

In 2006, the Government completed its first ever interim Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper (reduction of poverty). This is closely linked to the MDG report and further elaborates state strategies on improving the overall wellbeing of the population including women and children. One section of this document is solely dedicated to the wellbeing of women and children. Both, MDG reporting and IWISP, have been developed by the Government in close cooperation with the international donor community as well as civil society.

Also in 2006, the Government prepared and submitted the second periodic report on CRC implementation. This report was developed in close consultation with civil society and NGOs working on issues of children’s rights. As a follow up to the recommendations provided by the CRC committee, the Cabinet of Ministers updated the national plan of action for children in order to address all recommendations. The national plan of action has been reviewed and discussed by the NGO coalition and youth parliament.

The present report draws from all the documents mentioned above and considers all recent developments in the country. Drafting of the document began in late autumn 2006 and has been carried out mainly by the working group under the Cabinet of Ministers with support and contribution from UNICEF.

2. Major National Actions taken for Children towards the WFFC targets since 2002

Uzbekistan is one of very few countries in post Soviet space, if not the only one, that has maintained stability and economic growth during the period of transition. Stability in social development has also been a major focus for the Government of Uzbekistan. As an illustration of this is the fact that despite the gradual movement to an open market-oriented economy, prices for major public goods have not increased due to state control and subsidies.

Every year, since the late 1990s, the President of Uzbekistan has announced a new state program with a strong focus on social development. Many of these programs have been directly concerned with the well being of women and children. For example:

“Mother and Child“year program (2001):

- Establishing the necessary conditions for strengthening the health of pregnant women, the birth of healthy children, and their monitoring and care with the help of modern medical equipment;
- Organizing continuous medical supervision for children from birth, protecting them from anything which might endanger their healthy development and providing regular vaccination and other preventive actions;
- Providing adequate physical and spiritual education for children, fulfillment of all modern medical, pedagogical and psychological recommendations by all families;
- Strengthening the role of parents and teachers in the education of pre-school children based on the traditions and customs inherited from our ancestors, in the spirit of respect for our national values and using modern pedagogical methods which introduce children to the richness and variety of the world surrounding them;
- Providing education, particularly in primary schools, which enables children to develop respect for the national traditions and customs, as well as a world outlook and interest in foreign languages and human values;
- Strengthening the role of the mother and family in the upbringing of a child and, his/her physical and spiritual development until the age of majority and ensuring close connections between mother and child in this process.

“Mahalla” year program (2003):

- Strengthening social protection for low income families and supporting young families;
- Improvement of medical and rehabilitation services for people living in mahallas;
- Development of children’s sports;
- Promotion of mahalla activities related to the spiritual and moral education of young people

“Kindness and mercy” year program (2004):

- Strengthening of families, protection of motherhood and childhood, and bringing up young people so they show respect for the older generation..

“Health” year program (2005):

- Improvement of protection of motherhood and childhood; reproductive health; enhancement of medical culture and rehabilitation of family health;
- Prevention of socially dangerous diseases;
- Supply of clean drinking water to the population; ensuring a healthy environment and its protection;
- Development of the physical culture and sport in the population and the involvement of women and children in sport;

“Welfare and health workers” year program (2006):

- Financial and moral support to low income families;

- Improvement of the conditions in specialized social care facilities and strengthening of the infrastructure of educational establishments;
- Treatment and rehabilitation of people on low incomes, children and persons with disabilities;

2007 has been declared the year of social protection and the state program developed by the Cabinet of Ministers has a strong emphasis on further strengthening of the safety net for the most socially vulnerable groups within the population. The cost of the program is almost 400 million US dollars and more than half of the interventions are directed at the most vulnerable groups of children. They address issues like the improvement of the current conditions of children in institutions as well as a more long term strategy to prevent children from being institutionalized and providing alternatives to institutional care such as family type homes, foster care and adoption. This state program also addresses issues such as mother and child health, better incentives for staff working in social protection, cash benefits and other privileges for the most needy and young families and others.

In 2006, Uzbekistan submitted its second periodic report on CRC implementation. Based on the recommendations in this report, the Cabinet of Ministers reviewed and updated the action plan developed from the CRC committee's recommendations submitted in 2002 after the CRC inception report. Furthermore, the Cabinet of Ministers expanded the action plan and developed a national plan of action (NPA) covering issues beyond those addressed in the CRC committee recommendations. On 15 January 2007, the Deputy Prime Minister endorsed the NPA and the establishment of an inter-sectoral group involving relevant line ministries, civil society and UNICEF to monitor the realization of an NPA at national and sub-national levels.

Currently, the Government of Uzbekistan is working on a Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper (WISP) to be completed in summer 2007. The document will address issues of macro/micro economics and social development. The chapter on human capital development will cover health, education and social protection with a focus on the most vulnerable groups in the population and therefore, there is a special emphasis on issues related to children's wellbeing.

All regions of Uzbekistan now provide medical screening of women of fertile age in primary health facilities as well as the supply of contraceptives aimed at preventing unwanted pregnancies and increasing the birth spacing.

As part of the program on "Screening of mother and child" a series of activities are being carried out in the country to prevent congenital diseases linked with mental retardation as well as the examination of pregnant women to detect abnormalities in the development of the foetus. The current system and infrastructure boasts modern medical diagnostic equipment and highly qualified staff for screening the population. In total there are 12 Screening Centers operating in the country.

The government cooperates closely with WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, USAID, JICA, KfW Bank, WB, ADB in the framework of various programs related to mother and child health including "Safe Motherhood", "Newborn care", "Expanded Program on immunization", "Healthy family", "Promotion of breastfeeding practices", "IMCI", "Reproductive health improvement", "Iodine DD and Iron DD prevention" and others.

To achieve large scale success the Government of Uzbekistan and the international donor community have combined their resources through innovative partnerships to work effectively towards a common purpose. Although such collaboration is not always easy, the benefits are evident:

Nationwide Vitamin A supplementation has protected over 2.2 mln children under 5. Since 2003, children have received two doses of Vitamin A each year. Beginning in 2003 a joint UNICEF/JICA program on the prevention of anemia among women and children in Uzbekistan has been in operation. More than 4 million women of fertile age and children under two in 9 oblasts have been covered with iron and folic acid supplementation since 1999. This has resulted in a reduction of anemia among this group. As a result the evaluation of 2006 showed a 37.7% reduction in anemia among woman of fertile age compared to 1996 and a decrease of 33.1 % among children under five compared to 2002. The WB will extend iron supplementation to the four remaining regions of Uzbekistan. In order to make the prevention of iron deficiency sustainable the "National program on flour fortification" was launched in 2005. This program is worth 2.8 million USD and is funded by GAIN. The program is supported by the State and will be fully funded in 2008.

Access to iodized salt increased from 19 % in 2000 to 53.1 % in 2006. The Law on "Prevention of Iodine deficiency diseases" was adopted in march 2007.

Maintaining high vaccination coverage (DPT, HepB, OPV and measles) and preventing diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B was a major public health achievement and resulted in a significant reduction in vaccine preventable diseases.

In 2002 Uzbekistan, which used to be a polio endemic zone, was certified as polio-free. These activities have an enormous effect on reducing child mortality. A national day of immunization for measles\rubella is usually conducted once every 3-4 years, and a mass immunization campaign is planned for 2005-2006 aimed at people 7-34 years of age (a total population of 9,7 million).

Uzbekistan's Health Sector Reform initiated in 1998 aims to improve maternal and child health through strengthening the capacity for emergency obstetric and newborn care. It has the purpose of restructuring the provision of reproductive health care services within primary health care. The National Program on the Reduction of Infant and Child mortality has been approved and includes the most efficient interventions of Emergency Obstetric Care, Essential Newborn care and Neonatal Resuscitation, Growth Monitoring and Management of major childhood illness, Micronutrients and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT). The State resource allocation has been revised as the result of loans received and now there is an emphasis on Maternal and Newborn care. The number of potential international agencies involved in obstetric and neonatal care increased. Professors and local experts have accepted international standards and support the changes of current practice in neonatal resuscitation and newborn care. As a result rooming-in is now practiced around the country in 56 maternity hospitals and 182 maternity departments of district hospitals. Health workers help mothers to initiate breastfeeding within 30 min. after birth, encourage breastfeeding on demand and do not give bottles with pacifiers or artificial teats. Demedicalization principles related to normal deliveries, clean delivery practice, and partnership during birth has been introduced in all maternity hospitals. Tight swaddling of babies is no longer acceptable practice in 6 oblasts. In 2006, 32 maternity hospitals and 19 SVPs received UNICEF's "Baby friendly hospital" certificate.

In conformity with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" and the "National Program for Personnel Training" government policy on education is being

implemented in the following sectors: pre-school education, general secondary education, secondary special education, vocational education, higher education, post diploma education, retraining and out of school education.

Pre-school education aims at formation of a healthy and holistic personality of a child, well prepared for school education. It includes the education of children under 6 at home, in day-care centers or other pre-school facilities. The Ministry of Public Education with support from UNICEF is currently revising the State requirements (Standards) for preparing children for school to reflect recent educational developments..

There are 6565 pre-school facilities in the country, which cover 571,100 children or 22% of all children in this age group. Some 59000 educators work in these pre-school facilities. . In addition there are also alternative ways of preparing children for school, including short term courses, day-care centers, preparatory classes at school and groups organized free of charge by mahallas.

School reform covers 2 stages of the general secondary education: primary education (I-IV grades) and general secondary education (V-IX grades). Primary education focuses on providing children with the basic literacy, knowledge and skills, they need to progress to general secondary education. Children start attending school at the age of 6 or 7. Primary and secondary school enrollment is 96% and 95% respectively

General secondary education provides children with the fundamental knowledge they need, develops their independent thinking and organizational abilities and gives practical experience. This helps them develop an initial vocational orientation and to make choices for the next stage of their education.

There are 9773 general secondary educational schools serving 5.7 million children: this includes 170 primary schools, 3817 incomplete general secondary schools, 5700 complete general secondary education schools and 86 specialized schools and boarding schools for children with physical and mental disabilities.

Girls have equal access to education in Uzbekistan (out of total of 5.7 million children in schools 48% are girls). Girls and boys study together in the general secondary schools and all other educational establishments.

Education is provided in seven languages in the relevant schools as follows: Uzbek in 8,816 schools to 89% of children (5.1million), Karakalpak in 372 schools to 2% of children (10,000), Russian in 753 schools to 5% of children (30,000), Kazak in 521 schools to 2% of children (10,000), Tajik in 282 schools to 1.8% of children (9,700), Kyrgyz in 48 schools to 0.2% of children (1,200) and Turkmen in 50 schools to 0.2% of children (1,200).

There are 450,327 teachers (68.1% of these are women) out of which 68.5% have completed their higher education, 4.6% have incomplete higher education (Bachelor degree-4 years of study) and 26.9% have completed secondary special education (special pedagogical colleges).

The Government is currently focusing on improving the quality of education. This is shown by the number of State programs, decrees and resolutions aimed at supporting the implementation of the Education Reform and the State National Program on School Education Development 2004-2009. This program envisages a number of measures on:

- strengthening and developing the infrastructure of general schools;
- supplying schools with modern text-books, lab equipment, computers and manuals;
- improving teaching methodologies and curricula;
- re-training teachers and developing an efficient training and re-training, system which will increase their motivation;

Among the recent measures introduced was a differential increase in teachers' salaries based on a teacher's role in the improvement of students' level of knowledge; the restructuring of the system of education at rayon level; the strengthening of the methodology centers in order to further improve the quality of educational content.

To ensure more effective and efficient support to education reform a Donor Coordination Centre has been established at the Ministry of Public Education with support from ADB and other donors and UN agencies. Among key agencies supporting the improvement of the quality of education are ADB, WB, UNICEF and UNESCO.

Orphans and children deprived of parental care live and study in children's homes and boarding schools which are fully funded by the government. There are also general secondary educational rehabilitation boarding schools and sanatoriums for children who need long-term treatment.

For children with physical and mental disabilities, who are unable to attend regular schools, there are specialized schools and boarding-schools. There are 28 children's homes in the republic which provide care for more than 3000 orphans and children deprived of parental care.

In comparison with last year the number of children in children's homes has declined. The key aim of the State policy in this direction is deinstitutionalization and the promotion of actions to establish guardianship and obtain the support of relatives or other persons replacing a child's parents. In accordance with the Government Decree (2003), financial assistance is available for families that adopt children from social institutions.

A number of organizational and practical measures to increase the efficiency of the work, carried out by the Inspectors on prevention of juvenile offences, have been taken. These include measures to tackle the phenomenon of street children and the problem of juvenile crime, and the improvement of the interaction between the Commission on Minors' Affairs, educational and health structures, self-governing citizen bodies and other public organizations.

Between 2002-2006 visits were organized to all the regions of Uzbekistan as part of the work of the Commission on Minors' Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers for preventing juvenile crime. These visits were made in order to examine the work of educational establishments, to look at the issue of preventing offences among minors and young people and to provide practical and methodological assistance to the subordinated units in the implementation of the interventions, envisaged in the "National Action Plan on fulfillment of the recommendation of the UN Committee on Child Rights".

In 2005 there was a 12% decrease in the number of violations of the law by adolescents and the number of adolescent involved in criminal cases decreased by 10,1% compared to 2002.

The number of working adolescents involved in criminal cases decreased by 36,2% and the number of young unemployed people that do not study involved in criminal cases decreased by 9,6%.

Upgrading the juvenile justice system in Uzbekistan has been under discussion since 2002. As a result of the work that has been done since then, the need to reform the criminal justice system for children to be more child friendly and restorative has been accepted.

One of the recommendations of the 2005 International Forum on “Effective Forms and Methods of Providing Support to Socially Vulnerable Children” held in Tashkent was to draft proposals for the establishment of a new juvenile justice system in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Another recommendation was to provide pre- and in-service training to professionals working in the field of juvenile justice.

In September 2005, a law on juvenile justice was drafted with the support of UNICEF and shared with line of ministries for consideration.

Also, the Government of Uzbekistan in partnership with UNICEF has drafted an umbrella law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child”, which is included in the Government’s plan for 2007. In this law there is a new chapter on juvenile justice, institution of Child’s Rights (Children Ombudsman).

The drafting process of the law on Juvenile Justice has been participatory, including related ministries, university professors and MPs. In addition, in order to introduce the juvenile justice professionals to new concepts of justice such as restorative justice and child friendly court procedures, training for judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, staff from the commission of minors, and law students were conducted in Tashkent and Samarkand in 2006. These trainings were conducted in collaboration with the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Ministry of the Interior and the Supreme Court. As of the end of 2006, there are ongoing discussions in the country to pilot a child court and diversion mechanisms.

In 2004 the Republican Center for Social Adaptation of Children (RCSAC) was established by the Government of Uzbekistan in order to improve the efficiency of the work on educating a spiritually developed and physically fit young generation, ensuring full social adaptation of children with limited physical abilities and those who come from vulnerable families or have been deprived of parental care. This Center in cooperation with the respective ministries and departments is working on a study of the problems of vulnerable groups of children; on the development and implementation of recommendations on the integration of children into society; working with child care personnel on introducing new advanced approaches to working with children deprived of care; as well as raising public awareness of the issues surrounding the care of children in these categories. So far two important studies have been completed, one on the ‘Assessment of the child protection system’, the other on ‘Analyses of Social policy of Uzbekistan related to children with disabilities’. The year 2007, which has been declared the ‘Year of Social Protection’, is addressing support to vulnerable families and children and further progress is expected shortly on these issues.

Uzbekistan, as many other countries, also faces the problem of the spread of HIV/AIDS. A total of 7810 HIV cases were registered in Uzbekistan in 2005. There has been some increase in mother to child transmission within the last few years. In 2005 the total number of registered HIV positive pregnant women stood at 171

The necessary legal and political framework has been established to combat the spread of HIV in the country. In 1999, a law was passed to protect people living with HIV/AIDS from discrimination; the right to equal access to education, employment and social protection is guaranteed by this legislation, as is the right to free care from government health organizations.

As a follow up to the first National HIV Program, the Second Strategic Program on Counteracting the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (2007-2011) has been developed and it is under consideration for approval by the Government of Uzbekistan. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of line ministries in managing the country's collective response.

WHO Protocols on "Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission" were adopted with the help of UNICEF and local institutions. A number of agencies such as UNICEF, WHO, Global Fund project, Project HOPE and the International American Health Association are supporting implementation of the PMTCT programme in Uzbekistan. According to national protocols, 100% of HIV positive pregnant women and children are being provided with the necessary ARV drugs.

Uzbekistan received a US\$ 24.5 million grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in 2004. This grant is aimed at providing prevention programs focused on the needs of vulnerable populations, and improving access to care, support and treatment for HIV/AIDS patients.

A number of multilateral and bilateral organizations currently assist HIV/AIDS prevention in Uzbekistan. Several UN organizations provide assistance with specific interventions through both Government and NGOs and under the overall coordination of the UN Expanded Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. The World Bank, DFID, USAID and JICA are implementing a number of HIV prevention projects.

3. Resource trends for children

According to accepted procedures, each year when the national and local budgets are drafted and approved, priority should be given to the allocation of funds for ensuring the interests and development of children, the social protection of women and the young generation within the framework of the approved programs.

The size of the budget expenditure on education and the new generation is constantly increasing. From 2002-06 expenditure on the social sector increased 2.5 times, on education 2.6 times and on payment of allowances to families 2.5 times. In 2007 more than 54% of country budget will be allocated for the development of social sector.

Trends of increase of budget expenditures for some elements of the wellbeing of families, mothers and children

	2003	2004	2005
Total expenditure			
1. Public education			
Total expenditure	100	122,3	158,6
Including expenditure on maintenance of the following:			

Pre-school facilities	100	116,0	138,4
General education schools and boarding schools	100	124,1	159,5
“Mehribonlik” children’s homes	100	148,3	151,4
Specialized boarding schools for children with mental and physical disabilities	100	122,2	147,5
For maintenance of the out-of- school establishments (school-children centers, sports centers and schools, clubs for young tourists, nature loving children, technical clubs, etc.)	100	123,5	166,1
Children’s music and art schools (7 years of training)	100	109,2	147,2
Other expenditure	100	120,5	300,5
From the total expenditure on:			
Nutrition	100	110,0	118,6
Purchase of school supplies for 1 st grade students and winter cloths for children from low-income families	100	111,1	120,6
2. Training of personnel , including expenditure on	100	129,7	177,5
Academic lyceums	100	128,9	226,8
Vocational colleges	100	136,9	184,5
3. Health			
Total expenditure	100	92,8	101,2
Including services for children with congenital hypothyroids, phenilketonuria, mucoviscidosis and galactesimia. Free of charge nutrition and medication provided by the ‘Healthy Generation’ Foundation.	100	117,7	287,5
“Strengthening health of women and children” project implementation	-	-	100
Vaccination of children	100	116,7	169,2
4. Social protection			
Total expenditure on payment of allowances	100	118,1	153,4
Including monthly allowances to mothers with children under 2.	100	119,1	156,5
Allowances to low income families with children under 16 (18).	100	117,7	151,5
Financial help to low income families	100	114,7	148,6

4. Development and use of monitoring instruments to track WFFC/MDG targets

No special body or system exists to collect data that pertains to children’s well being. Different legislative and normative acts envisage monitoring and collecting data on social well being among all groups of the population.

It should be acknowledged that the routine statistics are unreliable and of poor quality. The majority of statistics are collected, analyzed and reported to the Government by the State Statistical Committee. But line ministries also collect, analyze and report on data that relates to their sectoral work. Therefore, data received from those sources is often not matching, thus the quality is not reliable. The reason for this is the use of a different data collection methodology and different sources. Also, not all internationally accepted indicators have been incorporated into the state reporting system, especially those related to the situation of women and children.

However, several initiatives have been taken in the country to improve statistical data by improving the methodology and bringing it closer to international standards. For example, two years ago, with support from UNDP other UN agencies, the State Statistical Committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy started implementation of the so called 'statistical project initiative' which aims to significantly improve the quality of statistics in order to ' monitor progress towards the MDGs. This project is in three phases: the initial survey to assess consumers' needs; the second phase to assess the current capacity of the systems to meet demand; and the third phase which will identify the existing gaps and build national capacity in data collection, analysis and reporting.

As was mentioned above, the work on the Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper is on going and the initiative on improvement of state statistics will contribute to this.

In order to fill in the existing gaps in national statistics, the Government of Uzbekistan, with the support of international agencies, has held two rounds of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (UNICEF/UNFPA) and two rounds of Demographic Health Surveys in 2000/2006 and 1996/2002 respectively. The results of these surveys have enabled the Government to have more realistic data on the current situation of health, education and other important issues reflecting the well being of women and children and also, to be able to develop an end-of-decade report for the World Summit for Children in 2000 and contribute to the Secretary General's report on the progress towards the WFFC goals.

The last MICS, as was mentioned above, was carried out in 2006. The survey covered 10,500 households and was representative at sub-national level. For some indicators it was possible to get data at regional level (14 regions in the country) but for some at the aggregated regional level - clustering different regions by similar social-economic characteristics (6 aggregated regions). The figures obtained from this survey have been used in this report to track the progress towards WFFC goals and they will also be used in the Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper development process.

Important work has been done to improve the quality of statistics in different sectors. Significant improvements have been made in health statistics such as the gradual introduction of the International Live Birth Definition. Until 2003, the MoH officially used the Soviet definition but since then, with support from UNICEF/WHO and other donors, it has begun to introduce the international WHO definition. In 2005, the MoH issued an order instructing all health facilities within the system to move gradually to the new live birth definition by 2009. This will significantly improve not only the vital statistics but will also contribute to better planning for quality improvement in health care.

For the last five years, the Ministry of Education with support of international organizations such as UNICEF, ADB, USAID, has been working on improving education information management systems. Specifically, the Ministry has developed and started implementation of new computer software that helps to track and assess the management of school attendance, learning achievements, etc. This work has prepared the ground for the further expansion, strengthening and replication of education information systems with ADB support.

Starting in 2006, the Ministry of Education is undertaking the assessment of learning achievements among primary school students. Two phases of assessment have been completed and results are being analyzed.

In the area of child protection, as part of the Government's work on de-institutionalization, with support from UNICEF, the national NGO "You are not alone" has developed and is now implementing a monitoring system for children in institutional care. This system/database is designed to monitor not only the current status of children in institutional care but will follow them after graduation or if they are returned to their biological families, or given for foster care or adoption. This system is being implemented initially in Tashkent city but once it has been fully piloted it will be replicated countrywide.

As was described above, the Cabinet of Ministers has endorsed the National Plan of Action for Children. The directive issued by the Deputy Prime Ministers entails the development of sub-national plans of action, The directive also calls for the establishment of an inter-sectoral national and sub-national level coordination group responsible for monitoring the progress made towards meeting the goals set by NPA which are based on WFFC goals.

A similar process has been used to monitor the implementation of the State Program of the "Year of Social Protection". Many objectives set by the state program will contribute to the achievement of WFFC goals, thus assessment of progress towards these objectives will help to track the progress towards WFFC goals.

5. Enhancing partnerships, alliances for children and participation

From 2002 the "Children's Parliament" project has been operating in Uzbekistan. Its work aims to develop children's abilities and to increase participation of young people in the decision making process and their involvement in various activities. Almost 200 members of the Children's Parliament, elected from all the districts and cities of Uzbekistan take part in resolving local social problems via educational and communication programs, These include programs on HIV prevention, the rights of the child, increasing public awareness of the MDGs, Universal Salt Iodization communication programs, flour fortification, development of child-friendly schools, etc.

The sessions of the Children's Parliament, held 2 times per year, serve as a forum to increase their knowledge of the CRC principles and provisions, ideas of democracy, openness, and the election system operating in Uzbekistan and they also acquire life skills. During these sessions children jointly drafted the first option of the Law on Guarantees of Child Rights.

The information received by the young parliamentarians is further disseminated other children via training events in schools and communities using the peer to peer principle. The main achievements of the Children's Parliament are:

- It is a model of real practical work with young people, which can be used in any part of the country;
- It has become popular among adults and children;
- A partnership has been established with local authorities;
- With the help of adults the young parliamentarians carry out a lot of activities in different locations;
- Young parliamentarians take part in the development and implementation of the youth policy at city and district level via specific social projects;
- Large scale communication activities were carried out as part of the implementation of the National Flour Fortification and Salt Iodization Plans;

- More and more children are becoming involved in the communication campaigns carried out by the young parliamentarians. It is a good indicator of the project's success. More than 17,000 children participated in training on the child's rights, healthy life style, HIV/AIDS and drug addiction prevention.

More than 5,000 NGOs (by law - Public Associations) have been registered by the Ministry of Justice, its regional and city' departments. This number includes professional associations/unions with regional departments, public clubs, etc. There are about 200 organizations, which work in the sphere of child rights protection, addressing children's issues and monitoring of CRC implementation.

On April 26, 2002, a Coalition of NGOs working in the sphere of a child rights protection was established. It united 108 NGOs and covers almost all regions and rayons of Uzbekistan. One of the goals of the coalition was to establish a proper coordination mechanism for all NGO activity in the country. The coalition and its head organization the Uzbek Children's Fund has been an active implementing agency of the "Leave No Child Out" Phase 1 and Phase 2 campaigns within the framework of the RNC project funded by the EU. During the campaign, the NGOs Coalition conducted a series of training courses for local government officials, representatives of law enforcement bodies, self-governing citizens' bodies (mahalla committees), Ombudsman's office, and mass media representatives. The training aimed to discuss the issues of CRC implementation, and the establishment of a juvenile justice system at the regional level. Also the campaign aimed to build the capacity of the coalition's members and strengthen relations with the regional authorities, ombudsmen and mass media. The project served to strengthen the ability of civil society and governmental decision-makers to advocate for children's rights and increase the role of civil society in protecting the rights and interests of children.

In 2006, the Coordination Council on the Wellbeing of the Children of Uzbekistan was set up under the Social Complex of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Council is a permanently operating deliberative body, which will coordinate the activities of government and public organizations working on the implementation of the rights and interests of children.

Starting from 2003, the non-government children's foundation "You are not alone" has been operating efficiently in the country. The Foundation conducted a number of international forums on the issues of protection of children, in collaboration with the Cabinet of Ministers, the Social Adaptation Centre, UNICEF and others, where specific recommendations regarding children without parental care, juvenile justice and children with disabilities were adopted. These recommendations have been addressed through the government structures as well as through the work of the NGOs and the Social Adaptation Centre. They have also been included in the NPA for children that was adopted at the beginning of 2007 by the Cabinet of Ministers.

Social partnership with public organizations and welfare foundations has been strengthened. For more than 10 years an international arts contest "The world of wonderful colors" has been organized among children with disabilities. This is a joint project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Adaptation with the International Welfare Foundation "Engrang", and more than 100 children from Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan take part each year.

In the framework of the contest an international seminar on the issues of disability are also organized.

6. Achievement of WFFC Plan of Action and related MDG targets

The Government of Uzbekistan has significantly expanded its capacity in the sphere of implementation of social reforms in order to achieve the objectives of the Action Plan in the framework of the “World fit for children”, MDG and the rights of women and children.

In cooperation with the donor community and civil society, it has successfully implemented the MDG adaptation and integration into the interim document on the Strategy of Increasing the Wellbeing of the Population (SIWP). Since the national MDGs and the goals of the country’s interim SIWP are directed at increasing living standards, the two are mutually complementary processes. The MDGs set a specific framework for the implementation of the interim SIWP.

The table below shows the achievements of recent years in implementing measures to fulfill the aims of the documents mentioned above. In line with this the national goals, the MDG objectives and the achievement have been grouped according to 4 topics: promotion of a healthy lifestyle, increase in the quality of education, mobilization of resources and protecting children from abuse and neglect.

National objectives	Progress achieved
I. Promotion of a healthy lifestyle	
Goal 1: Poverty and malnutrition reduction	
Objective #1: 50% reduction in poverty by 2015.	<p>The initial poverty level of 27.5% (WB data for 2001) is to be reduced to 14% by 2015. In 2003 the figure was 26.2%, in 2004 it stood at 24.9%,and in 2005.it again reached 26.2%;</p> <p>The malnutrition trend is a clearly positive one. In accordance with the surveys (UzMDS, 2002 and MICS, 2006) – for the period from 2002 until now the number of children under 5 with low weight has reduced by almost 1.6 times (from 7.9% in 2002 to 5.1% in 2006);</p>
Goal 4: Reduction of children’s mortality rate	
Objective # 5: Reduction of mortality rate in children under 5 by 2/3 by 2015.	<p>Infant mortality reduced from 2002 to 2005 by 12% (up to 14,9 pro mille). The mortality rate in children under 5 was 20,6 pro mille in 2005, which is 18% lower than in 2002.</p> <p>At the same time, according to the data of MICS 2006 and Medico-Demographical Survey: the rate of infant mortality (based on the definition life birth and child mortality, adopted by WHO) decreased from 61,7 pro mille to 48,5 i.e. by 28,5%. The under 5 mortality rate decreased by 28,6% (from 73,3 pro mille in</p>

	2002 to 57 pro mille in 2005)
Goal 5: Improvement of mothers' health	
Objective #6: Reduction of maternal mortality rate by 1/3 by 2015.	The indicator for the maternal mortality rate decreased by 8% and stood at 29,7 pro mille
Goal 6: Combating HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria	
Objective #7: Stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and initiate a trend for a reduction in the disease by 2015.	The prevalence of the HIV/AIDS has increased from 5.5% to 7% through improved diagnosis of the disease; targeted prevention measures were strengthened. A Strategic Program on preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS was implemented nationally in 2003-2006. A State Program has been developed for the period 2007-2011.
Objective #8: Stop the spread of TB and malaria and initiate a trend for a reduction in the disease by 2015	According to the WHO Global Report TB incidence per 100,000 (after 7 years of growth) has started to decrease. By 2005 this indicator stood at 76, 0 compared to 80 cases in 2002. DOTS is now accessible for 80% of the population in Uzbekistan. There are few cases of malaria in the country.
Goal 7: Environmental sustainability	
Objective #9: Integration of the principles of sustainable development into government policy and programs and reversing the process of the loss of natural resources by 2015.	In addition to the package of strategic documents on environmental issues which are being implemented, a system of ecological information, containing 91 environmental indicators for monitoring of the MDG achievement has been developed.
Objective # 10: Increase the proportion of the urban and rural population with access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015	The share of urban population with access to safe drinking water has increased by 3.4 % and now stands at 83.8%. The figure for the rural population increased from 71% to 78.5%. Around 40% of urban and 5% of the rural population now has access to sanitation. According to the MICS 2006 data 89.6% of the population now uses improved sources of drinking water and 99.4% has access to improved sanitation-hygienic facilities.
II. Increase of the quality of education	
Goal 2: Increase of the quality of education in primary and secondary schools	
Objective #2: Increase of the quality of education in primary and secondary general schools by 2015 and the maintenance of universal access to education.	In the framework of the Government Program on development of school education for 2004-2009 the school infrastructure will be further developed, they will be supplied with modern teaching and lab equipment, furniture, and computers and equal access and conditions will be provided for urban and rural children. The schools are equipped with the appropriately qualified teachers, modern books and manuals

	conforming to state educational standards.
Goal 3: Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women	
Objective # 3: Achieve gender equity in the system of primary, secondary and vocational education by 2015.	<p>Equal access for girls and boys to primary, secondary and vocational education is guaranteed by the state.</p> <p>Gender equity in the system of primary education is calculated on the basis of the number of girls and boys born.</p> <p>2.9 million girls and 3 million boys study in general education schools, including 1.1 million boys and 1.2 million girls in primary schools and 1.5 boys and 1.6 million girls in grades 5-9.</p> <p>According to MICS the ratio of gender equality is 1.0, in primary schools and 0.98. in secondary schools.</p>
Objective # 4: Achieve gender equity in the system of higher education by 2015.	<p>In 2005, 59,600 students entered universities (54,200 for bachelors courses and 5,400 for masters), which is 1.33 times higher than in 2000 (the enrolment for bachelor degree courses is 1.3 times higher and for masters courses 2 times higher than in 2000).</p> <p>The number of females, who entered universities increased by 44.3%, males only by 26.8%.</p> <p>But gender equity has yet to be achieved in the system of higher education. The proportion of females among students on bachelors' degree courses was 41%, and on masters' degree courses only 37.2%.</p>
III. Mobilization of resources	
	<p>In order to address the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child a National Action Plan was developed under the supervision of the Cabinet of Ministers which is responsible for inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation at national and local levels in the sphere of CRC implementation.</p> <p>Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) monitor respect for the rights of children.</p>
IV. Protecting children from abuse and neglect	
	<p>In the framework of a comprehensive approach to the issue of protection of the rights of the child, more than 50 legislative acts have been monitored to ensure conformity with the CRC principles and provisions.</p> <p>A group of national experts working jointly with representatives of the NGOs developed a draft law "On the guarantees of the rights of children" and the "Law on juvenile justice".</p>

Every year government programs are adopted and implemented which envisage interventions on protecting mothers and children, improving the health of mothers and children, improving reproductive health, promoting awareness of medical and health issues in families and ensuring the birth and upbringing of physically fit and harmoniously developed children.

According to government data:

- 706 children (0-3 years old) live in 13 infant homes;
- 3,037 (3-16 years old) children live in 28 “Mehribonlik” (children’s) homes; 13% of these children are orphans, while 54% have only one parent; 23% of them come from disadvantaged families and 10% have parents who have been convicted of crimes;
- 100 children live in 2 SOS Kinderdorf children villages (in Tashkent and Samarkand)
- 21,185 children live under the care of guardians;
- 269 children lived in patronage families in 2004 and 2005, and 31 children lived in 4 family-type houses;
- 7,680 children without parents are raised in Mahallas across the country;
- During 2005, 292 babies and 140 children between 3-16 years of age were returned to their biological families.

Uzbekistan has recently reviewed the child protection system, and is working on strengthening the capacity of families to care for their children themselves and promoting alternative forms of care for children without parental care.

There are 121,456 registered children with special needs (1.1% of the child population). There are 16,875 children with various disabilities who are either in residential care or special boarding schools. Currently, there are about 40,000 children with special needs who receive state-supported education. Many of them receive schooling at home.

In 2001-2005, according to the Commission on Minors’ Affairs, 15,000 homeless and neglected children were registered. Centers of Social and Legal Support for minors, subdivisions of the

	<p>Ministry of Internal Affairs, are aimed at preventing neglect of children and juvenile delinquency. During 2005, 6,951 children were placed in 12 Centers of Social and Legal Support for minors. A total of 2,727 crimes were committed by children in 2005.</p> <p>The officially registered number of homeless and neglected children going through the Centers for Social and Legal Support in the first 9 months of 2006 was 6,186.</p>
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7. Summary of lessons learned and initiatives undertaken since 2002 for accelerating the progress towards achievement of WFFC and relevant MDGs and outline of future initiatives planned at national, sub-national or regional levels

The Government of Uzbekistan attaches a great deal of importance to the development of the social sector and protection of the most vulnerable groups in the population with a special focus on mother and child wellbeing. The strategic decision to have a gradual transition to a market oriented economy with steady economic growth has enabled the Government of Uzbekistan to significantly increase its budget expenditure in the social sector.

As has been illustrated above, since the late 1990s, the Government of Uzbekistan has implemented many state programs to improve the social wellbeing of the population but the main focus has been on women and children. Also, through fruitful cooperation with many international donors, including UNICEF, the country has been able to achieve concrete results in this area. Specifically:

- The Government has come to realize the many initiatives implemented in the country (state programs and donor driven interventions) to improve the well-being of women and children need to be consolidated to achieve a comprehensive approach which will enable the Government to prioritize, use its resources more strategically, and monitor and report on achievements. In January 2007, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the National Plan of Action for Children. Although, the NPA requires further work on defining optimal modes for implementation and monitoring, this is the first serious step to put children's issues high on the social policy agenda.
- Official establishment of an inter-sectoral committee combining major line ministries, civil society, youth and community representatives to monitor the implementation of an NPA for children is also a step forward towards a holistic and participatory approach to the decision-making process.
- Another effective way to ensure the sustainability of interventions highlighted in the NPA is to reflect all of these in the Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper. The Government fully intends to do this.
- There are positive trends in health outcomes for mothers and children. This is the result of health care reforms started by the Government of Uzbekistan in 1997. The major focus of these reforms was a primary stress on preventive health care which has resulted in the optimization of health care and making primary health care more accessible and of better quality.

- Changes in health care have been introduced at pilot levels. The challenge ahead is to ensure a scale up by development of appropriate policies and resource allocation leading towards systemic changes in infrastructure, professional capacity especially in the areas of vital statistics, monitoring and reporting.
- Uzbekistan enjoys high levels of enrolment and attendance in basic education. The state is investing heavily in schooling and there have been noticeable improvements in infrastructure but improvement in the quality of education requires further work. The Government is closely collaborating with donor agencies including UNICEF to improve the quality of education by improving the teaching/learning environment in schools through curriculum development, strengthening teachers' professional capacities and most importantly through better de-centralized management involving parents and communities in the decision-making process.
- Many child protection issues that have not even been openly discussed before have become subjects of state concern and are now part of the social policy agenda. Roughly 400 million US dollars has been allocated for this program the majority of which will go to addressing the issues above.
- Based on the CRC committee recommendations, the Government has also promoted the development of the law on Juvenile Justice and supports piloting of a child court in 2007.
- The care of children and protection of their wellbeing are deeply rooted in Uzbek culture but the concept of child protection articulated by the Convention of the Rights of the Child requires a careful approach to ensure it is applied and implemented appropriately according to international standards but also adapted and integrated into the local context.
- In order to build a democratic society the Government delegates more responsibility to local government and mahallas. The social protection safety net begins at mahalla level since the mahalla is responsible for receiving and distributing social benefits (cash transfers) to the most vulnerable groups in the community. Therefore, the Government will maintain and further strengthen its focus on enhancing the professional and institutional capacity of local government.
- One important requirement for improved local governance is the further strengthening of statistics collection and analysis at national and sub-national levels, and application of appropriate monitoring and evaluation practices. More than 80% of resources for the social sector are allocated from local budgets, so better understanding of prioritization planning to ensure adequate investment in children will be a key objective of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the future.