CONCEPT NOTE

4th Child Protection Forum for Central Asia
Dushanbe, Tajikistan
1-3 August 2013

Creating inclusive policies, systems and services for children with disabilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Background:

The Child Protection Forum for Central Asia was instituted in 2006 with a view to facilitate dialogue and advance the rights-based reform of child protection systems in the region. The Forum is led by Central Asian governments with the participation of relevant international organizations and representatives of governments and civil society in these five countries. It also invited experts and experiences from other likeminded countries with interesting experiences to share. The Forum takes place ones every two years¹ and addresses each time a specific topic, on which the participating countries feel that cross country learning and exchange of good practices and experiences would be useful strategy to push for reforms at country level.

The theme for the 4th Child Protection Forum has been selected by the participating governments in light of the fact that children with disabilities is an important priority group in the child protection system, but also because it is felt that their rights to education, health and social protection may not be optimally achieved today. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which all countries in Central Asia are working towards its signature, ratification or implementation, provides a very important framework for reform and to address the rights of children with disabilities. In fact, in the absence of strong social protection policies, inclusive education and access to services, families to children with disabilities, feel obliged to resort to residential care services, or to keep their children with disabilities at home without getting access to key services.

¹ The first CP Forum took place in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2006 and had the theme “Social and Legal Support to Families and Children in Central Asia; the second Form took place in 2009 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and had the theme “Building and Reforming Child Care Systems”, the Third Forum took place in 2011 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan and had the theme “Opportunities in juvenile justice reform”.

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
**Purpose of the 4th Child Protection Forum:**

As Central Asian countries are in their process of signing, ratifying or implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) the 4th Child Protection Forum will aim at highlighting related obligations of countries for ensuring the realization of the rights of children with disabilities and in that context define road maps for further implementing new policies and legislation in child protection, education, health and social protection that would ensure such rights.

To achieve this, the Forum will:

1) Provide a platform for a high level discussion on the need to step-up efforts to promote the equalization of opportunities for children with disabilities in order to allow each child with disabilities to exercise his or her civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights as well as having specific rights to having his or her educational, medical and social needs met. That discussion will be based on key concepts related to the CRPD and examples from the countries which advanced with implementation of articles related to children with disabilities. Such promising practices will allow sharing lessons learned in service provision and transformation, professional attitudes and systems to ensure the rights of children with disabilities are met according to the standards set-up by the CRPD and the CRC.

2) The Forum will also allow countries to present their own action steps towards further ratification and effective implementation of the CRPD in each country.

**Outcome of the Forum**

The outcomes of the Forum are expected to be threefold:

1. That the Forum results in stronger political commitment towards realizing the rights of children with disabilities
2. In that context, it is expected that each participating country will outline the steps it is planning to take towards signing, ratifying, implementing and monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.
3. That the Forum provides an opportunity for stronger networking and exchanges amongst the participating countries in this regard.
Spirit of the Forum:

The Forum will be organized in the spirit of the CRPD\(^2\). As such, the themes, agenda and participation will be guided by the principles and articles of this convention in relation to children with disabilities, in particular addressing the fact that:

1. UNICEF uses the term "children with disabilities" in line with the social model of Article 1 of the CRPD. This definition focuses on the child first and indicates the disability as a secondary and evolving concept resulting from the attitudinal and environmental barriers in society, which hinders the equalization of their opportunities and effective participation. It is the expectation that these barriers will be identified and that States have the accountability to have them removed from services and systems and shape societal attitudes and behaviors in such a way that children with disabilities are allowed to develop to their full potential and as full participants of any given society.

2. Discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person. It is the States' accountability to ensure that within its own practices no discrimination is perpetuated, as well as that behaviors of professionals and service providers are regulated in such way that they are empowering and enabling towards children with disabilities and their families. It is also necessary to address any stigma and discrimination that prevail and have become social norms of any society.

3. Families are the cornerstone of societies. They are entitled to protection by society and the State, and persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities. States need to shape ongoing reforms of social protection and child protection systems and services, health and education to ensure that children with disabilities are not left behind in those processes.

4. Mainstreaming for children with disabilities requires that protection programmes, shelters, main public services, and relevant buildings are accessible and are in line with the universal design standards. Health, education and social welfare services should be affordable and reflective of their disability and age-appropriate needs.

5. Targeted efforts ensuring dissemination of all information in accessible formats, such as Braille, sign language and easy-to-read texts, and equal access to new communications

\(^2\)For the full text of the CRPD go to: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)
technologies and systems, as well as facilities, further improve the social inclusion of children with disabilities and their family.

1. In line with article 28 of the CRPD, the right to equal access to social protection programmes extends to the family members of persons with disabilities, who are often the primary caretakers, including assistance from the State for disability-related expenses, adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care.

2. Governments should ensure that data on children with disabilities are systematically collected, centrally reported and published. At a minimum, such data should be disaggregated by sex, age, disability and if in residential care, the reasons for and the duration of placement, and movements between placements, including detention should be mentioned.

The Forum will build upon the good work that is already going on in the Central Asian republics and will invite all countries to share their best experiences and practices. Selected experiences from other countries will also be shared. The Forum will also take inspiration and build upon experiences of children with disabilities, parents and professionals who have direct experiences from working with children with disabilities.

**Timing and venue:**

The 4th Child Protection Forum will be held 1-3 August 2013 in Tajikistan.

**Participation and partners to the Forum:**

The main partners of the Child Protection Forum are the five participating Governments of the Central Asian republics. They are expected to take part in the Forum’s preparatory work and in the Forum itself with a high level inter-ministerial delegation. Disabled people’s organizations will be invited to partner into the preparation of the Forum. In addition, it is suggested to include a core minimum of other partners who have significant expertise and represent important stakeholders in the region or on the specific topic.