



Second Child Protection Forum

"Building and Reforming Child Care Systems
in Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Turkey"

Второй Форум по защите Детей

"Создание и реформирование системы ухода за детьми
в Центральной Азии, Азербайджане и Турции"

12-14 May, 2009, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

UZBEKISTAN

Fact sheet

Total population (2007)	27 372 000¹
Child population, 0-17 (2007)	10 593 000
Children as proportion of total population	39%
Children in residential care, absolute number (2007)	33077
Children in residential care, rates per 100,000 children (2007)	312
Children in residential care, percentage of total child population	0.3%
Proportion of infants below 3 in residential care (2007)	2%
Children in guardianship families, absolute number (2007)	3642
Children in foster families, absolute number (2008)	78
Adoption, absolute number (2007)	3059

Trends in residential care²

The proportion of children in residential care is not reported to be high for the region, although the absolute figure is quite substantial. As in other countries of the region, state responsibility for residential institutions is divided mainly among three ministries. By far the largest share of responsibility falls to the Ministry of Public Education, which supervises some 86% of institutions and 91% of children in the state's residential child care system. It oversees the 28 'Mehribonlik' orphanages, serving over 2,686 children, and 82 residential schools that cater for approximately 19,000 children classified as having limited abilities. Since 2004, six orphanages have been closed, and the number of children in orphanages aged 0-16 decreased by 25%. The Ministry of Health supervises 13 infant homes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection supervises children with severe mental disabilities in five 'Muruvvat' children's homes, accommodating nearly 1,400 children. The practice of keeping a disabled child at home without socialisation, and in other cases of consigning him/her to residential care is still prevalent, and there is a strong stigma attached to disability. Children with motor disabilities after 7 years of age are usually

¹ All data are from the State Statistical Department and the Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan.

² *Residential care* refers to children residing in institutions (e.g. orphanages, children's homes, boarding schools, etc). *Children in formal care* are those living outside their biological families or adoptive families (including institutions, guardianship and foster families).

transferred to Muruvvats where children with mental disabilities are placed. Other types of residential institution include special schools for children from low-income families and sanatoria. There remains a strong belief in the benefits of residential care for children and a strong emphasis on improvement of the conditions in state institutions. There is strong support of institutions from the private sector.

Family based care

The proportion of children placed in family based care amounts to 17% and remains stable. Cultural traditions in Uzbekistan encourage the upbringing of children in a family environment: relatives generally take care for orphans, while a high number of children entering the formal care are either placed with guardians or adopted. The Ministry of Public Education has promoted alternative forms of child care, including family type homes and foster care. This assumes that the successful introduction of the newer form of family substitute service, foster care, may be feasible from the point of view of public acceptability. Foster care was introduced through pilot activity and is now recognised by law and provided with funding. Foster parents have the right to receive benefits in cash and in kind.

Family support services

Mahallas have considerable potential for advocating family and community support for children in difficulty. They are able to supplement family finances where they consider there is need. The decentralisation of some social care responsibilities to mahallas and the khokim is a good example of utilisation of a traditional mechanism for a reform process which is in keeping with the values of family life within a neighbourhood.

The introduction of social work as a discipline in academic (3 universities) and operational forms (4 months re-training programme for childcare professionals, after completion of which practitioners become certified social workers) in the last 3-4 years has been a vital catalyst to reform and practical support to child rights; and it has been officially recognised as a profession in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection norms.

Family support services are being developed, both through externally funded pilots and through the government budget. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection runs 12 centres that provide rehabilitation and professional orientation for disabled people, although there is a need to address the shortage of social and other specialist services for their beneficiaries. There is a successful experience and example of the Angren Sunday School for disabled children, now run by local authorities. Some families do not receive appropriate services because they are afraid to reveal they have a child with a disability.

Family Resource Centres set up by the Children's Fund of Uzbekistan in 12 localities aim to help enhance community-based facilities and help for children and families in difficulties as well as street children. These can serve as a measure to reduce the institutionalisation of children in economic hardship.

The Information and Counselling Service has been opened under the auspice of the Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children. It provides psychological, social, pedagogic, educational and legal assistance, along with speech therapy for vulnerable children and families, as well as practitioners.

There has been a significant shift in attitudes of government officials to child care reform so that they see the benefit of greater attention and investment being put into family support and into maximizing children's rights.

Main reform news

The Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children under the Cabinet of Ministers has published a widely referred-to 'Analysis of the System of Social Protection and of the Situation of Children with Disability'.

6 Family and Child Support Services with multi-disciplinary teams trained in professional social work have been established in 5 regions of the country.