

UNICEF TURKMENISTAN IN ACTION



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Issue 4

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Interesting Facts

- UNICEF was established in 1946 after the Second World War as an emergency relief organization helping refugee children.
- In 1950 UNICEF expanded its focus from post-war aid to assisting children and mothers in developing countries.
- In 1989 the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child and it became the most widely and rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history.
- UNICEF advocates for the protection of children's rights, helps meet their basic needs and expands their opportunities to reach their full potential.
- UNICEF is the world leader in supply procurement for the well being of children.
- From 1946 till today UNICEF continues to be the only UN agency operating with 100 percent voluntary contributions.

UNICEF Representative's Message

Dear readers! This year is marked with a great event for UNICEF – its 60th anniversary. Over 60 years, UNICEF contributed to real results for children, and has been continuing working for sustainable development on behalf of children's rights.

In this special jubilee issue of our newsletter you will see how UNICEF continues to contribute to the well being of children in partnership with the Government of Turkmenistan.

In order to get results, it is important to have credible data so that we could measure our progress. We are pleased to announce that this year UNICEF and the National Institute of State Statistics and Information is conducting the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) among 5200 households across the country. MICS will serve as a monitoring tool for the World Fit for Children, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as overall progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This year in May Turkmenistan received the concluding observations of the Government's first periodic report on implementation of the CRC and the report on implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As we en-

ter the third year of the Country Programme for 2005-2009, UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan will tailor the work plans to meet the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Particularly, we would be delighted to assist in establishing an interministerial committee on children affairs and development of a comprehensive National Plan of Actions for Children in Turkmenistan.

In this issue you will learn about how the United Nations system, including UNICEF, plans to assist the Turkmenistan Government in strengthening the national capacity in emergency preparedness. The training conducted recently helped the respective ministries and agencies understand how the UN system could assist the country in emergency response. UNICEF is a leader in behaviour change communication among population and has already assisted the National Commission on Prevention of the Avian Influenza in creating and distributing more than 30,000 information materials on how to prevent the avian flue.

You will also read about the Second National Children's Forum and how children boosted their participation by preparing a

set of recommendations for members of Mejlis, Ministry of Adalat, and other agencies on how to better promote the access to information about their rights. Mejlis members' study visit to Sweden and the Swedish Parliament to learn the practice of law making would be a great interest to you as well.

In mid June the Government of Turkmenistan hosted delegates from the Ministries of Education of Central Asian countries at the fifth CARK (Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan) Education Forum. The CARK Education Forum is organized annually and this year it focused on achieving the goals of the Declaration "Education for All".

Using the opportunity, we would like to congratulate the people of Turkmenistan on the 15th anniversary of Independence and wish the country peace and prosperity. As UNICEF's 60th year advances we would like to emphasize once more that children are at the heart of the international development agenda and achieving results for children would be achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is our hope that you will enjoy reading this issue.

Mahboob Shareef,
UNICEF Representative

CHILD PARTICIPATION: The Second National Children's Forum



For participant Alexander Zazorin, 14, the Forum was an opportunity to present his views and those of other young people from his province, Mary, and to make sure that their views are heard by the Parliament that sits in Ashgabat.

Consultation meetings with young people from each of the five provinces of Akhal,

Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary were held prior to the National Forum in Ashgabat. This was done in order to ensure that the views of young people from other parts of the country are well represented. The consultation meetings were also an opportunity for the young people to select their representatives to the National Forum in Ashgabat.

Participation of young people is one of the key initiatives that UNICEF supports in partnership with the Youth Union and National Children's Fund of Turkmenistan.

"Young people make up almost half our country's population," said UNICEF Social Policy Officer Shohrat Orazov. "UNICEF and the Government recognise the role that children and young people can play in promoting and protecting child rights in this country. By engaging young people in policy dialogue and advocacy, we are in a way contributing to civil society development," Mr. Orazov added.

Further equipping of children with knowledge on national and international legislation on child rights, engaging them into the policy making dialogue were among the key recommendations suggested by young participants.



Seventy young people aged 14 -16 recently gathered in the capital city Ashgabat to participate in the 2nd National Children's Forum. For two days, the young people discussed and recommended actions by which issues that affect their health, education and protection could be addressed by all concerned including the policymakers, programme planners and local-level authorities.

"This two-day Forum is a key step in the process of engaging children and young people in advocating for policies that will ensure the realisation of child rights in Turkmenistan," said UNICEF Programme Coordinator Regina Molera at the opening ceremony.

SOCIAL POLICY: Mejlis Members visit the Swedish Parliament



The Turkmenistan delegation comprising of four parliamentarians, including the Deputy Speaker, visited Stockholm in June to study the practices of planning for children and women at the

Swedish Parliament and some other governmental and non-governmental institutions that work in the area of children's development policy. The study tour was organized by UNICEF in collaboration with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and hosted by the Swedish Institute. Mejlis members had an extensive programme visiting the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament), Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, Women's Shelter at Solna Municipality, Children's Rights in Society, non-governmental organization "BRIS", Office of the Children's Om-

budsman, and schools, preschools, and Botkyrka Municipality Family Health Centre. It is expected that four participants will conduct a round table discussion with other Mejlis members and media on the outcomes of the visit to Sweden as well as will explore the opportunities to establish the parliamentary child's rights monitoring system in Turkmenistan. Globally, UNICEF works with the International Union of Parliamentarians (IPU) to help to introduce better development policies and laws geared toward children's and women's well being. UNICEF advocates for protection of children's rights and strives for those rights as international standards towards children.

HEALTH: Emergency Preparedness workshop

May has been full of events including the joint UN-Government of Turkmenistan the Consultative Meeting on Emergency Preparedness. Opening the one-day meeting, UN Resident Coordinator Richard Young underscored the importance of the Meeting in preparing the Government of Turkmenistan to respond to any situation of emergency and thanked UNICEF for organising the Meeting.

Angela Raven-Roberts, UNICEF Regional Advisor for Emergency for CEE/CIS countries and the main resource speaker for the Meeting told the participants that "saving lives requires efficient, timely and coordinated action and appropriate responses. Coordinated responses requires knowing what each agency's role and function is and above having an advanced preparedness plan

to respond to specific hazards."

In the wake of a threat of an avian flu outbreaks, the President of Turkmenistan issued a decree mandating the establishment of the National Commission on Prevention of Avian Flu headed by the Minister of Health and Medical Industry. The Commission



has already developed and adopted a workplan. In addition, the Government has also requested the UN to support the implementation of the workplan, which the Commission has prepared and adopted. Responding to this request, the UN has committed to support the health delivery system and the development of a strategic communication plan for integration in the existing workplan of the National Commission.

Turkmenistan was the first country in Central Asia to open its border for humanitarian convoys in to Afghanistan during the Afghan humanitarian crisis in 2001. Huge quantities of supplies sourced from nine countries in Europe and Asia were delivered into the country by air, rail and road transport. The whole experience proved Turkmenistan's capacity to handle huge logistics requirements of emergency operations.

NUTRITION: UNICEF welcomes the Decree on Flour Fortification

UNICEF welcomed the Presidential Decree on Flour Fortification with iron and folic acid passed on 24 of April and expressed gratitude to the Government for the crucial step towards reducing the level of iron deficiency anemia and contributing to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

"The fact that the Government is willing to share the financial cost of this initiative is a strong testimony to its commitment to promote healthy lives among children and women in the country," said UNICEF Representative Mahboob Shareef.

Iron deficiency and iron-deficiency anemia remain a problem, affecting the health of a significant number of women of childbearing age and young children in Turkmenistan. The 2000 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) conducted in Turkmenistan showed that 47 per cent of women suffered from anemia. In 2004, the

Ministry of Health reported a steady reduction of anaemia prevalence in Balkan and Dashoguz Velayats where a multi-component UNICEF-supported Anemia Prevention and Control (APC) Programme has been implemented since 1998. A recent survey conducted in 2005 by the Maternal and Child Health Centre shows decrease in anemia prevalence rates by 20 per cent in Dashoguz velayat where flour fortification has been piloted since 2000.

Flour fortification is one of the components of the Anemia Prevention and Control Programme in Turkmenistan that UNICEF has been supporting through the Country Programme of Cooperation with the Government since 1997. For 2006, UNICEF allocated \$100,000 to support efforts for the prevention

and control of anemia. Currently, 17 out of 21 large mills produce about 600,000 tonnes of wheat flour fortified with iron per year. This covers 82 per cent of all first-grade wheat flour and almost 50 per cent of all wheat flour available in the market. Given the amount of wheat consumption in Turkmenistan, the decree on fortification will certainly prevent spread of anemia among children and women and improve the overall nutrition situation in the country.



EDUCATION: Turkmenistan hosted the 5th CARK Education Forum



In her opening speech, Turkmen Minister of Education Shemshat Annagylydjova mentioned the importance of CARK Education Forum in advancing the goals of Education for All for Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

rum. She also challenged Forum delegations to look at four critical issues concerning basic education in the region. These include provision of pre-school education, promotion of inclusive education and child-friendly learning environment, provision of quality education including enhancement of teachers' capacity, development of relevant curricula and textbooks and other learning materials and involvement of parents and communities in children's education.

Education deputy ministers of the five Central Asian republics and representatives of international organisations including UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank and USAID were among the one hundred participants who participated in the CARK Education Forum held in Ashgabat from June 13 to 15 2006.

UNICEF Deputy Regional Director Shanaz Kianian-Firouzgar underscored the valuable role that Annual CARK Education Forum has played with respect to the commitments made by Central Asian governments at the United Nations Millennium Summit and the Dakar World Education Fo-

The theme of this year's Forum is "Moving Forward to Achieve EFA Goals." At the end of the three-day Forum, the participants adopted a resolution calling for a mid-decade assessment of efforts targeted at achieving the six goals of Education for All.

EDUCATION FOR ALL GOALS

-Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

-Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

-Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

-Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

-Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

-Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Learn more about the 5th CARK Education Forum at <http://www.carkedforum2006.org>

For questions, suggestions and other issues, please contact the Communications Section of UNICEF in Turkmenistan at:

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