

UNICEF IN TURKMENISTAN NEWSLETTER



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INTRO



We are happy to present the first issue of the United Nations Children's Fund in Turkmenistan newsletter, just a few days after

signing the UNICEF 5-year country programme implementation plan with the Turkmen government.

As part of our comprehensive advocacy vision, we will be releasing the newsletter on a quarterly basis. This is just one of our efforts to provide regular information about UNICEF's work, and we will be happy to welcome any suggestions and comments, so that we can improve our communication services.

The purpose of this newsletter is to update you on the current work of UNICEF in Turkmenistan, present achievements and challenges for the future, and open a forum for exchanging views and feedback.

The newsletter is designed to promote children's issues both within and outside the country covering such pivotal areas as health, education, child protection and child rights.

We hope this bulletin will help in promoting interests and well-being of the children of Turkmenistan - the country's greatest asset.

Mahboob Shareef
UNICEF Representative

ABOUT UNICEF

After World War II, European children faced famine and disease. UNICEF was created in December 1946 by the United Nations to provide food, clothing and health care to them. In 1953, The UN General Assembly extended UNICEF's mandate indefinitely. UNICEF began its first successful global campaign against yaws, a disfiguring disease affecting millions of children, and one that can be cured with penicillin.

UNICEF is now the driving force toward a world where the rights of every child are realized. We have the global authority to influence decision-makers, and the variety of partners at grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality. That makes us unique among world organizations, and unique among those working with the young.

We believe that nurturing and caring for children are the cornerstones of human progress. UNICEF was created with this purpose in mind - to work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child's path. We believe that we can, together, advance the cause of humanity. UNICEF is working in 157 countries around the world.

In Turkmenistan, UNICEF began its activities in 1994. The main areas that the UN Children's Fund covers here are health, education, child protection and promotion of child rights. UNICEF has now launched a new country programme for 2005-2009, expanding its focus in the velayats (provinces) and helping the government improve its capacity, policies and laws for better protection and development of Turkmen children.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- A Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child was enacted in 2002. The Government has finalised its first CRC report and is considering formulation of a National Plan of Action as part of its commitment to the UN's Special Session on Children and UNICEF remains committed to assisting the Government in shaping its policy agenda for full realisation of children's rights. An Agenda for Children remains at the core of UNICEF's programme in Turkmenistan and increased advocacy efforts at various levels are needed to clearly identify and respond to the basic needs of children and young people.



Chairman of Mejlis, on 1 November to present the international recognition and to thank the Turkmen authorities for their committed efforts to the success of the programme.

- Turkmenistan has received international recognition for achieving optimum iodine nutrition through Universal Salt Iodization – the first nation in Central Asia to receive such recognition and only the fourth country in the world to be so recognized. This achievement is extremely significant for the country's young people because iodine deficiency is the most common cause of brain damage in the world. Maria Calivis, UNICEF's Regional Director for Central Europe and Central Asia, met with H.E. Mr. Ovezgeldi Ataev,

- Immunisation coverage has been maintained at an average 95 percent for several years and the country was certified polio-free in 2002.



- UNICEF, working closely with the various ministries, has introduced several innovative concepts for promoting education. One of these is the idea of Child Friendly Schools as a component of global education, which is aimed at achieving the goals of the Education for All Declaration that Turkmenistan has committed itself to. Life skills education has also been introduced, focusing on health promotion and HIV/AIDS prevention for adolescents. The Ministry of Health has also initiated the Facts For Life programme to educate mothers on the thirteen different life-guarding aspects of childcare.

The Future:

The new Country Programme of Collaboration seeks further opportunities to work closely with both central and velayat (province)-level authorities, while greater efforts will be made to build ever more active partnerships to increase the amount of resources allocated for children and young people and improve the quality of service delivery. Through these measures the Government and UNICEF can build on past successes and move on to greater achievements in ensuring a better future for Turkmenistan's children and women.

UNICEF OFFICE UPGRADE

As of January 2005, UNICEF in Turkmenistan became a fully-fledged country office upgraded from the representation of UNICEF in Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

The decision, contained in a letter from UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy to the Government of Turkmenistan, was prompted by a desire to strengthen cooperation and collaboration with the authorities for the wellbeing of the country's children.

This decision will also help ensure the effective implementation of the new Country Programme 2005-2009 with the Government, which was recently approved by the UNICEF Executive Board.



Mahboob Shareef, who has been the UNICEF Head of Office in Turkmenistan since 2002, has now become Representative in the country, an appointment that the Government also welcomes.

Shareef, who has been working for UNICEF for 30 years, also served in Bangladesh, Sudan, Pakistan and Afghanistan before coming here almost three years ago.

UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAMME



UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan have launched a new country programme for 2005-2009. The current country programme responds to the distinct and complex social-political environment of the country and is anchored in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The country programme's major feature is its policy focus, systems improvements and institutional capacity building, and demonstration of models involving integrated quality services for a sustainable environment fit for children.

The three components of the country programme are:

Policy Advocacy and Development Planning for Children will seek to create an enabling environment for children with a legal framework and law enforcement mechanisms in line with international commitments and other national laws.

Institutional Capacity Development will push for international standards and quality service protocols and build systems and institutional capacity for their adoption and implementation. These will be in the areas of maternal and child health care, micronutrient deficiencies elimination, inclusive quality basic education, and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Velayats Fit for Children will support *velayat* (province) and *etrap* (district) administrations in the development of local plans for children. Service providers will be equipped with knowledge, skills and practices for applying technical and other standards to service delivery. Its components are Early Childhood Development, Child-Friendly Learning Environments, Youth-Friendly Services and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education. Child protection and gender concerns will be integrated within these interventions.

The proposed programme budget for 2005-2009 is US\$5.98 million, Regular Resources (core funding) at \$4.68 and Other Resources at \$1.3 million.

NEWS

UNICEF SIGNS FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKMENISTAN



On 29 March 2005, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, signed a five year action plan with the Government of Turkmenistan that set out specific programmes to achieve goals in health, education, water and sanitation, protection and other related issues for children throughout the country.

"It is a very special and important occasion that brings us here today, for the signing of the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) marks another stage in the close cooperation and consultation between the United Nations Children's Fund and the Government of Turkmenistan," said Mahboob Shareef, UNICEF Representative, in his speech before signing the development plan with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The signing with UNICEF was part of a ceremony that also saw similar five year development plans signed between the Government and the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. All three Country Programme Action Plans come under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to Turkmenistan that defines areas of cooperation and specific results forged with the Government.

UNICEF also warmly welcomed the Government's recent decision to ratify seven United Nations protocols, three of which deal directly with children and women.

UNICEF regards today's signing as another constructive outcome of the joint collaboration between the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations Children's Fund, Shareef said, adding that UNICEF remained committed to working with the government to help it fulfil its national priorities and international obligations covering children's rights.

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Ann Veneman, the outgoing Secretary of Agriculture in the U.S. administration, has been appointed by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to succeed Carol Bellamy when her ten-year tenure concludes on April 30. Under UN policy, agency heads may serve no more than two five-year terms.

"UNICEF has a great tradition of smooth transitions between its executive directors," Ms. Bellamy noted. "It will be my honor to ensure this one is just as successful."

"All of us at UNICEF look forward to welcoming Ms. Veneman and working with her to advance the well-being of children around the world," said UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Kul Gautam, a 32-year veteran of the organization. "Her accomplished career in public service, with extensive experience in international affairs, will serve her well at UNICEF."



A 20-year veteran of the U.S. and California departments of agriculture, she earned her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Davis, and a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Veneman also holds a juris doctorate degree from the University of California, Hastings College of Law. Ms. Veneman will become UNICEF's fifth Executive Director and will assume her duties on 01 May 2005.

UNICEF VISITS THE VELAYATS (PROVINCES)



With organisational support from the Turkmen Foreign Ministry, UNICEF took its message for children to all the five velayats (provinces) of the country: Mary, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap, and Ahal, from 14-24 March 2005. The main purpose of these field trips was to introduce the new country programme and to establish face-to-face dialogue for further implementation of specific velayat-oriented projects covering mother and child related areas including health, education, child's rights, child protection and development, and other social issues.

The visits were a real success, as they were the first in a series of provincial meetings with a specific focus on grassroots level interventions and were attended by a wide range of velayat (province) and etrap (district) officials and specialists from medical institutions, schools, kindergartens, youth and women's unions as well as national and regional media.



These meetings laid the groundwork for further progress to be done in close collaboration with velayat (province) and etrap (district) representatives and will be followed by a series of more practical measures under the new country programme.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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