

Tajikistan

Update on the context and situation of children

Tajikistan has a population of approximately nine million people, with over 40 per cent under 18 years of age. Every two minutes, a child is born in Tajikistan (World Population Review 2019). One in every 23 children dies before they reach five years, and more than eight in 10 of those deaths occur during infancy (DHS 2017). Despite significant improvements, almost one in five children is stunted and experiencing deficit of vital nutrients – 42 children out of 100 are anaemic. Despite high immunization coverage (over 95 per cent), 2017 DHS showed a lower coverage with 79 per cent of children aged 12-23 months immunized with all age-appropriate vaccines. Only 15 children out of 100 attend preschools. Girls in rural areas drop out of school at the age of 14-15 – transition to secondary education in some districts (Districts of Republican Subordination) stands at 61 per cent compared to 81 per cent national average (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019).

Officially, 40 per cent of children identified with disabilities access learning opportunities, but one in three are in segregated institutions (EMIS 2019). Conservative estimates based on international WHO standards indicate that less than 10 per cent of children with disabilities have access to education.

30 per cent of young people aged 15-24 are not in education, training or employment (NEET), 89 per cent of them being girls, while 40 per cent of Tajiks who seek work outside the country are under 30 years of age (Labour Force Survey, 2016). Children and families affected by migration are subject to multiple deprivations: 78 per cent of them do not have adequate income to cover cost of living, with need for food being the most unmet need for 93 per cent (Save the Children, EU, UNICEF, 2018). About one million children (34 per cent) in Tajikistan remain poor (Tajstat, 2016).

More than 60 per cent of the country's inhabitants live in areas of high seismic risks. Tajikistan is highly prone to diverse types of disasters and is among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of average annual percentage losses relative to GDP (UNISDR, 2018). In 2018 only, Tajikistan experienced 169 emergencies with the economic loss totalling equivalent to USD 3,6 million (CoES, 2018). Disasters from 1997 to 2018 cost Tajikistan of just over \$589 million according to the official damage assessment reports (National DRR Strategy 2019-2030). The capacity to respond to shocks is limited. The Government still relies more on external financing which exposes the economy to external shocks.

Tajikistan's reported real GDP growth rate remained 7.2 per cent in 2019, similar to growth rates in the last two years (WB, 2019). The country's risk of debt distress is high given the elevated levels of publicly guaranteed debt – 53 per cent of GDP in 2018 (WB, 2019). Roghun Hydro Power Plant (HPP) continues to remain the major priority investment for the Government with significant planned external borrowing to finance this and other infrastructure projects. The estimates for electricity production and thus export revenue vary significantly. Due to scarcity of state budget revenues, increases in resource allocation for social sector needs are unlikely in the short to medium term. Labour migrant remittances remain a vital economic lifeline (above 30 per cent of GDP, WB 2019) and are a major income source for households, in particular for those in rural areas.

Investments in infrastructure have been a top priority for the country during the recent decade as the age and scale of infrastructure have restricted Tajikistan's economic and social development. Tajikistan's National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030 prioritizes investments in infrastructure as a requisite condition for socio-economic development and improving well-being of the population. Despite a gradual increase in internal resource allocation for infrastructure development, the country is still far from the desired situation. Poor quality of infrastructure continues to remain a bottleneck, impeding decent access of population to social services and economic development opportunities at the local level.

Globally, UNICEF finalized several partnerships in 2019 with the aim to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs that will shape the years to come for Tajikistan CO.

The Declaration between the National Development and Reform Commission of China and UNICEF on "Accelerating SDGs for Children through Shared Development" in the Belt and Road Initiative reinforces the commitments made earlier in 2016 and 2017 through joint MoUs to develop innovative partnerships to protect children's rights and ensure child wellbeing and development. In particular, the Declaration sets forth the need to align national plans and strategies with the SDG targets for children and for "increased investments ... in accessible and high-quality services for most vulnerable boys and girls".

This was very timely and well-aligned with domestic Tajikistan's developments in socio-economic sphere. The Government's commitment to developing and endorsing a National Programme for Children created a strong policy framework to advance SDGs for children and implement the UN CRC recommendations. This is the first of its kind and is intended to anchor the country's child rights programming and financing through 2030.

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The UNICEF-EBRD MoU signed in September 2019 laid a foundation for a joint effort to “boost access to economic opportunities, including through access to skills, employment and basic services for young people and women”. The two institutions “pledged to bring together public and private stakeholders... to help vulnerable populations gain better access to services around the EBRD’s sustainable infrastructure investments”. Given the importance of the infrastructure on the Government of Tajikistan’s agenda, the partnership will strengthen the ties between infrastructure and socio-economic development, thus improving access to services and quality of life for children and their families.

The MoU between UNICEF and the Russian Federation (September 2019) is focused on the areas of maternal and child health; preventing child abandonment and violence against children; children with disabilities; promoting good parenting and early childhood development; vaccination; HIV prevention among children; young people’s agenda as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene – each of great importance to Tajikistan, which is well-reflected in the national strategic documents.

Major contributions and drivers of results

As the major initiative in Tajikistan to nationalise SDGs for children, and in response to the UN CRC Concluding Observations, UNICEF supported development of a comprehensive National SDG Programme for Children (NPC) rooted in the UNCRC and the SDGs. The programme document was drafted with the leadership of the Commission on Child Rights under the President’s Office in consultation with development community and NGO partners. It is based on the rigorous situation analysis and encapsulates key priorities for children in Tajikistan expressed through a set of SDG-based targets and indicators.

The final draft programme is with the Government for approval. It sets 33 targets through 2030, including reducing the under-five mortality rate by one-third, halving the number of NEETs in the country, halving the stunting rate, increasing WASH-in-schools and immunisation coverage to 100 per cent, reducing child labour to zero, reducing child poverty by half, and many others. The national SDG programme for children is substantiated with budget and funding analysis that allows to assess the level of financing necessary to achieve universal coverage of children in Tajikistan with basic services.

The NPC and the financial analysis were presented at the National Summit for Children on 19 November 2019 with participation of Deputy Prime Minister, line ministers, diplomatic community, IFIs and donors. At the event, the financing gap to achieve SDGs for children was announced at \$16.75 billion, an average of \$1.5 billion per year, or \$1 per child per day. The Summit was followed by a discussion with the Ministry of Finance, the State Investment Committee, WB, IMF, KfW, EU and ADB. This led to identification of the four key trajectories to address the financing gap: (i) increasing state budget allocations for children, (ii) finding efficiency gains within line ministries, (iii) increasing ODA, and (iv) sourcing innovative financing partnerships at scale not currently utilised by Tajikistan, e.g. blended financing or social impact bonds. UNICEF and MoF would co-convene the IFI community and create a financing plan that tackles each of those four components, with clear financial targets, and with each actor taking responsibility for various aspects based on mandate and competency.

The NPC also stipulates implementation and coordination mechanisms in-built within the existing structures and systems. The NPC development was well aligned with the ongoing strategic planning processes in Tajikistan: new national health, education and WASH strategies to 2030 were under preparation concurrently. This provided an unprecedented opportunity to link the high-level results and targets in all key strategic documents related to child well-being and thriving. Simultaneously, the CO partnered with TajStat and MEDT to strengthen child rights monitoring system (CRM) that does not only allow to assess the CO contribution to the national results for children, but supports the mandated government entities with know-how, methodology, tools and capacity-building. This will serve the basis for regular monitoring of the SDG programme for children in Tajikistan.

Every child survives and thrives

Quality of maternal and child health (MNCH) and nutrition services, rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in maternities, procurement of essential health and nutrition commodities, advocacy for increased budgetary allocation for MNCH, and advancing of early childhood development (ECD) were explicitly reflected in the National Health Strategy (NHS) 2021-2030 (under finalisation) due to shared vision and incessant efforts of MoHSPP, UNICEF and WHO.

Application of vaccines need estimation and budgeting tool combined with persistent advocacy for financing sustainability gained traction with a modest increase (one per cent) in the state allocation for vaccine procurement (28 per cent in 2019). With the Government of Japan’s financial support, UNICEF procured and distributed essential life-saving vaccines and IMCI drugs to all primary healthcare facilities resulting in vaccination of over 500,000 children which accounts for consistent 98 per cent coverage country-wide. With GAVI funding, optimising immunisation was complemented with a Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) study on immunization in 10 low-performing locations. The findings revealed

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reasons for immunization hesitancy and refusal: insufficient awareness, fears and lack of understanding, inadequate communication between health workers and caregivers, and transportation costs as main barriers to child vaccination. A communication strategy to optimise immunisation reach approved by MoHSP in October 2019 will be implemented in 2020.

Institutionalization of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) of maternal and child health services progressed in 2019. With the Russian Federation funding, UNICEF procured and installed life-saving equipment in 11 district maternities and two maternity hospitals which benefitted about 25,000 newborns during July-December. Besides, 95 maternities' focal points and 235 health managers/experts across the country received training and essential newborn care equipment. This would enable MNCH service providers to administer quality care to an estimated 260,000 infants and their mothers annually.

UNICEF's recognition as a partner of choice and technical agency for MNCH in Tajikistan leveraged around \$8 million from Asian and Islamic Development Banks for the replication of proven MNCH interventions in seven additional districts (thus covering 19 districts out of 68 nationwide).

UNICEF advocacy for holistic and optimal child care along with national nutrition surveys and economic analysis of malnutrition contributed to the Government approval of the Law on food fortification in July 2019. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the Third Nutrition Forum within the Regional CEIS Paediatric Association conference that facilitated knowledge sharing on malnutrition among over 200 representatives of academia and practitioners from the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and a resolution to devote the next CEIS paediatric conference solely to nutrition.

Procurement of Folic Acid plus iron for 150,000 pregnant women, 221 anthropometric measurement equipment for PHC facilities and therapeutic food for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 4,000 children contributed to increased coverage of affected children from three to eight per cent in 2019.

Progressive adoption of the nurturing care framework as a holistic approach to early childhood development (ECD) is reflected in both NEDS and NHS 2021-2030. To enable a comprehensive approach and ensure effective monitoring of five key child development domains, UNICEF supported development of a system for early detection/early intervention (EDEI) case management. In 2019, in Bokhtar city and Rasht district only, 10,102 children were screened for developmental delays, and 196 children with developmental delays and disabilities received early intervention services. When fully operational, EDEI system will benefit estimated 750,000 children under three annually and will establish accurate prevalence of developmental delays.

Provision of mental health services to adolescents launched in 2018 moved to implementation phase. Within this integrated model, where school is in the heart of a preventive approach and referral pathway is established involving PHC, community and additional education institutions, more than 14,000 adolescent girls (about 45 per cent) and boys received mental health services from school psychologists and counsellors. This accounts for about 16 per cent of adolescents in targeted nine districts (220 schools, approximately five per cent of schools in Tajikistan). Only 0.8 per cent of these adolescents were referred to PHC proving effectiveness of school as an entry point, with increased awareness on mental health issues, availability of services and peer referral. To ensure sustainability and effectiveness, adolescent mental health modules were introduced in pre- and in-service training in education and health sectors. MoES as a coordinating government agency recommended expansion of this mental health programme across the country.

In child HIV/AIDS, UNICEF became an active member of the National HIV/AIDS/TB Coordination Committee, thus promoting child HIV/AIDS in the national HIV-response discussions. Furthermore, a peer-to-peer methodology of "Join-in-circuit" to reach the first batch of 3,600 adolescents was used to support HIV prevention among adolescents.

Every child learns

Early development and pre-school education, inclusive education, vocational training, girls' access to education and skills were prioritised in the National Strategy for Education Development (NSED) 2021-2030 to fulfil the right to education for every child in Tajikistan and ensure nationalization and implementation of SDG4 targets. In collaboration with the EU, UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF supported the Education Sector Analysis, which highlighted bottlenecks related to equity, quality and efficiency of education system; result-based planning and costing, and development of the final draft of the NSED.

Early learning opportunities were being scaled-up through development of efficient, transparent financial mechanisms for ECE. A budget brief and 12-year transition costed scenarios were finalised along with the adoption of the State Programme on Preschool Education 2020-2025. This enabled an effective policy dialogue at central and regional levels, with the participation of over 260 local government and community leaders across the country. Innovative multi-lingual education

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among children from ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds was supported with alternative ECE programmes including a peacebuilding and social cohesion ECE model. In 2019, UNICEF ensured access to early learning for additional 649 children (46 per cent girls) of Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz origin in six targeted areas. This adds to the total of 6,000 children (45 per cent girls) yearly enrolled in 240 UNICEF-supported ECE alternative centres in 20 districts since 2010. UNICEF Magic Box TV animation series were broadcast nationally targeting over 70,000 children, and a child assessment tool was finalized to ensure the monitoring of early learning outcomes. The enrolment rate of children aged three to six increased from 13.9 per cent in 2017-2018 school year to 14.7 per cent in 2018-2019 (an increase of 6,219 children).

Transversal skills and competency development were pursued through a competency-based education model finalized in 2019 and delivered through multiple pathways in formal and non-formal settings. Over 9,500 adolescents (52 per cent girls), including NEET, children with disabilities and in conflict with the law, developed core competencies in 14 Innovation Labs established at the Centres for Additional Education and Youth in 12 towns and districts. Over 6,500 adolescents (49 per cent girls) improved skills through extra-curricular interventions, including through student councils' and summer camps activities. Employability and transition to employment was facilitated with the launch of Impact Sourcing model in partnership with the private sector and Agency of Employment of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Population Employment (MoLMPE). The first cohort of 87 adolescents and youth (80 per cent girls) were employed in digital jobs, as part of proof of concept, and two Impact Hubs were established in Dushanbe and Khorog. In 2019, the coverage of adolescents with these services increased by 5 per cent in 12 districts. A national inter-agency working group led by MoLMPE with involvement of the Committee on Youth Affairs, Tax Committee and State Telecommunication launched development of a Strategy for scaling-up the Impact Sourcing model to support marginalized youth transition to employment. This will be a game changer of current labour migration dynamics among youth with potential 17,000 digital outsourcing jobs.

Prevention of school-drop at secondary level through modelling of an early warning system in 52 schools in Sughd Region reached over 9,600 children (50 per cent girls). This provided schools with knowledge, skills and strategies to identify and respond to drop-out cases and will be expanded to additional schools within the framework of conducive enabling environment. Girls' drop-out prevention was further supported with WASH infrastructure improvement initiated in 48 schools (to reach 45,000 children, 50 per cent girls), and development of a holistic resource pack for school communities on WASH and Menstrual Health Management, in partnership with UNFPA and WB.

Inclusive education pedagogical approach was modelled and inclusive education features as a national priority in the NSED 2021-2030. Building on extensive policy dialogue and the International Disability Forum conducted in October 2019, MoES committed to review its pedagogical approach across in-service teacher training institutions and develop a national Inclusive Education road-map with costed interventions for 2020. Furthermore, UNICEF supported a nation-wide campaign on promoting inclusion of children with disabilities, with 887,000 inclusive education books distributed throughout the country reaching over 70 per cent of schools. Key messages address social norms and school culture towards children with disabilities. Latest EMIS report for 2018-2019 school year shows 7,278 children with disabilities (less than 27% of identified children) had access to education, which showed an increase of 694 children (268 girls) compared to the previous year.

Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF Tajikistan promoted the rights of children to live and grow in safe and protected environment. The long-awaited transformation of Baby Homes into Family and Child Support Centres (FCSC) was realised, increasing the chances of new-borns and young children to stay with their families and reducing the number of children in institutions. Children in conflict and in contact with the law could access child-friendly justice to prevent their unnecessary criminalisation and re-victimisation.

UNICEF supported the Government to strengthen national child protection systems, particularly in the areas of alternative care, access to justice and protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. Technical assistance provided to the MoHSPP resulted in a Roadmap for transformation of Baby Homes, assessment of training needs and job descriptions to operationalize FCSCs. Two of four Baby Homes already converted into FCSCs which provided new type of services for 465 children, where 291 children under four evaded placement in residential care. In 2019, the number of children in residential childcare decreased by 13 per cent and number of children in family care (including guardianship, foster care and adoption) remained stable. MoES, as the custodian of the Law on Child Rights Protection, submitted an amendment to the Family Code which will allow to operationalise the Foster Care Procedure developed with technical support of UNICEF.

Local governments of Kulob and Levakant cities piloted Referral and Response Mechanism (LRRM) to promote access of vulnerable children and families to services at the district level. Over 439 vulnerable children (201 girls and 238 boys) were identified and their needs assessed. Around 180 cases of children and families were discussed during monthly LRRM meetings and children were referred to relevant services, including vocational skills and support to start income-generating activities; civil registration to obtain birth certificates; school enrolment, and support to get access to social benefits/allowances and alimony. Fully-functional LRRM contributed to increased coverage of vulnerable children to address

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their individual needs - from four per cent in 2018 to 103.5 per cent (528 children) in targeted districts in 2019.

The system-level results in justice for children were consolidated through the amendments to the Law "On Order and Conditions of Custody for suspects, alleged offenders and defenders". Key changes were: (i) to ban solitary confinement of children during custody; (ii) to separate children from adults during pre-sentence custody and other custodial measures during investigation; (iii) medical check-ups of children (e.g. in case of torture) to be carried out by independent medical experts. These amendments mean that up to 700 children who fall into pre-trial detention will be protected from risk of abuse from adult detainees to children; approximately 40 children annually sent to boys' colony cannot be placed in solitary confinement while serving their sentences; and most inequitable practice of medical examination following the worst forms of child rights abuse in case of violence towards children within institutions was terminated.

Following concerns of the Government on increasing number of offences among children and youth and as a result of UNICEF advocacy, a National Programme on Prevention of Offences 2020-2024 was developed that envisages social workforce system strengthening and will allow to work with parents, communities and authorities to prevent devastating effects of VAC (a root cause for children to commit offence) throughout the child life. The Government received further support to increase their capacity to anchor system-level changes, such as cascade capacity building for 75 child rights units on strengthening gate-keeping system and management of juvenile justice.

Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Adequate water and sanitation play a vital role in reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity. In 2019, UNICEF advanced its support to the MoHSPP and MoES to meet quality requirements in maternity units by improvement/refurbishment of WASH infrastructure for provision of 24-hour safe hot/cold water in 17 maternities (approximately one-fourth of total number) across the country. An estimated 65,000 pregnant women and their newborns (approximately one-fourth of annual births) would benefit from improved WASH facilities. The Republican Family Medicine Centre (RFMC) and Republican Healthy Life Style (RHLSC) under MoHSPP reviewed training and education materials on hygiene promotion and infection prevention to identify gaps and revision needs. This review will inform development and dissemination of the WASH training modules and materials planned to commence in 2020 in collaboration with RFMC and RHLSC.

Capitalizing on its unique position to strengthen the national programming on Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR), child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) UNICEF invested significantly in enhancing the GoT's emergency preparedness capacity for predictable early action. It supported development of Tajikistan Emergency Social Protection Model (TESPP)/Humanitarian Cash Transfer Program (hCTP); equipping the CoES with a newly-established psychosocial support unit. Besides, UNICEF replenished pre-positioned emergency supplies and completed a full-fledged and a table-top simulation exercises.

Following on the global UNICEF/International Federation of Red Cross agreement and within the framework of "One Billion Coalition for Resilience", UNICEF and International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC)/Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) successfully launched a joint programme focusing on strengthening Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policy in education facilities, institutional and human capacity building, and improving selected schools' resilience to disasters. Reducing children's vulnerability to both sudden disasters and crises related to climate change is also an essential part of the programme being supported by UNICEF and IFRC/RCST. As part of this intervention, more than 3,000 students and 250 teachers and Parent and teacher association (PTA) members from five target schools and 15,015 community members improved understanding of disaster risks, mitigation, prevention and preparedness measures. Young girls and boys were also equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes to help them to be leaders on climate change and be able to shape national policies on environmental sustainability and climate change. Such interventions will be replicated in 2020 to additional 200 schools.

Gender and equity perspectives were integrated into all EPR/DRR/CCA-related activities, including risk assessment, early warning, capacity building, school-based education and training, aiming at awareness-raising on gender factors in disaster situations, and actively promoting women's and girls' participation in EPR/DRR/CCA.

At the policy level, UNICEF supported the development of the Mid-term Programme on Population and Territories Protection in Emergency Situations for 2019-2022.

Every child has an equitable chance in life

Tajikistan's social protection system was reinforced with a humanitarian cash transfer mechanism. The Government accepted the model which will be tested as soon as an emergency of a pre-defined scale occurs. The model will help strengthen the shock responsiveness of the national social protection system.

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Over 3,790 children affected by migration received support to access social welfare services, including birth certificates for 2,502 children. Through this contribution and that of UNHCR, local government and NGOs from 13,242 children at risk of statelessness in 15 targeted districts, the coverage rate of affected children increased by 28.6 per cent in 2019.

UNICEF in cooperation with the Committee on Youth Affairs and Sports improved opportunities for adolescent participation in decision-making and building social cohesion at the community level through dialogue between adolescents and local authorities in five districts and towns. Adolescents' participation and civic engagement developed into a contextualized Child and Youth Friendly Local Governance, aligned with CFCI. 15,081 adolescent boys and girls (girls: 5,789, CWD:182) participated in and led civic engagement initiatives for building tolerance and social cohesion as well as governance and development of their communities. 544 adolescent girls and boys (girls: 250) worked closely with local authorities to implement community development projects in four targeted districts, while 157 local authorities' staff were capacitated to support civic engagement by adolescents. Through this contribution the adolescent participation rate in these districts reached 10 per cent in 2019 (from 6.4 per cent nationally in 2018).

Child participation platform was established within the Office of Ombudsman for Child Rights (O4CR) in the scope of the established complaint mechanism. The O4CR engaged 96 children through group consultations on education, where children acted as experts to inform O4CR decisions and reports to the Parliament.

UNICEF strengthened volunteer network by capacitating 610 adolescents and youths to contribute to decision-making processes and social cohesion in conflict-prone border districts of Tajikistan. 144 volunteers expressed the youth views and contributed to development of local plans to implement the National Programme on Youth Social Development 2019-2021 (NPYSD). The first priority of this programme is adolescent participation, whereas the rest nine cover all key areas of adolescent development. Besides, 314 adolescent girls and boys (Girls:131) in two cross-border districts (Isfara and B.Gafurov) improved their peacebuilding competencies and contributed to building social cohesion through joint community projects and mediation with the local authorities during the cross-border intercommunal tensions.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

The milestone of one-quarter of the SDG lifespan was reached in 2019. It is doubtful if progress towards SDG targets is similarly advanced, in any country. What has, however, become very clear to everyone is that the progress will be impossible without duly nationalising and localising the SDG targets, identifying financing at scale, and efficiently measuring progress.

In Tajikistan in 2019, the CO made significant effort to advance both the SDG nationalisation and localisation agenda. This was through:

- supporting the Government's commitment to develop a National Programme for Children (NPC), fully aligned with SDGs, inclusive of analysis of the financial gap to achieve SDG targets by 2030, and;
- initiating or consolidating operationalisation of several global UNICEF partnerships at the country level, including with China, Russia and a number of IFIs;

Nationalising SDGs

As part of the launch of the NPC, all stakeholders were informed on the outstanding financing gap to achieve the agreed SDGs for children in Tajikistan, which amounts to \$16.75 billion. Expanding fiscal space to incrementally reduce the financing gap was underscored to be the most important element of further policy planning and programme implementation in Tajikistan. Limited budgetary allocations, in particular to social sectors, compounded by inefficiencies in planning and spending, impede achieving tangible results for children in the country. It is a certainty that if SDG targets are not met for children, the SDGs will not be achieved overall. If a business-as-usual approach continues, the gap in financing will accumulate to an unmanageable volume by 2030 with long-term detrimental effects to the human capital of the country – its biggest asset. Paradigm shifts in planning, budgeting, financing and implementing must start today.

The need for exploring innovative ways of financing is vital for Tajikistan. UNICEF's focus on global level partnerships with international finance institutions (IFIs) facilitated discussions with these institutions to localize the partnerships at the country level. UNICEF's memorandum with the National Development and Reform Council (NDRC) of China created a solid policy framework for transforming infrastructure investments into child-friendly initiatives. This will serve to operationalise commitments at the national level, to test new approaches for better results for children and to localise and ensure financing for the SDGs, which is in the interest of all partners regardless of mandate.

Localizing SDGs

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UNICEF, EBRD and AIIB agreed to test our common partnership around the Roghun Bypass Road Project scheduled to be started early in 2020 in two districts of Tajikistan. The partnership involves generating evidence on the vulnerabilities of children living in the catchment zone of a large-scale infrastructure project: assessing the likely impact of infrastructure, consulting with local communities on an action plan to transform the infrastructure area into a child-friendly territory, and ultimately crowding in other investors to create a child-friendly zones using the infrastructure as the catalyst. Implementation of the action plan will be supported by local governments and development partners. The partnership case around the Roghun Bypass Road Project will be studied and a toolkit will be developed to guide UNICEF's partnerships with IFIs in other countries and contexts.

This collaboration forms the proof of concept for the Belt and Road Initiative for Children (BRI4C), which if successful has the potential to transform the lives of the 235 million poor children living in BRI countries.

Tajikistan CO – with strong engagement with the Dushanbe Mayor's Office – is finalizing a roadmap to transform the first cohort of 13 cities and districts in Tajikistan into child friendly cities and districts. The CFC initiative will serve as a framework for the implementation of the NPC at sub-national level. The implementation and results will be assessed through a nation-wide child rights monitoring system, currently at beta stage of development with MEDT and the Tajstat.

Advocacy

2019 marked 30 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and went on to become the most ratified piece of document, guiding UNICEF's work across the continents. Based on global milestones and locally relevant initiatives, UNICEF Tajikistan amplified its advocacy and communication making the 30th birthday of the CRC a theme of the year. It consistently engaged key stakeholders from government, media and business to raise issues of children and win the public support for the cause of children - as part of Vaccines week in April, Parenting month in June, Peacebuilding and (UPSHIFT) Peshsaf Forum on adolescent development, Migration forum on children and families affected by migration. A multifaceted disability inclusion campaign was started across the country reaching over 3 million people (approx. third of the population) through TV, radio and press coverage. The broadcast was about and with children with disabilities living in the communities, attending school and their interaction with peers. A dedicated Facebook account (with over 106,140 views) induced animated online debates about rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities. 7,000 local officials and community members including youth, adolescents, men and women with/without disabilities were sensitised on social inclusion, with focus on children and women with disabilities. These advocacy efforts culminated in the National Summit for Children co-hosted together with Deputy Prime Minister, where Government publicly presented the national SDG programme for children with the costed analysis and funding gaps. The occasion was also used to introduce new Champions for Children – team of ambassadors who agreed to advocate on pertinent issues related to children in Tajikistan on political platforms and high visibility events throughout 2020.