

Tajikistan

Part 1: Situation update in the country

The Republic of Tajikistan is a landlocked mountainous country in Central Asia with an economy dominated by mineral extraction, metal processing, agriculture (with less than 7 per cent of the arable land), and reliance on remittances from citizens working abroad (31.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017). Tajikistan imports approximately 70 per cent of its food. The first years after independence in 1991 were marred by civil and political conflict which persisted until 1997 and which had significant long-term impact on the country's development, not least due to the resulting loss of human resources and deterioration in human capital.

Remittances of labour migrants along with state investments in industry and the construction sector have been important sources of economic growth and have reduced national average poverty rates to 29.7 per cent in 2017, with extreme poverty dropping to 14 per cent according to the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2018. Despite reducing monetary poverty, Tajikistan is still the poorest country in the Community of Independent States. About 900,000 children live below the national poverty line and more than 400,000 children faced extreme poverty in 2016. There is substantial geographic variation in child poverty: rural areas are substantially poorer than urban areas. The urban centre of Dushanbe is consistently the least poor area of the country with the lowest share of children living in poor households. The highest child poverty rate persists in the Districts of Republican Subordination, but due to a higher population of children, Khatlon province has the highest number of poor children.

Poverty in Tajikistan is seasonal: in the lean season, the national poverty rate rises as much as eight percent more than during the harvest season. The number of poor children ranges from 0.6 million in the third quarter of the year to 1.1 million in the first quarter. Tajikistan regressed from a low-middle income country to a low-income country in 2018, according to a World Bank updated income classification.

Tajikistan's population is an estimated 8,931,000 (49 per cent female; 51 per cent male). Children under six years old constitute 18 per cent of the total population; 41 per cent are children under 18, and 66 per cent are young adults under 30, which makes Tajikistan's population one of the youngest in Central Asia.

For every 100,000 live births, 32 women die from pregnancy-related causes. The adolescent birth rate is 36.4 births per 1,000 women who are 15 to 19 years old. Under-five mortality is 33 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the infant mortality rate is 27 deaths per 1,000 live births. This means that one in 30 children in Tajikistan die before reaching age five, and more than eight in 10 of those deaths occur during infancy.

Female participation in the labour market is 46 per cent compared to 73 per cent for men. World Bank 2016 study reported that 50 per cent of households in Tajikistan are female-headed. Eighty-seven per cent of children left behind live with one parent and 13 per cent in kinship care. Research shows that only 10 per cent of families of migrants have knowledge of available support services.

Tajikistan's most recent Human Development Index value is 0.650, which puts the country in the medium human development category, ranked 127 out of 189 countries and territories. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the Human Development Index falls to 0.562, which signifies a loss to human development due to inequality. The 2017 Gender Development Index value for Tajikistan is 0.624 for females and 0.669 for males. (In comparison, Gender Development Index values for neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are 0.960 and 0.945 respectively.) The Gender Inequality Index for Tajikistan is 0.317, ranking it 69 out of 160 countries in 2017. In 2017, Tajikistan ranked 57 in the Human Capital Index among 130 countries.

There are clear socioeconomic inequities in accessing basic services in Tajikistan. For example, out-of-pocket payment for health services amount to 63 per cent; Government spending on health is only two percent of GDP (WHO/NHA). Tajikistan still faces a shortage of health workers: it has the lowest density of doctors of all the countries of the former Soviet Union (1.7 doctors and 4.7 nurses per thousand people). The shortage of health facilities, materials and personnel is especially serious in rural areas. And the situation is similar across all social sectors

Finally, Tajikistan is prone to disasters such as avalanches, earthquakes, floods, mudflows and landslides. It is situated in a high-risk seismic zone, with an estimated 88.3 per cent of children living in areas of seismic hazard. Though the natural disasters generally have a local, limited impact, the cumulative effect on livelihoods and economy is considerable, as is the number of human losses. Tajikistan is the most climate-vulnerable country in the region, mainly due to its exposure to climate-related extreme events; its dependence on natural resources such as water; and its limited capacity to adapt, according to the World Bank. The 2018 INFORM risk assessment gave Tajikistan a 9.7 earthquake hazard risk. Floods and landslides/mudflows occur regularly, on a seasonal basis, and pose a most threatening prospect for Tajikistan. Between January and September 2018, Tajikistan experienced 21 local disasters, with the economic loss totalled at approximately US\$3.6 million.

The year at a glance

2018 was an eventful year for Tajikistan, with major political and socio-economic developments having implications at both national and regional levels.

Political changes in Uzbekistan in 2017, most notably the election of the President who is following a more open foreign policy agenda, improved relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan after years of tension. The President's visit to Dushanbe in March 2018 marked renewed economic and social links between the two countries, boosting economic opportunities, especially in border areas with proximity to cities such as Khujand, Panjakent, Istaravshan. The renewed political relationship opens potential for further regional cooperation in Central Asia and enables economic development of Tajikistan, which would increase the state budget required to fund important sectors such as education and health.

This political warming allowed Tajikistan to launch the first aggregate of the Rogun hydropower plant, a primary point of contention between the two countries. The Government of Tajikistan has prioritized energy independence, emphasizing major state investment into this strategic infrastructure, aiming to develop the economy and increase budget income of the state.

In March 2018, on the sidelines of the launch event of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the President signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was a critical step for the country, demonstrating the importance of the inclusion agenda to the Government of Tajikistan. The next step will be to domesticate the Convention into national legislation and prepare for its ratification in 2020.

The Convention's signing boosted the organizations that oppose discrimination and stigma of adults and children with disabilities. The Government of Tajikistan, jointly with the United Nations, initiated a national disability inclusion campaign with the slogan 'Each one of us is able', in the framework of the National Programme on Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Tajikistan. The campaign raised awareness on the rights of people with disabilities and discouraged discrimination while encouraging social change for the disabled in all sectors of society.

Tajikistan remains a champion of the "water for life" international initiative. In June 2018, the country hosted an international conference within the framework of the International Decade of Action "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028" in Dushanbe, following the launch of the International Decade for Action at United Nations Headquarters earlier in March. Meetings and symposia during the conference centred on how member states, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant partners, including the private sector, can contribute to the Decade of Action. The conference produced a policy dialogue paper, 'Water for sustainable development 2018-2028', including how solving water scarcity fits the mandate of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a communique by all attendees. UNICEF Tajikistan was an active partner advocating for WASH as a holistic approach.

In December 2018, the Government presented the results of the 2017 Demographic and Health Survey by the statistical agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, with technical and financial assistance by USAID, United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF. The second round of Demographic and Health Survey in Tajikistan, it provided data to assess the country's progress in maternal and child health and nutrition, child mortality and HIV/AIDS prevention, domestic violence and woman's empowerment. For the first time in Tajikistan, the Demographic and Health Survey collected data related to child discipline.

Following the submission of the combined third to fifth periodic report of Tajikistan to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2017 and the subsequent Concluding Observations in April 2018, the Government of Tajikistan adopted a national plan of action to implement the recommendations for 2018-2022. This is another sign of political will by the Government to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals following the previous year's submission of the Voluntary National Review. A key point of the plan of action follows the Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendation to "prepare and adopt a comprehensive national policy on children that encompasses all areas covered by the Convention and, on the basis of that policy, develop a strategy with for its application supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources". To build on this success, the National Commission on Child Rights conducted a meeting in December to launch the development of a national Sustainable Development Goal programme for children in Tajikistan.

UNICEF in Tajikistan

The 2016-2020 Country Programme for UNICEF Tajikistan aligned with and supported key Government of Tajikistan policies, strategies and initiatives. The programme results are aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan and Gender Action Plan and will contribute to eight out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Goals 1 to 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17). The country programme aims to accelerate progress towards the realization of the rights of all children, with special attention given to closing equity gaps through four components at different stages of their life cycle.

The 'surviving and thriving in the early years' component identified quality as a bottleneck to the provision of maternal, newborn and child health services; it aims to improve the quality of care and infection control in maternal, neonatal and child health services. The component calls for system-strengthening regarding immunization services, as well as greater accountability of service providers.

'Inclusive and quality learning', the second component, supported the improved access, inclusiveness and overall quality of education, building on ongoing efforts to strengthen pre-service and in-service training of educators to promote learner-centred teaching. The programme assists the Government in the planned transition to a 12-year education system, including the associated curriculum reform. In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan worked with the Ministry of Education and Science to strengthen evidence-based policy, planning, monitoring and budgeting.

The programme on ‘the full participation of adolescents’empowers them to participate in all aspects of national and local government institutions and civil society. The programmes promote rights awareness and life skills development, as well as the expansion of service provision for and with adolescents.

The child protective component of the country programme enables policy, legal and operational environments to ensure that the rights of all children, in particular the most marginalized, are upheld. The programme strengthens existing systems to ensure that children victims of violence, children in contact with the law, children affected by migration, children with disabilities, and children living in institutions are protected, have access to social and rehabilitation services, are not discriminated against and live in a safe and supportive family setting.

In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan continued to work with reinforcing programme strategies: communication for social change; advocacy and communication for child rights and equity; strengthening national capacity and systems for data collection, analysis and child rights monitoring; innovation; sustained, system-wide capacity-building for the equitable delivery of services; youth participation; and disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness.

Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan contributed to the realization of children’s rights to survival; childhood development and well-being; maternal, neonatal and child health (with a focus on the first thousand days); nutrition; HIV/AIDS prevention; and early childhood development. As a result, there have been overall positive trends in health and nutrition for children under five; reduction in neonatal mortality rates from 22 per 1,000 live births in 2013 to an estimated 14.5 per 1,000 in 2017; and reduction in child mortality from 48 per 1,000 in 2013 to an estimated 33.6 in 2017.

Also, prevalence of stunting and wasting in children under five decreased from 26 in 2012 to 18 in 2018; the number of underweight children under five fell from 12 in 2012 to 7.6 (DHS 2017). But challenges remain: stunting and wasting remain high among children, while 41 per cent of women and 37 per cent of children have anaemia and vitamin A deficiencies.

To improve mother and child health services, a ‘continuous quality improvement’ mechanism at maternity, newborn and paediatric units was established by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population with UNICEF Tajikistan technical support. It is now functional in hospitals in 11 targeted districts. The assessment conducted in May-July 2018 highlighted quality issues in sterilization practices, compliance with the clinical protocols and overall quality

care management. The results of the assessment informed the design of interventions.

UNICEF Tajikistan supported the World Bank and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection performance-based financing focused on maternal and child health services in primary health care in 12 UNICEF maternal, newborn and child health-focused districts. Two rounds of independent data verification of primary health care services conducted by UNICEF in January and October 2018 noted improvements in equipment availability and maintenance, technical knowledge of primary health care staff and quality of services. About 45,000 women and 45,000 newborns benefitted from continuous quality improvement and independent data verification interventions in 2018.

To increase uptake and value of maternal and child health and nutrition services, build dialogue and trust between caregivers and health workers, and improve child care practices at household level, UNICEF supported a full-scale dissemination of the mother and child health handbook in 16 districts, reaching over 43,400 women who were pregnant. During joint monitoring by UNICEF Tajikistan and Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population, both mothers/caregivers and health service providers admitted a better change in attitudes and practices resulting from the handbook. In 2019, work will be to strengthen mechanisms to monitor and measure changes in these practices.

Building on the progress made in previous years, UNICEF Tajikistan continued supporting initiatives aimed at a system-level change: the achievement of universal health coverage. A costed 'reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health package', finalized with UNICEF support in 2018, was the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population success in the resource mobilization effort. The costed package will facilitate development of budgets, responsive to the needs of the Tajikistanis for quality and coverage of maternal and child health services.

UNICEF Tajikistan, with funding from the Government of Japan, ensured uninterrupted children's access to vaccines and essential drugs for the integrated management of childhood illnesses programme, which helped decrease child morbidity and mortality. Between January and August, over 290,000 children benefitted from the vaccines; 37,855 children with diarrhoea benefitted from oral rehydration salt and ainc; and 126,128 children diagnosed with acute respiratory infections (including pneumonia cases) were treated with integrated management of childhood illnesses drugs.

To protect children from polio, UNICEF Tajikistan supported introduction of the inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) into the routine immunization schedule in June 2018. This, along with capacity building of 126 health managers, 174 family doctors and 2,948 vaccinators benefitted 63,000 children across the country. UNICEF support ensured the smooth introduction of IPV and a resultant increase in IPV coverage from 66 percent to 85 percent, between June-September 2018.

With GAVI health-system strengthening funding, UNICEF Tajikistan strengthened the

Republican immuno-prophylaxis centre's cold chain, which resulted in a more reliable delivery system of potent, quality vaccines to children. This was achieved with procurement of cold chain equipment for 256 health facilities, and capacity building of health managers and technicians on use and maintenance of the new equipment across all regions. As technical advisors, UNICEF quality-assured the development of the GAVI cold-chain equipment optimization platform. To better advocate for domestic funding for vaccines and related products; strong vaccine and supply-chain management; and capacity of health planners and service providers, UNICEF Tajikistan and Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population developed 'vaccine-needs estimation' and budgeting tools, and trained Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population and Ministry of Finance officials on its use.

UNICEF collaborated with World Food Programme and the World Health Organization to support Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population to update the national 'integrated management of acute malnutrition protocol in 2018 to increase access for the treatment for severe acute malnutrition and reduce stunting and wasting. UNICEF trained more than 450 health staff across the country on the guidelines. The improved capacity of health workers and active case-finding resulted in a 51 per cent increase in the admission of severe and acute malnourished children to treatment between the second and third quarter of 2018. Currently, full-scale implementation of 'integrated management of acute malnutrition', including in- and out-patient treatment, is implemented in every district of the country: 2,772 children benefitted from UNICEF-supported severe acute malnutrition treatment in 2018.

UNICEF ensured the availability of vitamin A, iron folic acid, sprinkles, and therapeutic food at health facilities through a donation from the Government of Canada and funding from USAID. More than 79,000 children in 12 districts benefitted from micronutrient powder for sixty days every six months in 2018. Over 83,000 women who were pregnant in 35 districts received iron and folic acid tablets as part of their antenatal care at primary health care level while 2,593 severe acute malnourished inpatient children were treated with therapeutic food to recovery.

To ensure the access of women and children to quality HIV prevention and treatment, in 2018, UNICEF supported capacity-building of primary health care managers for quality HIV rapid tests procurement and utilization. HIV infection in children—especially children whose cases are classified as 'unknown' (largely believed to be through nosocomial routes)—was the focus of a round table discussion for Government and non-government experts convened by the National AIDS Centre with UNICEF Tajikistan support. The roundtable led to an acknowledgement that identified more than 600 children with an unknown route of transmission, and a government order for active HIV case-finding through targeted, voluntary HIV-testing of children. National elimination of the mother-to-child transmission policy on case management of HIV infection in children was strengthened with UNICEF technical support. The full-scale implementation of option B+ mother-to-child transmission protocol enabled the access of 100 per cent of women who were pregnant and HIV-positive to antiretroviral therapy. The number of children living with HIV to access social services increased from 63 percent in 2015 to 75 percent in 2018.

In Bokhtar and Rasht districts, with UNICEF Tajikistan technical support, the Government modelled a child- and family-focused early detection and early-intervention programme for developmental delays; rehabilitated the Pedagogical Medical Psychosocial Centre space, and procured essential equipment for the centre in Rasht district; trained 25 national and regional experts and 138 health care workers (family medicine doctors and the centre's staff). Due to this, out of the 844 children screened between July and November 2018, 15 children with developmental delays were referred for expert consultation; five of them were enrolled in rehabilitation programme.

UNICEF Tajikistan contributed to system-strengthening to improve adolescent health with a focus on youth-friendly health services and adolescent mental health. UNICEF assisted the MoSPP in implementation of Ministerial Decree #426 (2017) on integration of adolescent-friendly services at primary health care. Algorithms and protocols were developed and approved for national adolescent health check-ups which started in the Sughd region, to be scaled nationwide.

Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population, with UNICEF Tajikistan support, started implementation of the national programme on "Adolescent development and their social participation" with the focus on adolescent mental health. A rapid assessment of the adolescent psychological support system was finalized and presented to an inter-sectoral audience. Based on this, 320 school psychologists, 200 primary health care personnel and other relevant staff in pilot regions of the country (Sughd province and three Districts of Republican Subordination districts) were enabled to provide adolescent mental health services with an expected outreach to 43,000 adolescents.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

According to the Ministry of Education and Science data (2018), only 12.5 percent of children aged three to six (122,241, of whom 54,576 are girls) are enrolled in preschool education. To improve access to early childhood education opportunities and learning outcomes for pre-schoolers, UNICEF Tajikistan continued its partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, which resulted in enrolment of 1,187 children of age four to six (574 girls), representing diverse ethnic backgrounds (Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Russian and Tatar) in 15 early childhood education centres in five targeted border districts within the Sughd Region of Tajikistan.

UNICEF Tajikistan supported the Institute for Education Development and the In-Service Teacher Training Institute to design and deliver a multilingual education and peacebuilding programme in Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tatar, which allowed 935 ethnic minority children to start their first learning experience in their mother tongue. These children represent 12 per cent of total ethnic minority children enrolled in early childhood education in the Sughd Region and 7.9 per cent of the total ethnic minority children enrolled in early childhood education across the country. Some 51 preschool teachers and 20 local education officials were capacitated on child-centred teaching and learning techniques to support young children in a diverse linguistic

and cultural environment. The programme components concentrated on the issues pertinent to the cross-border areas, such as different ethnic backgrounds, that often cause misunderstanding and exclusive social and cultural practices.

This programme is part of the global initiative on early childhood education and peacebuilding by UNICEF Headquarters and Early Childhood Peace Consortium and seven country offices, to evaluate the impact of early childhood education on sustainable development and social cohesion. The network is led by Queen's University Belfast, supported by the expertise from Yale University, New York University and Harvard University in partnership with UNICEF. In Tajikistan, the research aims to measure the abilities of 1,500 young children and their parents to recognize and respond to situations of discrimination and exclusion in districts where the early childhood education model is implemented under the UK Department for International Development (DFID) conflict, stability and security fund. The research will generate evidence about the influence of early childhood education on peacebuilding and sustainable development, as well as facilitate the revision of the existing early childhood education curriculum in Tajikistan. It will contribute to the global knowledge on the impact of early childhood education on sustainable development and social cohesion.

To increase demand for early learning services and address gender equality, social inclusion and other social norms and behaviours at scale, UNICEF Tajikistan supported production of TV animation "The Magic Box"; 25 episodes were broadcast in 2018 nationwide with the estimated outreach of over 70 per cent of children of age three to six years, and their parents.

At the policy level, UNICEF Tajikistan supported the Ministry of Education and Science to develop a medium-term education action plan 2018-2020, which stipulates an increase in access and quality of early learning as one of the key priorities. UNICEF Tajikistan, with the support from the UNICEF Regional Office, engaged with the Ministry of Education and Science to cost several proposed scenarios of transition to a 12-year education system, with pre-primary education being one scenario envisaging a compulsory year of school-readiness programme for all six-year-old children. This led to a policy dialogue with stakeholders on the feasibility of transition to a 12-year education; options to support evidence-based decision-making; and to enhance institutional capacity in planning and budgeting.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, UNICEF Tajikistan is conducting analysis of fiscal space and financing options to enable the Government to allocate education reforms to balance cost effectiveness and learning outcomes of children in Tajikistan. As a coordinating agency for the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF Tajikistan secured funding to implement reforms from the General Partnership for Education's Multiplier Fund (US\$10 million), leveraging an additional US\$60million from the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank.

Building on inclusive-education policies, including early detection/early intervention under the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNICEF Tajikistan partnered with the Ministry of Education and Science and the In-service Teacher Training

Institute to develop a school-based inclusive-education model. The model was introduced in 11 schools in three regions where resource classes were set up by the Ministry of Education and Science with General Partnership for Education support. This enabled 184 children (84 girls) with disabilities—2.8 percent out of 6,584 children with disabilities (2,611 girls) in formal education—to attend mainstream school with their peers. With programme implementation, the proportion of children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive education is expected to increase by 40 percent by 2020.

UNICEF Tajikistan also supported pre-service teacher training with the delivery of a pedagogical mastery course in four universities, and enabled 50 faculty staff to prepare future teachers on child-centred teaching and learning. This resulted in the Ministry of Education and Science commitment to expand the course to all universities in the country and fill the gap in preparing teachers with approaches to improve learning outcomes of future generations of students in mainstream schools.

In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan further implemented its holistic approach to peacebuilding and social cohesion models. Peacebuilding and social cohesion models are adapted to each age group to ensure new, non-violent narratives are embedded into the lives of children and their communities from early childhood education centres through university years and adolescence.

UNICEF Tajikistan developed an integrated programme for in- and out-of-school adolescents, with a focus on those youth not in education, employment and training. To support competencies and skills relevant for learning, transition to other levels of education, adulthood and employability, the competency-based education model is being delivered through formal and non-formal education, such as student councils in schools, 'adolescent innovation labs' in centres for additional education and outdoor education in summer camps.

A resource pack on competence-based learning was completed with a focus on key peacebuilding skills. During 2018, 4,971 children (2,393 girls) and adolescents in five districts enhanced their competencies in problem-solving, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and goal setting through work with student councils. About 140 teachers and local education officials are commissioned to deliver this gender-sensitive and equity-focused model. After revision and approval by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2019, the programme has a potential for scale-up to all schools reaching more than 1.5 million students. As part of the global Generation Unlimited initiative the model seeks to ensure that more girls and boys have skills for employability and empowerment, all of them contributing to a more peaceful and prosperous future.

In 2018, nine adolescent innovation labs opened in the five regions of the country. Through PESHSAF (UPSHIFT) social innovation curriculum at the adolescent innovation labs, 2,780 adolescent girls and boys acquired skills and developed their own innovative solutions to social problems in their communities. By 2020, UNICEF Tajikistan aims to establish adolescent innovation labs in every centre for additional education and youth centre in Tajikistan, building 21st century skills of up to 30,000 adolescents and youth every year. To support sustainable

mechanism of skills-building within non-formal education, the social entrepreneurship curriculum titled PESHSAF (UPSHIFT)---a boot camp curriculum and mentorship programme for adolescent innovation labs---was developed for Tajikistan in collaboration with human-centred design company LLC Quicksand, with a dedicated website to raise awareness on skills-building and opportunities.

To successfully support adolescents in transition from school to work, UNICEF Tajikistan and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population, conducted a feasibility study on impact sourcing as a model of building skills for employment and providing employment opportunities to marginalized adolescents and young people with a focus on digital platforms. The study showed high relevance and feasibility of these skills for Tajikistan. UNICEF started development of first pilot phase of implementation of impact sourcing in cooperation with the Agency on Employment of Population to link 16,000 young people with job opportunities by the end of 2020.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Government efforts to strengthen the country's child protection system are underway. The functional assessment of the Commission on Child Rights and the child-rights units that was finalized in early 2018 provided understanding of the formal child protection system, including its capacities, continuum of care, process of care and accountability. This is a key step towards addressing the gaps, and recommendations from the exercise are now being implemented. The establishment of a new Directorate on Child Rights Protection was a key measure taken by the Ministry of Education and Science to ensure that the Law on Child Rights Protection is effectively implemented and monitored.

In its Concluding Observations 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child identified the administration of juvenile justice as a main area of concern. According to official statistics, in 2017 there were 683 offences committed by children (657 boys/26 girls) and 1,039 child victims—an increase from 2016. To ensure that as many of these children as possible receive child-friendly justice, UNICEF Tajikistan supported the Supreme Court Training Centre, the General Prosecutor's Training Institute and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to strengthen capacity and increase the number of professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver child-friendly justice to children. As a result, 60 newly-appointed judges and 20 prosecutors gained acumen in child justice and child psychology. To ensure training institutions of law enforcement agencies have in-house capacity to carry out training on justice for children, 10 judges, 10 police officers and five prosecutors were trained as master trainers.

UNICEF continued to support the only diversion programme available in the country. In January-November, 106 children (18 girls and 88 boys) in conflict with the law or with behavioural difficulties benefitted from rehabilitation services in five districts of Sughd region. Among other actions, UNICEF Tajikistan supported: case workers, who made a total of 289 household visits to monitor the effective rehabilitation of these children; 20 para-social workers in centres for additional education; and two child-rights units officers in learning better case

management. Advocacy efforts to scale up this model have so far been unsuccessful, however, partly due to limited budget resources. In light of the keen interest expressed by the Ministry of Education and Science to establish adolescent innovation labs in the centres for additional education, UNICEF will advocate for the two initiatives to be linked and ensure that attention is paid to the problems faced by marginalized children with behavioural issues.

UNICEF remains a key partner of the Ombudsman for Child Rights, focusing support on institutional strengthening which included a visit to Kazakhstan to observe good practice in child rights monitoring. With UNICEF Tajikistan technical guidance and funding, the Ombudsman for Child Rights team monitored child rights in 11 residential child care institutions, including boarding schools and institutions for children with disabilities, as well as secondary schools located in various parts of the country servicing 3,188 children. For the first time, the visits were conducted jointly with non-government organizations and were guided by 'the best interests of the child' principle, focusing on the necessity and suitability of placement of children, and not just living conditions. During these visits, the Ombudsman for Child Rights team engaged with the communities to raise awareness on the role of the Ombudsman for Child Rights and gathered information on the concerns and difficulties of families and children in the community. The findings of these visits were presented to concerned government stakeholders and civil society organisations in December and the recommendations will be followed.

The implementation of the 42-month multi-country project on "Protecting children affected by migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia" was kicked off in July. The main objective of the project funded by the European Union is to protect and promote the rights of children affected by migration in eight countries: Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Thailand and Tajikistan.

In Tajikistan, the focus is to ensure that children affected by migration and their caregivers have access to services such as birth registration, education, health, social welfare and vocational skills for mothers. The project will contribute to building the capacity of stakeholders such as para-social workers, child-rights unit officers, migration departments, parents, local authorities to be able to refer and manage cases of children on an individual basis.

The recently released data from Demographic and Health Survey 2017 shows that 69 per cent of children from one to 14 years old experienced some type of violent discipline. In line with Goal Area 3 of the strategic plan, UNICEF Tajikistan embarked on an initiative to address violence against children, particularly in the family setting. To better understand causes of this violence and devise interventions to tackle them, UNICEF Tajikistan partnered with the international non-government organization CESVI and the Istituto degli Innocenti, an Italian research institution, to conduct research in three districts. In 2019, the findings will design interventions to prevent and respond to violence against children in the family, the community and at school in six villages of three districts of Rudaki, B. Gafurov and Panjakent. UNICEF will document and present to the Government the process and the results of this 18-month intervention in the second half of 2019 for review and potential scale-up.

In 10 jamoats of Rasht district, 121 children with disabilities (62 girls/59 boys) received community-based rehabilitation assistance. The children included those with hearing impairment, visual impairment, speech disorder, and intellectual and developmental disability, including cerebral palsy. Of the children, four girls and three boys were enrolled in school with UNICEF support. To improve the quality of services received by the children, 12 staff from a partner non-government organization, Social Assistance at Home, learned the basics of community-based rehabilitation, with a focus on physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and visual and hearing impairment.

Through its partnership with a local non-government organization, Refugee Children and Vulnerable Children, UNICEF assisted 13 child returnees (nine girls), six from Iraq and seven from Turkey. The parents of the latter children had attempted to cross the Turkey and Syria border and were deported to Tajikistan where some received long-term prison sentences. The children received medical check-ups, home tutoring, enrolment in pre-primary and primary school, one-time cash assistance for each child, advice and assistance in accessing birth certificates. The International Committee of the Red Cross complemented the support with home-based counselling sessions for children on an as-needed basis. Despite constant advocacy efforts with the Government to establish a multi-sectoral task force to coordinate government action regarding the repatriation and reintegration of child returnees, no such platform has been set up in the previous six months.

Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Optimizing hygiene and sanitation in Tajikistan remains a challenge. Currently, a majority of health facilities in the country lack adequate water supply systems and sanitation. Where these do exist, they are in a very poor condition, failing to meet national standards. Sixty-five out of 73 (89 per cent) of maternal wards in the country, where more than 80 per cent of annual child births take place, do not meet the required WASH standards. Poor hygiene practices continue to contribute to high prevalence of infectious diseases among mothers and newborns.

The sanitation situation in several schools across the country remains equally dire. Many schools in Tajikistan have access to piped water sources in the yard only; many rely on open drinking water sources around the school, posing a health risk to children. Sanitation facilities are generally available on-site for schools in Tajikistan, however they are usually basic pit latrines situated outside the school buildings. Soap for hand-washing is not available in most schools. One reason for adolescent girls' drop-out after completing mandatory basic education is attributable to lack of proper sanitation facilities in schools.

A UNICEF Tajikistan 'strategic moment of reflection' exercise in 2018 led to reintroduce a WASH programme to address these issues. With a long-term objective of ensuring that all households, schools and health facilities in Tajikistan have access to safely-managed drinking water and sanitation facilities, UNICEF Tajikistan committed to address sub-optimal water supply and sanitation in schools and health facilities in a phased approach. Specifically,

UNICEF will help ensure that by 2020, 50 per cent of the schools and 100 per cent of maternity centres in the country are WASH-compliant as per national standards.

Towards this end, UNICEF's effort resulted in the Government's identification of 50 schools and 20 maternity wards to benefit from the first phase of the WASH interventions. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population and the Ministry of Education, UNICEF engaged the technical services of the Tajikistan State Unitary Enterprise "Research Institute of Construction and Architecture" to conduct an assessment of needs and develop a Bill of Quantities facilitating scaled implementation of the first phase of WASH interventions in school and maternities, for which funding was secured in 2018.

In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan launched a new WASH in schools programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and initiated an assessment of 50 schools that will benefit from renovation and augmentation of the existing WASH infrastructure. A comprehensive hygiene promotion strategy will be developed and implemented during 2019 and the hygiene, water and sanitation skills of children, parents and other stakeholders will be enhanced.

In 2018, UNICEF advocacy and engagement with government and development partners led to the convening of the Children's Water Forum as part of the high-level international conference Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028 on 19 June 2018. This forum highlighted the importance of water for children and amplified the voices of children and young people to all participants of the conference. UNICEF Tajikistan with the Ministry of Education and Science ran UPSHIFT Youth Challenge on WASH, allowing adolescent girls and boys to express their views on WASH problems in the country and mobilize communities through their innovative solutions. UNICEF in Tajikistan, in cooperation with the State Committee on Youth Affairs, launched a co-creation contest using the UPSHIFT approach within the framework of Global Partnership Generation Unlimited, as one of 16 pilot countries globally. The UNICEF-led, WASH-themed UPSHIFT lab attracted more than 600 adolescents from different parts of the country whose proposed solutions and innovative products were showcased at the Water for Life conference.

Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

In partnership with the World Bank, UNICEF Tajikistan influenced the country's poverty monitoring approach by introducing a new child poverty measurement methodology. For the first time, the Government is able to report on the number of children living in monetary poverty using the Household Budget Survey data. UNICEF and the World Bank then produced a joint analytical note on child poverty and shared the results with the Tajikistan Poverty Council, which is comprised of representatives from all concerned ministries. As a result of this joint advocacy, the Agency on Statistics committed to routine monitoring of child poverty and biannual reporting. With a systematic approach to child poverty monitoring in place, the Government can better prevent risks induced by poverty and address systemic deprivation. This new data on child poverty is used to advocate with the Government on the benefit amount

of targeted social assistance for low-income families, based on the number of children in the household.

UNICEF launched a new partnership with the Government on humanitarian cash transfers. Tajikistan—a country prone to natural disasters often affecting vulnerable populations—will focus on investing in the national social protection system and work with the existing targeted social assistance programme to provide cash to the affected population. Through South-South cooperation facilitated by UNICEF, 10 national stakeholders could enhance their understanding and capacity in humanitarian cash transfer programming in Nepal, which would result in the Government's agreement to pilot a new humanitarian cash transfer programme in 2019.

With UNICEF support, the Government launched the first six-month awareness-raising National Campaign on Disability Inclusion in July 2018: a component of the 'communication for social change' strategy developed in 2017 based on the findings of the 2016 knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices' study. The campaign is being rolled out across the country through national and local TV and radio channels, national newspapers and social media platforms with a potential reach of over 7.7 million people based on the media outlets. It portrays men and women, boys and girls with disabilities who challenge, through their actions, prevailing misconceptions about persons with disabilities. The campaign will raise understanding, awareness and tolerance in the society. Throughout the design, launch and rollout of the campaign, disabled persons organizations played an active role and provided expert guidance on the messaging.

Adolescents as agents of change

In the domain of adolescent engagement, UNICEF Tajikistan in cooperation with partners developed an enabling environment for the active participation of adolescents in decision-making at local government level, as well as for their contribution to social cohesion in their communities. Through a collaborative approach, UNICEF empowered adolescents with peace-building competencies and relevant skills and provided an opportunity to apply their skills in leading community development initiatives. This helped change the worldview of adolescents from the cross-border districts from a negative perception of neighbouring Kyrgyz communities to a peaceful narrative aimed at inter-communal cohabitation. A total of 6,217 adolescents (3,225 girls) participated in or led civic engagement activities within the consultative platforms established at the local government level in Isfara and B. Gafurov cross-border districts—23 per cent of the total adolescent population.

Many adolescent-led initiatives were aimed at building tolerance given the persisting inter-communal tensions in four cross-border districts. To enable the support of local governments, 126 government representatives in four districts were capacitated to develop approaches on positive engagement with adolescents. In addition to this, all 69 heads of district-level youth committees in the country were dispatched to work for the engagement of adolescents in decision-making.

UNICEF supported the participation of 4,600 adolescents by providing the opportunity to be heard through a first-time, national adolescent study. In partnership with the Strategic Research Centre, the study applied active participatory research methods and 'foresight game consultation' modality. The steering committee proposed the development of a national action plan, based on the evidence, to incorporate into the Government's National Sustainable Development Goal programme for children, the new Strategy on Youth for 2019-2030, the National Health Strategy for 2020-2030 and other policy documents.

The normative framework on adolescent and youth participation was enhanced with UNICEF Tajikistan support and partnership with the Committee on Youth Affairs and Sport. In 2018, UNICEF backed the National Programme on Youth Social Development for 2019-2021. The priorities of adolescents related to their health, skills and innovation, and civic engagement were incorporated in the national programme and concentrated in 10 key areas. In the scope of this programme, a US\$10,500 (100,000 TJS) state grant was provided to youth non-government organizations and adolescent groups to enable social initiatives. Youth themselves were actively involved in the programme development through provincial-level youth consultations, covering 150 young people from five regional centres.

The law on youth and youth policies was revised with UNICEF support to incorporate principles of youth participation in political governance, and to address the needs of most vulnerable adolescents and youth (14 to 30 years old). UNICEF supported the Ministry of Justice in development and publication of the interpretation of the Law on Protection of the Rights of the Child to provide another normative document ensuring the right of children for participation, as well as the broader rights of the child during adolescence.

Restrictive social norms regarding adolescent participation in the country will be addressed through a communication for development strategy on adolescent participation. A cross-sectoral team of national partners validated the approach to promote the change of mindset and the behaviours of stakeholders in acknowledging adolescents as partners and agents of change, rather than vulnerable people who need support. In 2019, the communication for development strategy on adolescent participation will be incorporated across programme interventions to reach adolescents, parents and duty bearers in 15 districts and five regional centres of the country.

Humanitarian assistance/Disaster risk reduction

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to work closely with the Government of Tajikistan, Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team, and national and international partners to reach and protect the rights of vulnerable children and their families during humanitarian situations.

In May 2018, in response to the major disasters and emergencies in the country, UNICEF Tajikistan provided lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the population affected by floods and mudflows in Pyanj and Farkhor districts, and reached 5,040 affected people, including 3,175

children, with WASH-related emergency supplies, including hygiene kits, water tanks and canisters, water purification tablets and communication for development materials. Emergency supplies were distributed through the Committee on Emergency Situations from UNICEF pre-positioned stocks based on request, and in coordination with the Government of Tajikistan. As UNICEF Tajikistan's response is carried out through government institutions, it not only provided emergency relief to affected populations but strengthened the capacity of the basic social service systems to prepare for and respond to future emergencies.

In line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action benchmarks, UNICEF Tajikistan invested in its own and its partners' emergency preparedness capacity by developing contingency plans; replenishing emergency supplies and pre-positioning them at higher risk zones; and testing contingency programme cooperation agreements signed with partners through full-fledged and table-top simulation exercises, organized by the United Nations country team, UNOCHA and Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team partners. This intervention enhanced UNICEF Tajikistan's partners' ability to support the Government of Tajikistan in effective emergency preparedness and response.

UNICEF Tajikistan maintained disaster risk reduction programmes to build the capacity of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and educational facilities to prepare for the natural disasters that frequently affect the country. In Partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, UNICEF Tajikistan distributed the Disaster Risk Management Guidelines to 3,800 schools in Tajikistan and provided training for school inspectors. Following its global agreement in 2015, UNICEF and the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan strengthened cooperation on humanitarian action for affected populations in the context of emergency preparedness, early action measures, the promotion of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and the emphasis of youth participation and development. In December 2018, UNICEF and Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan launched a joint project on strengthening disaster risk management policy in education facilities, institutional and human capacity building, and selected schools' resilience to disasters.

At the policy level, UNICEF Tajikistan supported the development of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy. This now has a strong focus on resilience and risk reduction rather than disaster management alone.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

Water and sanitation for children remains a major concern in Tajikistan, with many development partners focusing on water policy and infrastructure as priorities, while 42 per cent of the infant mortality rate caseload is attributed to lack of water and sanitation at a community level. UNICEF Tajikistan phased out of WASH programming at the mid-term review of the previous country programme (2010-2015), and no new partner has emerged locally to fill in the WASH gap in education or the health sector (for example, maternity wards), especially on WASH soft programming.

There are very real challenges in building and maintaining functioning latrines in schools and hospitals. This gap in both the soft component and infrastructure has a negative impact on delivering results in areas of health (specifically maternal, newborn and child health) and nutrition. Following a call by development partners and the Government during the mid-term review, and the analysis of service gaps in hospitals and schools, UNICEF Tajikistan took the decision to restart a WASH programme. It based programming priorities on lessons learned, as well as concerns flagged in the design and sustainability of the previous country programme.

New opportunities emerged to further engage and position UNICEF Tajikistan more strategically vis-à-vis the development sphere in Tajikistan, especially considering the momentum created from the Government commitment to nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the overall 2030 agenda, as well as the urgent and substantive action required to follow-up on the recently submitted Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Right of the Child (September 2017). In this context, the Commission on Child Rights and UNICEF are jointly developing the national Sustainable Development Goal programme for children extending through the lifespan of the Goals, to accelerate the achievement of results for girls and boys with integrated and comprehensive policy planning and budgeting process, setting key targets/indicators, securing financing, and fulfilling obligations under the Convention. This repositioning requires significant cross-sectoral evidence-based planning, as well as identifying new models of financing.

Financing for children is a priority due to economic constraints that are expected to continue to affect government spending on child-related programmes and services. Value-for-money advocacy becomes increasingly important in a resource-constrained context. Budgetary limitations and decreasing the international donor portfolio may jeopardize sustained results for children. UNICEF Tajikistan strives to strengthen engagement in public finance management with focus on efficiency and effectiveness of services and programmes for children and their families. Several costing exercises helped national stakeholders better understand financial implications of proposed policies and political decisions. However, a proper budgeting exercise is not a mandatory prerequisite to development of any policy document in the country. Furthermore, the level of understanding of costing models is very low and the national capacity for budgeting is weak. There is not a sufficient connection between costing and financing. Thus, costing results are not utilized at the level where they could contribute to policy-making. UNICEF continued investing in capacity development on broader public finance for children issues such as programme-based and participatory budgeting and value-for-money analyses.

The social sector will remain fiscally strained in the coming years, primarily due to the Government's prioritization to allocate funds to the energy sector, in particular to the construction of the Rogun hydropower plant, with the goal to minimize the import of electricity and to generate revenues through the export of electricity to neighbouring countries. UNICEF Tajikistan advocacy for more efficient budget implementation and to re-prioritize investment within the available budget envelope will be a more realistic approach by decision-makers such as the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and sectoral

ministries. Obtaining budget data both from the Ministry of Finance and the sectoral ministries proved to be challenging. Concerning data on children, the challenge is exacerbated by the fact that disaggregation by age is technically difficult. In 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan improved its collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and sectoral ministries in order to jointly embark on the analysis of the public spending and budget efficiency exercise within the framework of developing a national SDG programme for children.

Public financial management initiatives are a platform to engage with public policy formulation and budgeting for children. The roles of development partners and international financial institutions are crucial in financing for children in Tajikistan. UNICEF Tajikistan will enhance its cooperation with international financial institutions, building on efforts that have mobilized resources for children. The CCR and UNICEF began national-level consultations on a national SDG programme for children in late 2018, which can serve as a solid platform for engagement with development partners and international financial institutions.

The quality of services in the social sector is another critical area for UNICEF Tajikistan. The model of health service delivery and the patient health care pathways between rural and urban areas continue to create inequity. Typically, urban population have access to higher levels, and often better quality, of care without referral from the primary care level. Gate-keeping at primary care level, poor integration of primary and secondary care, and gaps in post- specialist or post-hospital care impedes timeliness and access to needed care, as well as follow-up treatment by primary care providers, especially in rural areas.

Health-facility infrastructure suffered from years of under-investment; technology and equipment are often obsolete. It is not uncommon for rural health facilities to lack electricity, adequate water and sanitation facilities and functional washing points with water and soap. Consequently, infection-prevention measures were poorly followed, resulting in preventable neonatal morbidity and mortality and discouraging care-seeking and service utilization by pregnant women.

Health care in Tajikistan suffered from 'brain drain' phenomenon, as health workers seek higher wages abroad. This, coupled with the high turnover of health care workers, hampers sustainability of capacity-building results, suggesting a need for a continuous education curriculum for healthcare providers and for supportive supervision of the healthcare worker.

While the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population recognized the challenge of improving quality of care, embarking on the revision of existing clinical protocols, gaps remain in adherence to protocols and guidelines by health care practitioners. Fears of confidentiality breaches exist and as a result, clients' refusal to give consent for transfer of their cases hampers optimal integration of such things as HIV/AIDS prevention or treatment into primary health care.

Another major concern in health service provision is poor and limited adolescent-friendly services and psychological support. On the one hand, services are not tailored to the needs of

adolescents and young people, while on the other, the capacity of health personnel to provide care to adolescents is limited and requires continuous investment. UNICEF Tajikistan is addressing some of the identified gaps, but there is a need for greater investment in the knowledge of health professionals on adolescent psychology.

To address quality gaps of health care at policy level, UNICEF supported evidence generation, the development of policies, tools protocols, guidelines, cross sectoral results framework and the budgeting of packages of care that would objectively influence policy formulation and would benchmark services quality. At a service-provision level, UNICEF Tajikistan assisted in the procurement and provision of essential equipment, vaccines, integrated management of childhood illness' medication, cold chain equipment, Vitamin A and therapeutic food for the treatment of acute malnutrition. Capacity-building for health care workers, school psychologists, administration and officials needs to be a part of continuous quality improvement system.

Regarding adolescent friendly services, support is needed to raise awareness to create demand for services. The inclusion of adolescent health topics in the pre- and in-service training curriculum of health care workers and teachers would facilitate sustainability and longer-term availability for adolescent health services.

Despite improved access, the education system is still beset with quality issues. In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Science supported by development partners and multilateral organizations, such as the Global Partnership for Education and the European Union, improved the quality of education through the adoption of competency-based curriculum, the improvement of learning materials and the overall enhancement of school infrastructure. However, poor quality of instruction is still prevalent, especially in rural areas. There is a prevailing failure to attract, train and retrain qualified and motivated teaching personnel. As a result, the education system is failing to equip boys and girls with relevant skills for their future life and employment.

To fulfil children's right to education, UNICEF Tajikistan facilitated a dialogue with development partners which led to the agreement with the European Union to support development of a new Education Sector Plan 2021-2030 aligned to the national priorities and the SDG agenda. The focus of the Plan will be to improve equity, efficiency and learning outcomes at all levels of education. As a coordinating agency for the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF leveraged almost US\$70 million to secure funding for education reforms.

In Tajikistan, the national data management system remains fragmented with limited access to quality, disaggregated data. Data production and data supply are mismatched. Though localization of the SDGs has become a beacon for national development, action plans and strategies across sectors lack proper targets and indicators. Disaggregated data in general, and on vulnerabilities in particular, is lacking. The availability of reliable, disaggregated and regularly collected government data on children and adolescents remains a major challenge in the country. Ability to conduct timely monitoring, data collection and reporting is impeded by limited capacity on the ground and a punitive culture in which data that is not considered as

'favourable' is dismissed or questioned (including official data) and which results in the absence of systematic, harmonized approach to data analysis and use. The process of data clearance takes time that limits its use as evidence for policy decisions. Capacity-building efforts are hampered by high turnover, low salaries and a poor performance management system, as well as the discouragement of real accountability and transparency in data sharing.

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to monitor the situation of children through alternative data collection systems such as "Listening to Tajikistan", a monthly real-time monitoring survey conducted by the World Bank, and through the food security monitoring survey conducted twice a year by the World Food Programme. UNICEF engaged in development of a vulnerability atlas based on the secondary data at the district level to help target interventions to reach the most marginalized. The Atlas is pending final approval by the Government. UNICEF contributed to the Demographic and Health Survey (2017) by introducing the module on child discipline, one of the few child-related indicators in Multiple Indicator Survey Cluster modules missing from the DHS. Further efforts by UNICEF Tajikistan in evidence and knowledge agenda will focus on supporting the country in developing a robust child rights monitoring framework, as recommended by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, UNICEF Tajikistan, as a (co-)custodian of 17 SDG indicators, champions the SDG agenda for children with a focus on resourcing, planning and monitoring. Support to national partners to localization the SDG targets will contribute to collaboration with Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (in charge of planning, Sustainable Development Goals, the National Development Strategy and United Nations Development Assistance Framework) that is responsible for the SDG reporting.

END/