

Uzbekistan

Update on the context and situation of children

Uzbekistan's population exceeds 35 million inhabitants, and it remains an early demographic-dividend country with its predominantly young population, i.e. 60 per cent under 30 years old.[1]

The economy is transitioning from a centrally planned to a free-market economy, with many sectors being reformed and privatisation expanded. According to government sources, the informal economy constitutes around 50 per cent of the national GDP. According to the World Bank, GDP growth in Uzbekistan for 2021 was 6.2 per cent and forecasted at 5.6 per cent growth in 2022.[2]

With a substantial proportion of the population being under 18, the Government has emphasised meeting children's needs. This priority is evident in the state budget, with more than 35 per cent of GDP allocated for social sectors.[3]

The environmental catastrophe of the Aral Sea remains a significant challenge for the region, which is leading to limited water resources, the prospects of consequent food insecurity and climate change impact. At the UN climate summit in Glasgow (COP26), Uzbekistan reaffirmed its commitment to promote the green agenda and curb climate change processes and made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions per unit of GDP by 35 per cent until 2030 and generate 25 per cent of electricity from renewable sources.

During the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Uzbekistan committed to uphold fundamental human rights and freedoms and develop civil society, including a commitment to "Leave No One Behind" by prioritising gender equality, rights of persons with disabilities, and youth policy. These affirmative commitments resulted in the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), an open invitation to all Special Rapporteurs to visit Uzbekistan and the adoption of the 2030 National Gender Equality Strategy.

In the aftermath of the Taliban taking over in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan policy is influenced by concerns of a possible influx of Afghan refugees and the potential presence of radical groups among them. According to the Ministry of Interior, more than 13,000 Afghans had crossed into Uzbekistan. Their needs are yet to be assessed, and access to services is ensured.

Long before the 2021 presidential elections, the current President, who was re-elected for the second term in October, had distinguished himself by promulgating policies that have positively impacted children and young people in Uzbekistan, namely: 1) enhancing early childhood education coverage; 2) investing in human capital development with emphasis on mother and child health and nutrition; 3) educating and developing skills, especially of girls; 4) targeting the most vulnerable children and families through social protection and poverty reduction measures; 5) effectively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic; 6) repatriating women and children from conflict zones; 7) supporting children without parental care.

According to the Government, the preschool enrolment rates increased from 52 to 62 per cent in 2021. The participation rates in organised learning one year before the official primary entry age (SDG 4.2.2.) is increased by 15 per cent reaching 77 per cent among the 6-year-olds. However, substantial regional disparities remained wherein Surkhandarya, the enrollment rate is only 42 per cent, whereas, in Tashkent city, it reached 86 per cent.

Uzbekistan is currently on track to achieve the 2030 global nutrition target on stunting while regional disparities remain. The Government is drafting a new Health Strategy 2030, which is expected to

ensure that all building blocks of the system addressed and sustainability of investments by partners in areas like immunisation are maintained.

By the end of 2021, Uzbekistan had received 43,2 million vaccines with 34.9 million doses of vaccines administered, out of which 9.7 million (45.2 per cent) of the eligible population fully vaccinated.

In 2021, 6.1 million children attended general secondary education (GSE), and 30-40 thousand were estimated to be out-of-school (OOSC). Historical data suggests that children with disabilities, girls, those from remote areas over-represented among the OOSC. In 2021, the GSE enrolment rates were 97 per cent, with a gender parity index of 0.94. Only 94 per cent of the boys and 86 per cent of the girls completed the first stage-lower secondary education (grade 9). Available evidence on learning outcomes shows students learn through rote memorisation and have inadequate mastering of competencies for application, reasoning, and higher-order thinking competencies. It is also anticipated that remote learning resulted in further learning losses.

There are concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic shock on the population. The Government introduced measures to mitigate the pandemic's impact, including establishing an Anti-crisis Fund and substantially increasing social protection coverage and economic stimulus measures. However, UNICEF estimated that the share of children in low-income households is 11 per cent higher than what it would have been without the pandemic, implying that an additional 845,000 children fell into the low-income families bracket.

The Government of Uzbekistan has continued to demonstrate an exemplary commitment to repatriate women and children from conflict zones and to ensure gender-sensitive and age-appropriate reintegration support, a fact that was acknowledged by the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism. In April 2021, the Government repatriated an additional 24 women and 69 children, including seven children without parental care, from Syria. Eight women and 18 children who returned on their own from Afghanistan in March 2021 were granted reintegration support as well. As of the end of 2021, between 150-180 children of Uzbek origin, including unaccompanied and separated children, are estimated to be stranded in camps in Syria.

A key milestone in the protection of the rights of children without parental care was the adoption of a Presidential Decree and related roadmap in August 2021, which put in place a moratorium for the establishment of large-scale residential facilities for children and calls for the development of a national de-institutionalisation strategy and family-based alternative care.

[1] State Statistics Committee (2019), Demographic Situation.

[2] World Bank (2022) Global Economic Prospect.

[3] UNDP (2021) Development Financing Analysis in Uzbekistan

Major contributions and drivers of results

As 2021 launched the first year of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Country Programme for Uzbekistan derived from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and normative mandate as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the emerging corporate priorities, UNICEF's work has focused on unpacking strategic areas of engagement in line with the national development and sectoral priorities. During the year, UNICEF extended its technical assistance to the Government in defining evidence-based strategies and plans for the areas like immunisation, pre-primary and primary education, skill development and youth civic engagement, social protection, childcare, gender equality, the inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF made a significant contribution to a joined-up COVID-19 response and recovery work with WHO, relevant UN agencies, IFIs and development partners in the field of vaccines deployment and use, adapting measures to ensure safe and accessible education and expanding social protection measures to minimise the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable, including children.

UNICEF's advocacy resulted in recognising the importance of independent child rights monitoring and creating a specialised Ombudsperson post. Joint work with partners led to the ratification of CRPD, the design of a national action plan and a joint programme. The UNICEF-led programme targets inclusive services' modelling and investing in civil society capacity to demonstrate the shift from a medical to human rights approach. The Multi-Cluster Indicator Survey conducted with UNICEF's support will inform SDG monitoring for more than 30 disaggregated indicators related to women and children by mid-2022.

Programming at scale and a balanced approach to system strengthening work accompanied by modelling and reducing equity gaps at a sub-national level were observed in all areas of the engagement.

Goal area 1. Every Child Survives and Thrives

Despite the active phase of COVID-19 spread in the country and its burden to the health and wellbeing of children, adolescents and women, UNICEF managed to extend its unprecedented support to the Government, ensuring the sustainability of the routine immunisation programme and providing significant support as a key supply partner under the COVAX mechanism. As a result, more than 19.6 million children under five and adults benefited from enhanced immunisation supply and cold chain systems, and 4.5 million adults were fully vaccinated against COVID-19 thanks to the COVAX facility.

Since the pandemic, 49.036 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were delivered to Uzbekistan, and 63.1 per cent of the target population is fully vaccinated. The immunisation cold chain system was upgraded by commissioning 21 new cold stores, procurement of eight ultra-cold freezers for vaccines, 2,078 refrigerators for primary health care facilities, and 16 SUVs for monitoring. Moreover, the vaccine logistic management information system and online knowledge hub have improved National Immunisation Plan's (NIP) efficiency. These investments from GAVI, USAID and COVAX donors have ensured the smooth implementation of the routine and COVID-19 immunisation throughout the country.

Following UNICEF's advocacy and modelling, the universal-progressive home visiting, which covers important elements of nurturing care, was scaled up nationwide and sustained from the state budget. More than four million mothers and children in Uzbekistan, especially the disadvantaged families, have improved access to services and reduce equity gaps by reaching out and including the most vulnerable populations in home visiting services. More than 48,000 nurses can now roll out the universal-progressive home visiting programme.

WHO and UNICEF have partnered closely in the health system strengthening work. As a result, the entire Syrdarya Region (850,000 inhabitants) benefited from the newly introduced health insurance scheme. All regional perinatal facilities successfully implemented a perinatal death audit.

Five hundred six thousand children aged 6-23 months have benefitted from UNICEF leveraged state budget of more than US\$ 2 million. A total of 8,236 family doctors increased capacity on micronutrient powder management, infant and young child feeding counselling nationwide, and 506,916 parents of children aged 6-23 months nationwide have increased knowledge on healthy nutrition.

The national multisector adolescent health and wellbeing strategy drafted with UNICEF's technical assistance is expected to benefit 5.5 million adolescents directly in the coming five years. The Strategy,

which was endorsed by the Government and awaits approval of the Senate, envisages improving universal health coverage for adolescents, focusing on mental health issues, prevention of non-communicable diseases, improving sexual and reproductive health, prevention of road traffic injury and violence against adolescents.

Goal area 2. Every Child Learns

As educational institutions in Uzbekistan reopened in November 2020, the focus of UNICEF's support was on safe preschool and school functioning and building back better through enhancing access to preschool education and quality general secondary schooling.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to provide technical support to the Government of Uzbekistan. As a result of collective efforts and partnership, the preschool enrollment rate reached 62 per cent, and 77 per cent of 6-year-olds children participated in a one-year pre-primary education programme. The alternative preschools that UNICEF is currently piloting benefit 350 children who attend eight preschools, where children themselves and entire communities benefit from women participation in community life, enhanced social cohesion, and community mobilisation. However, gender, disability, and geographic disparities persist, with only 59 per cent of girls attending a preschool program compared to 66 per cent of boys. Enrollment rates in Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions are only 42 and 44 per cent, respectively, while in Tashkent city it is 86 per cent, followed by Navoi region - 78 per cent. Furthermore, the majority of preschool facilities are not inclusive to accommodate children with developmental delays and disabilities, and specialised facilities remain the main supply for this group. Hence, it was agreed with the Ministry of Preschool Education to prioritise the equity and inclusion dimension of the partnership and leverage additional resources from IFIs and donors to meet desired outcomes with UNICEF's technical assistance.

For the basic education, UNICEF in 2021 continued supporting the Government in creating an enabling policy environment, including but not limited to the Education Sector Plan review, enhancing the content of education, namely developing new curriculum, textbooks, teacher professional standards and assessment systems and empowering and equipping teachers through in-service and pre-service capacity development programs. More specifically, UNICEF supported the Republican Education Center under the Ministry of Public Education in developing competency-based, gender-responsive, inclusive curriculum and textbooks for Math, Mother Language and Science subjects in Grades one and two, which were made available to around 1.23 million schoolchildren. In addition, the digital learning platforms were enriched with UNICEF's support. An additional 1,000 courses became available for children and youth and directly benefited more than 600 girls and 112,000 teachers, who undertook online in-service training on new curricula.

Besides, more than 90 per cent of the schools throughout the country were mapped and monitored for real-time internet connectivity to assess the level of access by children and adolescents to information and learning opportunities.

Challenges remain on the availability of data on the number of OOSC. Nevertheless, notable developments support rights-based inclusive education in the country, followed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' ratification in June 2021 and the introduction of inclusive education in 42 schools on a pilot basis.

Goal area 3. Every Child is Protected from Violence and Exploitation

In 2021, UNICEF provided strategic guidance and support to the Government in advancing childcare reform, strengthening the foundation for social work, and enhancing children's equitable access to justice.

A total of 627 social service and justice professionals strengthened their knowledge and skills in case management, critical child protection support, and child-friendly and gender-sensitive approaches for

vulnerable children, benefitting directly 7,098 children (48 per cent girls).

A key milestone in childcare reform has been the adoption of Presidential Decree from 9 August 2021 and related roadmap, which put in place a moratorium for the establishment of large-scale residential care facilities for children and calls for the development of a national deinstitutionalisation strategy and family-based alternative care options, which will affect an estimated 30,000 children in different forms of residential care.

Advocacy and technical support for a professional social service workforce resulted in the development of a draft Law on Social Work and finalisation and adoption of the intersectoral ‘Instruction on Status, Responsibilities, Functions and Qualification Requirements of Social Workers’ and Professional Standards for social work with the Ministry of Labour and Employment). More than 190 professionals have enhanced their case management and psychosocial support capacities, directly benefitting 6,798 children (47 per cent girls).

Four hundred thirty-seven professionals and more than 300 children (48 per cent girls) benefitted from UNICEF’s support to Government in enhancing children’s equitable access to justice, with a primary focus on preventing children’s deprivation of liberty through introducing non-custodial alternatives and sensitising professionals on relevant international standards; reintegrating children from closed-type special educational institutions into their families and communities; enhancing procedures and practices on rehabilitation and reintegration.

UNICEF policy dialogue and advocacy contributed to adopting a Government National Action Plan supporting women and children repatriated from conflict zones on 4 May 2021. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support, and in partnership with the Taskhiz Centre under the Ministry of Public Education, the Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children and Barqaror Hayot NGO, in 2021, UNICEF ensured reintegration assistance to 65 women and 183 children and support to 35 children in institutional care. Reintegration assistance included in-depth needs assessments, psychosocial support and legal information and assistance to obtain key documents, and referral to essential social services, including housing and material assistance, health care, employment, vocational training and education.

Goal area 4. Every Child Lives in a Safe and Clean Environment

In response to the results of the assessment of the status of WASH in health facilities and schools in Uzbekistan, UNICEF, in collaboration with line ministries and regional governments, are working together to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions in schools and primary healthcare facilities.

UNICEF initiated the improvement of WASH infrastructure in 22 healthcare facilities and 15 schools of the most deprived regions of Karakalpakstan. Several innovations will be used during WASH infrastructure improvement to reduce environmental impacts while still being affordable and sustainable, even in resource-scarce environments. In addition, 170 health care providers and 324 schoolteachers gained knowledge and skills on WASH.

Prevalence of soil-transmitted helminths assessed in 15 target schools among 2,128 primary education students. Results demonstrated that 13 per cent of 6-10 years old children are infected with soil-transmitted helminths. To address identified problem, UNICEF procured 80,000 deworming tablets to cover 13,000 6-10 years old children and 22 primary healthcare facilities in three targeted districts equipped with microscopes to timely detect soil-transmitted helminths among schoolchildren.

Goal area 5. Every Child Has an Equitable Chance in Life

UNICEF’s technical assistance and advocacy in reforming the child benefit system doubled the number of families receiving cash benefits. The number of families receiving benefits increased from

600,000 to 1.2 million by enhancing the Single Registry of Social Protection introduced by UNICEF and owned by the Ministry of Finance. Thirty per cent of the increase in the number of children from low-income families was thanks to UNICEF's advocacy. The modelling of community-based social services has been launched. The exercise aims to test an institutional foundation for the case management system to timely identify, refer and provide community-based services for children and families in need. In total, 106 families were assessed during the pilot which resulted in 192 children (101 boys and 91 girls), including 12 children with disabilities benefiting from services.

UNICEF's evidence-based advocacy and technical assistance made it possible to reach a consensus to measure monetary child poverty in Uzbekistan for the first time. The Cabinet of Ministers adopted resolution on poverty measurement, tasking line ministries to work with World Bank and UNICEF to define national poverty rates for different age and gender groups. UNICEF also established a partnership with the Centre of Economic Research and Reforms under the Presidential Administration on designing and introducing multidimensional child poverty measurement.

In 2021 UNICEF successfully continued implementing the social innovation and entrepreneurship programme UPSHIFT in Karakalpakstan, Surkhandarya, Samarkand and Tashkent regions. The Basic Life Skills curriculum was contextualised for integration into the school curriculum and tested in 30 schools and two residential institutions.

Uzbekistan has also joined an educational nanosatellite programme for girls UniSat+. One hundred eighty-eight girls across all regions of Uzbekistan participated in the online STEM skills-building course.

International Aflatoun curriculum on soft, employability and entrepreneurship skills and financial education was adapted to integrate the programme into the non-formal education system in training and re-training centres for unemployed youth under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations.

Also, UNICEF supported the building of the digital knowledge and skilling platforms for adolescents and youth in local languages, including career counselling and professional orientation, volunteering and internship platforms.

The abovementioned interventions have resulted in reaching over 24,000 young women and men. On top of that, the digital platform U-Report was scaled-up, reaching 225,000 young people, and was featured as one of the most active in the U-Report Global Newsletter. Two additional regional Youth Committees were established during the reporting period in Andijan and Bukhara regions. Regional face-to-face dialogues Youth-U-Report-Khokim (governor) were conducted in Navoi and Andijan.

In response to the prior UNICEF observation on the necessity to enhance capacity and build a system of meaningful youth participation at the local level, UNICEF, jointly with the national partners, has launched the Youth and Child-Friendly Local Governance Initiative.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

In May 2021, the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan endorsed the National Gender Strategy 2030. UNICEF provided technical expertise, as part of the UN Gender Thematic Group (UN GTG) engagement, through extensive consultations and collaboration amongst national state bodies, international agencies and experts, and civil society.

Gender was mainstreamed throughout the programming areas, such as nutrition, adolescence health and wellbeing, girls education and skill development, applying a gender lens in curriculum and textbooks revisions, gender-sensitive justice, social work and case management, as well as gender-disaggregated poverty measurement and data collection to inform policies and strategic decisions.

In order to enable effective institutional mechanisms and introduce gender-responsive and gender-

transformative programming, a dedicated senior-level national Gender and Inclusion post was introduced.

The Government of Uzbekistan has demonstrated commitment to the human rights-based approach at the highest level by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and developing the National Action Plan with UNICEF's technical support and advocacy. Through the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) – Uzbekistan, under UNICEF's leadership, conducted a Joint Country Analysis on the situation of persons with disabilities and received funding for two years to implement identified priorities. The UNPRPD funding will further encourage more agencies, development actors and donors to join the UN Country Team to kick start the implementation of the Convention through a comprehensive and integrated approach.

As part of the Annual Management Plan, UNICEF Country Office in Uzbekistan has developed its Gender Strategy and UN Disability Strategy and Action Plans to ensure strategic vision in advocacy and programming in line with UNICEF Gender Action Plan and UN Disability Strategy.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF is a key member of the UN Country Team in Uzbekistan. Reflecting the nature of its Country Programme, which is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, UNICEF contributes to all outcomes and chairs People and Prosperity Result Group, Thematic Groups on Youth, Human Rights and Inclusion, and co-chairs taskforce on Data and M&E, thus ensuring effective articulation and follow up on children, women and young people's issues.

UNICEF successfully led joint work with UNFPA and UNODC as a part of a dedicated Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the Aral Sea. In partnership with ILO and UNDP, it led the Joint Programme on Strengthening Social Protection System in Uzbekistan, yielding success in development of the concept and strategy of social protection, institutional arrangement options and links between services and benefits and promotion of disability-sensitive social protection, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that the Parliament ratified in 2021. Following ratification, UNICEF in partnership with other UN agencies and OSCE, supported development of the National Plan of Action on CRPD and the joint programme aimed to transform social service delivery for children, youth and women with disabilities funded by the UN Partnership on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

To enable Uzbekistan to mount an effective response against COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF and WHO facilitated development and implementation of Uzbekistan's national vaccine deployment plan under the COVAX to ensure availability and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, UNICEF teamed up with USAID to improve the cold chain system and implemented demand generation and community engagement for COVID-19 vaccines while addressing vaccine hesitancy. The Global Vaccine Alliance continued critical support for the country's routine immunization, providing a robust platform for COVID-19 vaccine deployment.

In 2021, UNICEF coordinated the local Education Group, consisting of government entities and development partners, to organise the first-ever Joint Sector Review and mid-term review of the Education Sector Plan. UNICEF's work in complementarity with other UN Agencies, World Bank, ADB and Islamic Development Bank and bilateral/multilateral agencies (EU, USAID, British Council, JICA and FinnPartnership) ensured avoiding duplication of efforts in the education sector.

UNICEF entered new partnerships with the Red Crescent Society for emergency preparedness and response, NGO Istiqbolli Avlod to model child-friendly and gender-sensitive legal aid, including on refugee and asylum-seeking children and families, as well as joined efforts with Zamin Foundation and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to promote inclusion of children with disabilities.

In 2021, UNICEF enhanced the preparedness capacity of staff and the Red Crescent Society, leveraging regional partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies while preparing for the potential impact of the crisis in Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. UNICEF joined UNHCR-led Regional Refugee Response Planning leading in WASH, Nutrition, Education and Child Protection sectors. UNICEF CO in Afghanistan agreed to use Termez in south of Uzbekistan as a humanitarian corridor for logistical support.

Partnership with the large supermarket chain enabled UNICEF's communication materials air in 80 stores that serve thousands of customers daily.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown that strengthening the Nationwide infrastructure for routine immunisation, especially the cold chain system is the key to a successful rapid vaccine deployment in times of pandemics. UNICEF has developed a vaccine logistic management information

system and is in the process of supporting the Government to develop electronic immunisation registries that will ensure the national immunisation programme is fully functioning and integrated into the national health management information system. Based on the lessons learned during previous years, UNICEF is leveraging digital technologies to strengthen the immunisation system further to ensure the sustainability of the program.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent strict lockdown measures spurred a shift towards wider telecom technologies for coordination, cooperation, professional learning, and even medicine. Vast penetration of broadband internet, even to remote areas of the county, opened up a unique opportunity to leverage technologies for better efficiency in the healthcare field. Therefore, future investments in distance learning are essential to strengthen the health care system. Implementation of new digital solutions in health care requires increasing the IT literacy of healthcare providers. UNICEF should include IT skills development of health care providers in all programme components.

Leveraging Government's efforts in introducing innovative programmes with UNICEF's global technical knowledge and support is crucial in enhancing the impact of the innovations and alternative provisions. For example, while the Government decided to provide internet connectivity to all schools, UNICEF, under the GIGA project, ensured that the internet connectivity is mapped and tested for real-time informing further improvement for school connectivity.

Knowledge generation and management are crucial for not only evaluating past and ongoing interventions but also for planning and designing future efforts. For example, UNICEF's study on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of parents towards early childhood development have highlighted the importance of preschool experiences for school readiness among children and also, parenting practices, which are now incorporated in the social behavioural change strategies for promoting parenting practices, including through the mobile application "Bebbo".

Recognising the strategic importance of evidence and accountability for the realisation of child rights in Uzbekistan, particularly around equity, inclusion and child-sensitive public expenditures, the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) emphasised the need to strengthen child rights monitoring as a cross-cutting area in the new Country Programme. In line with strategic CPE recommendation, UNICEF, in its new Country Programme (2021-2025), prioritises the establishment of an integrated child rights monitoring and reporting system for collecting sufficient and reliable evidence on the situation of children, duly disaggregated to enable identification of disparities, but also to ensure that such evidence is used to assess progress achieved in the realisation of child rights and to inform the policy and programmes development aligned with international child rights standards and best practice.

In the absence of one single ministry responsible for social protection and welfare of vulnerable children and families, including children without parental care and in alternative care, it is strategic for UNICEF to act as a convener, bringing together key stakeholders from Government and non-governmental organisations. A delicate balance must be struck between encouraging an expedited deinstitutionalisation process, considering the substantial number of children remaining in several types of residential care in Uzbekistan, and advocating for a systematic, policy-driven and gradual change which results in less reliance on residential care and an increase in services aimed at keeping children within their families and communities. The Senate has proven to be a key partner in this regard, and due to UNICEF advocacy, the Chairperson has agreed to lead a National Coordination Group on Deinstitutionalization, mandated to oversee, and guide the further reform of the childcare system, including deinstitutionalisation of children from large-scale residential care facilities.

Despite an initial commitment from partners to introduce diversion and restorative justice in Uzbekistan, a pilot project on diversion and restorative justice was put on hold due to the absence of a legal basis for diversion and restorative justice approach in the criminal and criminal procedural legislation of Uzbekistan. UNICEF, jointly with the Prosecutor's General Office, introduced

amendments concerning diversion and alternative measures to the draft Criminal Code; however, the latest edition of the Criminal Code is still under consideration. The main lesson learnt from this experience is the need to continue with high-level advocacy among key decision-makers and awareness-raising among justice practitioners, children, and families about the benefits of diversion and restorative justice both for children, victims of crimes, and society.

The lessons learnt from evaluations of the Education Programme and of the District Health System Strengthening (DHSS) model were discussed jointly by UNICEF and national partners and addressed in response actions. One of the lessons from the evaluation of the DHSS model is that the planning at the primary healthcare facilities level can potentially improve health system performance. However, the major challenge in developing and applying DHSS is a quality improvement measurement which is almost impossible due to the limitations related to the availability of reliable data, the frequent absence of good baseline data, and in how to connect and use the outputs of the quality control mechanism with the broader system reform in the country.