Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities
In 2018 the Government of Uzbekistan undertook to develop a re-integration programme for girls in specialised educational correctional facilities to return them to their families and communities. This is in line with United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s recommendations made to Uzbekistan in 2013 regarding children deprived of their liberty.
Glossary of key terms

Inter-agency commission on minors: Government body dedicated to the prevention of child neglect and juvenile delinquency, and to ensure children's rights, freedoms and legal interests.

Khokim/khokimyat: Governor of a city or region/Governor's office.

Makhalla: the smallest habitation unit in Uzbek communities.

Mehribonlik: state institutions for orphans or children without parental care.

‘Oila’ Centre (Scientific-Practical research Center ‘Oila’): Government run family centres offering psychological support.

Republican Centre for the Social Adaptation of children: Government led NGO that provides comprehensive support to vulnerable children.

The Women’s Committee: Government led NGO mainly providing support and assistance to women in different fields, such as entrepreneurship, health care, education, culture.

Youth Union: body established to provide Youth Services such as education and extra-curricular clubs through its network of centres.

TABLE OF ACRONYMS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WCU</td>
<td>Women's committee of Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCSAC</td>
<td>Republican Centre for the Social Adaptation of Children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGO</td>
<td>Prosecutor General’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACM</td>
<td>Interagency Committee on Minors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention to Eliminate Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECF</td>
<td>Specialised Educational Correctional Facility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

In September 2017, in line with a new climate of political reforms, the Government of Uzbekistan granted access for UNICEF to visit specialised vocational correctional colleges and schools, baby homes, orphanages and a boy’s prison. This was made possible due to UNICEF’s support to the ongoing reforms and rounds of discussions with decision makers at which international evidence was presented.

The visit was the result of intense and high-level communication and cooperation between UNICEF and the Prosecutor General’s office (PGO). During the visit, UNICEF supported a rapid assessment of the institutions, then presented the findings as a short report to the Chair of the Women’s Committee (WCU), who is also deputy prime minister, to advocate for development of an Action Plan.

UNICEF supported the Cabinet of Ministers to create this action plan (January 2018 #426) to address the needs such children, their re-integration into their families, and ways to reduce the number of referrals to such facilities.

UNICEF then partnered with the WCU and the Republican Center of Social Adaptation of Children (RCSAC) on a programme in a Specialized Educational and Vocational College (for children aged 14-18) and a Specialised Educational and Training School (children aged 11-14) in Kokand, Uzbekistan to assess girls for eventual re-integration with their families and communities.

Trust-building events in the vocational college laid the ground for social workers, working with UNICEF and the WCU, to conduct interviews with the girls. By August 2018, they had assessed 130 girls from Kokand Specialised Educational and Vocational College identified as particularly vulnerable and had developed individual welfare and reintegration plans for them. Further assessments in October 2018 were made of 37 girls in the school in Chinaz.

These assessments allowed social workers continue to prepare individual case plans for each girl focused on re-integrating them into their families and communities. As of February 2019, 48 girls have been successfully re-integrated. The project has informed UNICEF’s recommendations for the legal, systemic and practical reform of the institutions, and has contributed to UNICEF’s successful advocacy to bring social protection services into one agency or ministry.

As well as benefiting the target group for rehabilitation it has allowed UNICEF to build trust and deepen its working relationship with a variety of Government ministries in Uzbekistan; for example, the Ministry of Public Education supported a visit to a boys’ specialised educational-correctional facility in Samarkand in 2018. In 2019 the Government announced it would be bringing social protection services into one agency or ministry. Discussion with the Presidential office focused on reforming the activities of closed institutions.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Background of children in closed institutions in Uzbekistan

After becoming independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan inherited a child welfare system that is heavily reliant on institutional care. As a result, institutionalisation, rather than family support, is often the first resort for managing children with difficult family situations or who display difficult behaviours, and the placement of boys and girls in specialised educational-correctional institutions remains the practice in dealing with children in conflict with the law.

A child protection assessment1, undertaken in 2017, highlighted that the functions of the child protection system are fragmented, and its mandate is distributed among different state bodies. Services for children who need support are mostly reactive due to weak gate-keeping mechanisms which pass too many children into institutions with too little preventative work carried out. Poverty and educational problems are key determinants of children entering institutions.

Two Specialised Educational and Training Schools, operated by the Ministry of Public Education, exist in Uzbekistan for children in conflict with the law.2 There are also two Specialized Educational and Vocational Colleges for older children,3 operated by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. Children can be placed in specialised educational correctional facilities (SECFs) via a court order, with referral provided by the Inter Agency Commission on Minors (IACM).

They are referred for a variety of reasons, for example, for committing socially dangerous offences while they are too young or immature to be prosecuted, for continually being involved in ‘antisocial behaviour’ (e.g. use of alcohol or drugs, begging, prostitution, or running away from home) despite prevention efforts. They may also be placed in closed institutions as an alternative to criminal prosecution for older juveniles. According to the latest available data from 2016 there are around 500 children housed in such closed institutions.

**Closed educational facilities for girls:**

The Specialized Educational and Vocational College in Kokand was established in 1971. In 2018, there were 230 girls aged 14-18 years in this institution.

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1 Child protection system in Uzbekistan: now and in the future, Elayn Sammon, June 2017, report commissioned by UNICEF.
2 The term ‘gate-keeping’ is defined as a ‘filter’ ensuring children are not separated from their families unless it is genuinely in their best interests.
3 One for boys aged 11-14 years in Samarkand, one for girls aged 11-14 years in Chinaz, Tashkent region.
4 One for boys aged 14-18 years in Bakt, Syrdarya region, and one for girls aged 14-18 years in Kokand, Fergana region.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

In 2018 there were 130 staff at the institution, including 45-50 pedagogues, 15 supervisors, 12 vocational trainers, 20 teachers, and 2 psychologists.

The specialised boarding school no. 5 in Chinaz, Tashkent was opened in 2006 and houses 37 girls between the ages of 11-14. There is a large staff of teachers at the institution, two supervisors and one part-time psychologist.

Girls are sent to both Republican Institutions from all regions of Uzbekistan.

In 2013 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) made the following observations with regards to children in closed institutions in Uzbekistan:

Firstly, it expressed the concern that institutional care is still the first, rather than the last resort, when dealing with children in conflict with the law. It noted with reference to Mehrhoniks that the majority of children in institutional care face socio-economic hardships, and suffer the effects of parental divorce, abandonment, and/or lack of family support services.

Secondly, the Committee referred to the lack of adequate measures for facilitating and maintaining continuous contact with family and the lack of systematic monitoring of institutions. It also expressed concerns about the lack of adequate mechanisms to support the reintegration of the most vulnerable children, including the lack of individual care plans and of alternative support services.

Thirdly, the UNCRC expressed concern about unconfirmed reports of torture and ill-treatment of children in closed settings particularly in relation to kartcer (solitary confinement) cells.

Based on the definition in the UN Minimum Rules for the Protection of Children deprived of liberty correctional-educational facilities can be considered to be a form of deprivation of liberty. According to article 11b of these rules, “deprivation of liberty means any form of detention or imprisonment or the placement of a person in a public or private custodial setting, from which this person is not permitted to leave at will, by order of any judicial, administrative or other public authority.” Children in institutions are not only vulnerable to abuse but can suffer long term psychological effects from institutionalisation.

Partnership between the WCU, the RCSAC and UNICEF seeks to support the Cabinet of Ministers Plan of Action 2018 Jan #426 to improve the situation of girls in specialised schools and the Presidential Decree on measures to strengthen the institution of the family.

This initiative seeks to improve the coordination and monitoring of the reintegration of children, to create effective community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for children leaving closed educational institutions, to reform closed educational institutions for the benefit of children and to assist them to successfully reintegrate into society following their release.

Conditions in Uzbekistan’s closed facilities had long been of concern to the International Community because lack of access meant there was no information about the conditions within.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Preparatory phase

As mentioned above, in 2013 the UNCRC submitted a list of over 74 recommendations on children’s rights in Uzbekistan which included several recommendations relating to closed institutions. From 2016, the ongoing legal and judicial reforms in Uzbekistan provided the momentum for UNICEF to address the observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, to support the Government in its justice sector reform and engage more actively with them on child rights.

At national level, the process of carrying out the recommendations of the UNCRC allowed UNICEF to support the Government to review the implementation status of each recommendation and commit to the implementation of additional recommendations including those relating to children in closed settings.

At this time, UNICEF engaged in discussions with the Supreme Court, Ministry of Public Education, Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO) and Ministry of Interior to raise the issue of gaining access to closed institutions. The discussions during this period focused on the importance of reforming closed institutions as a way to close the UNCRC observation and to keep the best interests of children in mind. UNICEF referred to similar initiatives on the reform of closed institutions in Tajikistan, Moldova and Georgia where cooperation between Government and UNICEF successfully addressed the issues of these institutions and prisons for children.

Security clearance was granted for a visit to SECFs, mehribonliks, baby homes and a boy’s prison. UNICEF engaged an international expert with prior experience of rapid assessment who was tasked with making observations on the trip.

Access was provided to UNICEF for a joint visit to seven different regional institutions over the space of four days, including the Specialized Educational and Vocational College for Girls in Kokand city, and boarding school no. 5 in Chinaz. This allowed for observations to be made on the welfare and provision for children of various ages in the different institutions.

The media covered the joint visit on various platforms as a positive step towards reforms to address the needs of children. After the visit UNICEF made the following proposals to the WCU, the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, and the Ministry of Public Education:

- To conduct an assessment of the case files of girls and identify the reasons for their entering the institution and their family situations. Conduct assessment of individual needs of the girls.
- Develop individual plans for each girl that will reflect her needs and contribute to her re-socialization and reintegration.
- Put in place some structured programs to address risk factors for girls and bolster protective factors (for example, life skills education, and mediation/conflict resolution programs).
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

UNICEF negotiated for partnership with the WCU because their responsibility to respond to the recommendations of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made them the most appropriate organisation with whom to work. UNICEF also advocated for a Cabinet of Ministers Plan of Action to improve the situation of girls in SECFs.¹

The WCU entrusted the role of carrying out work in the closed institutions to RCSAC based on their competencies and experience. A social work approach to identify and tackle the problems of families and children was presented by UNICEF, in collaboration with the RCSAC, as the best methodology for supporting this initiative.

Since rich data about the circumstances that led to the girls being sent to institutions was not available at this stage, and the capacity of staff to prepare girls for leaving was yet to be determined, UNICEF and the RCSAC presented the need for assessment, emphasising the risks (including of religious extremism) faced by girls who leave without care plans and who have no place to stay. This concern was aligned with the goals of the WCU’s work on the spiritual development of girls.

To build the girls’ trust, as a pre-cursor to the assessments in Kokand, an initial activity was undertaken in the Specialized Educational and Vocational College in Kokand. More than 200 girls had their portraits taken as part of a photography-therapy session. (Assessment in Chinaz did not include this modality due to time constraints and the smaller number of girls being assessed).

In Kokand, the three-days of photo sessions aimed to contribute to the girls’ rehabilitation and eventual reintegration by increasing their self-esteem and allowing for self-reflection. A photo exhibition at the college was organized, and each portrait was accompanied by a short story about each girl, which covered their experiences, concerns and dreams.¹

¹ Cabinet of Ministers Plan of Action #26 in January 2018, to improve the situation of girls in specialised schools

Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Assessment phase

The assessments of girls formed part of a broader partnership with the WCU called "Supporting the implementation of the Program of Cultural and Moral Education for Girls in a Specialized Educational and Vocational college in Kokand and a Specialized Educational and Training School in Chinaz."

In particular, the goals and objectives of the joint initiative included:

1. The introduction of social work practices to the institution's training supervisors and teachers in specialized educational institutions in Kokand and Chinaz so that they would be able to assess the situation, risks and needs of girls in institutions and compile their individual rehabilitation plans and reintegration.

2. Training and professional development of psychologists in specialized educational institutions on methods of psychological counselling and work with girls, including work with trauma.

3. Improving and supplementing the database of specialized educational and training institutions so that the individual situations of girls could be assessed and individual plans for working with them could be drawn up.

4. Improving the mechanisms for the reintegration of girls into families and communities after leaving institutions.

5. Improving the educational work of specialized educational institutions through photographic therapy, holding events dedicated to International Children’s Day, the celebration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The following case management tools were developed in order to ensure that a systematic approach was taken to address the issues and rights of girls in closed institutions.

- Form for the Comprehensive Assessment of Inmates of the Specialized Educational and Vocational College in Kokand (see Appendix 1),
- An individual pupil work plan for inmates of the Specialized Educational and Vocational College in Kokand (see Appendix 2),
- Basic questions for use in conducting interviews with girls (Appendix 3).

These social work tools were used to assess the situation of 140 out of the 260 girls in the institution and to formulate individual rehabilitation and reintegration plans for them. The criteria for selecting girls for assessment was the region from which they arrived, and their date of leaving the specialized educational school or college.
Since one of the goals of the joint project was to improve existing mechanisms for the reintegration and support of girls, priority was given to girls hailing from Tashkent, the Tashkent region, the Fergana region, the Namangan region, and the Andijan region. This was because of the relatively large number of pupils from these regions compared to other regions, as well as the location of the RCSAC in Tashkent and of its branch in the Fergana region. RCSAC, which has a branch in the Fergana Valley, would play a key role in coordinating the provision of targeted social services and assistance to girls after leaving the specialized educational institution. In Chinaz, all 37 girls in the institution were assessed.

The evaluation of the girls’ situations and the preparation of individual plans was carried out by a team of professional social workers (8 people trained by the RCSAC and the SOS Children’s Villages program in Uzbekistan), who were employed by the WCU. Social workers studied the girls’ situations by conducting interviews with them using the main interview questions, as well as studying the girls’ existing documents and talking with institution’s supervisors and teachers.

The girls were informed in advance of the purpose of the conversation and their consent was obtained to participate in the interview. Information from interviews helped social workers complete a Comprehensive Assessment of each individual girl, and based on the evaluation of this, an Individual Work Plan for the pupil was drawn up.

The girls’ assessments were carried out in Kokand over three visits by social workers. On the first visit institutional supervisors were present to observe the interview and ask clarifying questions about the techniques of interviewing. During the subsequent visits, it was found that when the institutional supervisors were not present, the girls spoke more freely to the social workers. In both SECFs social workers also obtained information from the girls’ caregivers in order to fill in the relevant sections of the integrated assessment and to prepare individual plans.

CONDUCTING THE ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWS:

“Initially the girls would come in and their faces and body language were closed. They were wondering what to expect. No one had ever asked them about themselves before. We asked them to tell us their story; why are you here? Tell me about your family, your health, your education. We used open questions that gave the girls the opportunity to say what they needed to say.

Sometimes the girl would come in tense; you could feel it. She really needed to speak. It was like the flood gates opening. She would be crying while she was speaking and telling me the things that had happened to her. Then afterwards there was a sense of relief. It was a surprise that such a simple talk could have such a profound effect.

Of course, as social workers, we are trained to be able to help children open up about difficult topics, but it really wasn’t challenging to get them to start talking. If we spoke to a girl, by the next morning she’d be waiting for us, a whole crowd of friends with her. There was so much hugging. When we left, they cried. That was hard to see.”

(as related by a social worker from RCSAC)
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Assessment phase

Chapter 5

Psychological assessment and support:

With the support of an international consultant on Social Work, in Kokand tools were adapted to conduct screening and to identify Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), anxiety, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This was carried out so that staff, management and professionals could better understand the rehabilitation needs of the girls who had been placed in the institution.

Screening results showed that most of the girls assessed were diagnosed with adverse childhood experiences, trauma and had moderate and severe rates of anxiety and depression, which meant that they should be provided with qualified and specialized rehabilitation services.

A group of psychologists developed a manual for practitioners working with adolescents suffering with trauma and for those in crisis circumstances. The manual included two chapters: 1) a definition of post-traumatic stress disorders and screening tools to identify them; 2) an art-therapy program to the improve emotional state of the girls and to constitute the initial stage of working with trauma.

35 girls from the Kokand SECF attended art-therapy sessions at this time. The college psychologists and one of the most experienced teachers were trained to be able to conduct these sessions for other girls in the institution in the future.

ART THERAPY WITH GIRLS IN KOKAND SPECIALISED COLLEGE:

“We used really basic techniques, for example working with breathing exercises. These children don’t always recognise why they get into fights, why they drink, why they self-harm and cut themselves. After the therapy, they understand that their actions are an expression of the trauma they have experienced. Art therapy helps them to understand how what has happened to them has affected them.

One of the girls drew in very tight lines when she first came in, everything was symmetrical. She cried as she was drawing and the next day, her drawing was freer and she felt better. You could see the movement of her emotions on the page. A lot of the girls asked to keep their art works, so they could look at them again and remember the feelings they had. Some of them even said, “I slept better last night!” We are teaching these girls that you can draw and you can talk, simple exercises to help them see who they really are. The assessments revealed that the girls’ highest-ranking emotion was guilt, but most of these girls are victims. This is a child who needed love, care and a family but didn’t get it.”

Psychologist
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Assessment phase

Chapter 5

Summary of key findings of assessment of situation of girls in closed institutions:

- Minors were placed in the specialized educational college for various reasons and circumstances including minors who had been involved in antisocial behaviour, and minors who had committed socially dangerous acts. Some minors in the institutions had previously been subjected to sexual exploitation and violence but little provision was made for their needs.

- Behind most of the unlawful and antisocial behaviour of minors existed a difficult atmosphere in the family, violence and lack of care, poor relationships between family members, and lack of material opportunities.

- The placement of girls in a specialized educational college was not used as a last resort or because it was necessary for the safety of the population. Neither was it always justified as acting in the best interests of minors. In part, this was related to the lack of professional social workers and social services in the community to work with families and children experiencing difficult life situations.

- The specialized training college and school did not have sufficient capacity to solve the behavioural problems caused by the complex social situations of girls and their families.

- Girls in the institutions were isolated from contact with their families, which led to psychological distress and increased difficulties in reintegrating them after release. Although in theory the school in Chinaz allowed children more unrestricted communication, in reality, this did not result in more contact.

- Insufficient assessment of the situation and needs of minors was conducted to determine the assistance they would need after leaving an SECF. There was a greater need to work with parents and relatives of pupils to prepare them for the return of girls.

- There is a different set of challenges to reintegrating orphans and children left without parental care.

The assessment of girls in both SECFs allowed for the development of a series of recommendations.

Short-term recommendations:

- Measures to prevent the placement of minors in specialized educational colleges and schools, to strengthen rehabilitation work in specialized educational colleges and schools, and to support minors after they leave a specialized educational college or school should be developed based on the best interests of the child.

Long-term recommendations:

- To undertake reform of the activities of the specialized educational college and school in the best interest of the child.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Assessment phase

During one assessment at the SECF in Chinaz, it was suggested to the specialist who conducted an interview with one of the pupils (L) that the girl had been sexually abused in her family. The girl herself did not directly state this fact, but her psychological state and reaction to some questions made it clear that a conclusion could be made about what had happened to her. After a conversation with the director of the SECF, it was decided to hold a joint conversation again, during which the girl spoke up about sexual abuse she had experienced by her brother. The girl also said that her brother severely beat her and put her on a chain, tying her to a battery.

As in most such cases, at first her mother did not believe her daughter when she told her what had happened, but then she realized that the girl was telling the truth. No criminal case was opened against the brother, since the mother did not report the incident to internal affairs bodies. It is possible that the girl’s placement in the SECF was initiated by the mother to protect her daughter from her brother. At the time of the assessment, the girl had spent 2.5 years in the boarding school, and according to the director, her mother refuses to pick up her daughter and asks that she be left in the SECF until she is 16 years old.
Re-integration phase

"Our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev recently said: "Every child should be raised by seven mahallas." In other words, "It takes a village to raise a child." We social workers are facilitating the child’s care by their community.”

(Project worker in charge of re-integration.)

Process and practice of reintegration:

To oversee the process of integration and to support the project staff, a child protection expert with prior experience of supporting children who were leaving care was engaged in the assessment process.

After analysing the 130 Kokand assessments the expert prioritised girls who were approaching the age of 18, and girls who had been brought to the school aged under 14 (the age of statutory criminal responsibility in Uzbekistan). The cases of girls who had been placed in the school/college unnecessarily and whose parents were requesting their release, and girls who required only minor interventions to support their families with working documents or employment help were also prioritised. A similar prioritisation exercise was also done for the girls from Chinaz.

The role of the social workers in the re-integration of girls was primarily to facilitate their access to the various agencies and bodies put in place to support them on release. This included support for their families to improve the home environment.

In order to re-integrate the girls effectively, social workers built relationships with each agency responsible for their care, as well as the girl’s family. Re-integration plans were first created in collaboration with the girls, according to their particular needs dictated by their family environments and later these plans were updated following visits to the girls’ family residences.

The core concerns to be met were:

- assuring the girls of a living space,
- an education
- financial support (e.g. stipends for orphans, social protection, support for low income families)
- psycho-social support to family members and the girls

Historically a detailed assessment of girls’ family situations had not taken place, which resulted to some girls previously being returned to harmful environments. The fragmented functions of the child protection system led to some individuals “falling through the gaps.” Equally, the complexity of the system prevents individuals from understanding what their support options are or who is responsible for fulfilling them. In these respects, social workers helped the girls access the child protection system, supplied objective assessments that were in the interest of the child and the community, and made sure that the process was more coordinated. Better inter-agency collaboration acted not only to re-integrate girls but as a means of preventing recidivism.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Social workers and officials from Government bodies travelled to remote regions of Uzbekistan to visit the family homes of girls who had either already been released or were finishing their time in Kokand college or Chinaz school. There they assessed families and their living conditions on an individual basis.

The team met with local secretaries of the Interagency Commission on Minors (IACM), deputy khokims, the police, makhalla district and community leaders, Youth Union leaders, Oila family centre specialists, representatives of educational departments, college and school headmasters and representatives from clinics. Discussions were held to provide child-centred solutions that would facilitate the girls’ return and support their further wellbeing. Female staff members entered the girls’ living accommodation to discuss their needs.

These in-person interviews with family members revealed extreme economic and social vulnerability (see appendix 4 for a sample re-integration interview and plan). Each reintegration plan was updated to include concrete actions to address each individual families’ needs.

These included: improvement of living conditions (housing, heating, lighting), registration for housing programmes and welfare schemes, medical treatment for mothers, psychosocial support for single mothers, employment support, involvement of girls in Youth Union programmes, support to prevent discrimination within schools and makhallas, and family income generation support. It was agreed that these would be enacted with the oversight of the secretary for the IACM.

Briefings have been conducted on the re-integration process in khokimyats in over 20 regions and districts of Uzbekistan to broaden the understanding of the process and reinforce their ownership.

CASE STUDIES OF RETURNED GIRLS - as related by a social worker from RCSAC

M, 17, from Djizzak, had run away from home. While she was in the SECF in Kokand it was discovered that she was pregnant. She gave birth in college and was then sent home with her baby. Social workers initiated contact with family and carried out interagency visits with the female deputy khokim, and deputy of the district Women’s Committee. However, due to social stigma, her family would not accept her with her baby and sent her to live with her grandmother. They insisted that she sign her child over to a baby home. However, she recanted and wanted to take her child back. Social workers helped her to ensure that the baby would not be given up for adoption while it was at the baby home and helped her to establish a rented living space. With the help of the Women’s committee and Oila centre specialists, they attempted to reconcile her with her family, but her step mother would only accept her without the baby. The project therefore supported the girl to finish college where she was helped with a special schedule so that she could catch up on her education and complete her diploma. They arranged dispensation for the girl to have extended visiting rights with her baby while it was at the baby home. They then helped her apply to the khokimyat for work, established an Oila centre liaison worker for her, and supported her to get on the list for state provided accommodation for when she is reunited with her child. Funding from Youth Union was secured so that she could meet her basic interim needs such as clothes and afford her rent. However, after release the girl became depressed. She felt uncomfortable at school and dropped out. She moved in with a former pupil of Kokand school. Social workers intervened by referring her to a rehabilitation centre that will provide accommodation and continuing psychological support.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

CASE STUDIES OF RETURNED GIRLS - as related by a social worker from RCSAC

**V**, 17, was sent to the SECF in Kokand because of a violation of procedure. The girl had been kidnapped by a prostitution ring, but she was able to escape and return home. The girl’s mother reported the ‘Madam’ of the brothel to the police but because a medical examination of the girl showed she was still a virgin the police refused to press charges, but instead sent the girl to the Kokand SECF without her mother’s consent. The mother fought the court order and after one year the girl was released. Social workers supported the girl to reintegrate, by meeting with the director of a school and liaising with the Ministry of Education to persuade him to take her. **V** is now successfully studying and is reunited with her mother, who the project is supporting to find work through the khokimyat.

**F**, 13, from Syrdarya, had been taken in by her uncle and aunt following the death of her parents and was strongly attached to them. However, in interviews, she expressed distress whenever their elder son was mentioned. When an assessment of her family was conducted prior to her release, the family, although fond of her, refused to take her back and asked that she be kept in the closed institution indefinitely. From conversation with them, the social worker was able to establish the strong (though unconfirmed) possibility that the elder son had abused the girl. As a result, it was unsafe for her to return to the house, so it was arranged that she would be moved to a Children’s village, and the adult family members could visit her there. The experience makes a strong case for in-person family assessment, and the need for tailored protection measures.

**D**, 16, had been sexually abused by a relative when she was 14. She became pregnant and was forced to abort the baby. When she was released abruptly from the SECF, social workers urgently tried to trace her, and found her living with an aunt. The Mahalla Specialist told social workers that the aunt had a reputation for being aggressive and warned them not to speak to her. Nonetheless, social workers requested that the Chief Specialist of the Women’s Committee and the Mahalla specialist accompany them on a home visit. It was discovered that the aunt had been badly scarred in a fire years before and was therefore stigmatised by society, which explained her aggressive behaviour. Despite the extremely dilapidated conditions they were living in, the girl’s safety was established. The aunt was supported to get a sewing machine to enable her to work and funding was secured to remodel the house, access clothing for her niece, and medical treatment for the woman. As a result of the visit, the Mahalla Specialist was strongly reprimanded for prejudging the girl’s care-giver and failing to investigate their living circumstances properly.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

**Re-integration phase**

**Re-integration challenges:**

Due to a sudden change in the Kokand SECF management, interim college authorities decided to abruptly release certain girls, without coordinating with the social work team or the IACM. Many of these girls had been assessed by the social workers for reintegration but included some who had been assessed as needing complex psychological and family support before they could be returned to their communities.

However, these girls were released alongside girls with less complicated rehabilitation profiles, and social workers were only informed of their release after they had been returned to their families. This led to an urgent need to assess the girls’ home environments. Locating the released girls was sometimes difficult, particularly if they chose not to return to their family or if the family had moved. This presented challenges to monitoring the condition of released girls and the status of their reintegration.

A small number of the girls who had been abruptly returned home without proper support immediately ran away. In these cases, when girls could be found, psychologists were connected to them, and social workers assigned to parents to help improve the family environment. However, a lack of skill and infrastructure to deal with the most extreme behaviours presented by returning girls challenged the process of reintegration.

Very few parents knew how to deal with their children’s behaviours. This experience highlighted the need for tools to conduct a rapid assessment diagnosis of young people, a greater social workforce to support girls and their parents (including parenting courses), and more collaboration between SECFs and child protection bodies.

Girls from low income families and girls who had no families had no means to purchase medicine, eye glasses, pay for transportation or communication (i.e. basic phone calls to social workers/hospitals etc). Financial support to cover these basic needs should be made available for girls leaving closed institutions.

Some returning girls exhibited signs of depression and suicidal tendencies. A key challenge of reintegration is addressing the mental and emotional wellbeing of returning girls.

Data about girls who were sent to closed institutions showed that the majority of referrals were from low income families.

However, officials had limited knowledge about how poverty, a poor family environment and adverse childhood experiences effect child behaviour. Mandatory rehabilitation efforts for secretaries of the IACM and Juvenile delinquency inspectors have generally been limited to returning girls to their neighbourhood schools or passing medical examinations. There were no qualified personnel to conduct continuing psycho-social support work in rural areas, no professional help to refer teenagers for support. The Youth Union is currently developing special programmes for youth at risk.

To ensure that IACMs undertake their responsibility to implement these procedures more effectively need to be adequately resourced. The lack of human and economic resources was an impediment to the roll out of re-integration plans.

As part of the follow up to this initiative experts interacted with parents, social workers, and returned girls in separate groups to better understand their challenges and perspectives.

The most important challenge that emerged was the stigma that these girls faced in the their makhallas. Several parents from the groups had sought help from the makhalla to resolve economic difficulties but were not successful. This was a key challenge to successfully reintegrating and supporting their returned daughters. Some girls had been blacklisted by school authorities and refused a place in class due to resistance on the part of teachers seeking to maintain the reputations of their schools. Teachers and officials in schools lacked the necessary skills, empathy and understanding to support girls.
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Chapter 7

Key achievements

Out of all the girls for whom case management plans were prepared 50% of girls have been successfully returned to their families or communities or established with independent housing and education and the rest are being prepared to return in due course.

Trained social workers have now started supporting the Youth Union to support the reintegration of girls with extra curricula activities.

The Kokand khokimyat, having seen the results of the assessment and reintegration process has expressed its commitment by developing the capacity of its staff to carry out a case management approach towards assessment and reintegration.

Greater ties with other agencies and easy contact with other agencies were enabled thanks to the strong relationship with the PGO. The project’s social work approach has positively led to improved knowledge of the officials in the IACM on the case management approach.

The individual plans stipulated by the case-management approach now clearly identify the steps to be taken and ensure monitoring can be undertaken. The secretaries of the IACM will now send monitoring reports to the PGO.

The challenges of the re-integration process created an opportunity to discuss the bottlenecks in the social service system with all concerned officials.

Evidence generated by this joint initiative between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF has contributed to the Presidential resolution which guides the processes for de-institutionalisation.
Chapter 8

Learnings

The experience of assessing and rehabilitating girls from SECFs has underscored the need for a team of well-trained and resourced social workers for future work. This would enable social workers to compress the time frame for assessment, to meet with children’s families shortly after interviewing girls, and to gather together institution staff to make plans. This would also allow for girls to stay in daily touch with a key worker during the crucial first weeks after leaving their institution.

It is important to maintain consistency of approach among the social work team. Ideally all social workers engaged with re-integrating children from closed institutions should be employed on a full-time basis to prevent clashes of commitment.

More time for the assessment process would have led to greater trust between girls and social workers, and more open sharing of the details of their lives. This would also have allowed the girls a greater sense of ownership of their rehabilitation and reintegration plans.

Social workers and psychologist of the Project needed a physical space to meet to discuss professional issues, hold supervision and discussion sessions or receive girls for counselling needs.

Supporting extremely traumatised young people has an emotional impact on social workers. Regular supervision that covers emotional as well as procedural support could help to prevent burnout.

Institutions and referral bodies felt a lack of ownership of the process, and documents created were perceived as being external to institution and too difficult to implement. More initial training for staff, having a social worker based in the institution to aid the cooperation process and a strong commitment from authorities that new social practices should be followed will accelerate behaviour change at the organisational level. Capacity building on the khokimyat’s staff on reintegration duties will create a sustainable programme to support vulnerable children and families.
The way forward

Out of 167 girls assessed in the institution, 96 girls’ reintegration needs related to their family situations, housing conditions, educational, medical and psychosocial issues have also been assessed. The remaining 71 girls’ family situation remain to be assessed. The integration of the remaining girls will be step-phased until 2021.

Flexible education schemes should be developed to allow young people from closed institutions to prepare for return to mainstream schools. Youth Centres for these kind of youngsters with both daytime and shelter programs could be established to meet both the urgent needs and the development needs of young people in difficult life circumstances.

The IACM continues to send new girls to the closed institution in Kokand at a greater rate than in preceding years. It is therefore important to promote the practice of a social services approach over the punitive/preventative approach within the juvenile justice at a national and local level. Social protection should be developed alongside social work as a protective and preventative measure to strengthen the resources of families.

Youth Union programmes have the potential to offer special knowledge and skills to work with teenagers in difficult life conditions and should be developed. Women’s Committee specialists based in makalla community centres provide another key function for supporting healthy family environments and should be similarly supported to provide appropriate support.

Addiction support does exist in Tashkent and this should be accessed for adolescents should the need arise and expanded to other cities if possible.

Small scale social apartments with special correctional or therapeutic programmes could be provided for girls to prepare them for returning to their communities. This could also be a solution for girls who have not been accepted by their families or are not yet ready to re-unite with their families.

Attention should be given to the cases of orphans, to ensure that they are provided with accommodation and education needs on leaving the institution.

In partnership with the PGO and Ministry of Public Education UNICEF plans to begin an assessment of a boys’ institution in Samarkand from which it will develop a step-phased strategy for deinstitutionalisation.

The Government has confirmed its commitment to de-institutionalisation. Until such time as this process can be fully enacted, UNICEF will continue to work closely with the Government to ensure that international standards are followed in places where children are deprived of their liberty. It will support the Government to strengthen gatekeeping measures and improve the conditions in closed facilities, through better infrastructure, activities and psychological support.
## Complex evaluation

Name, position and contact details of the person conducting the assessment:

Evaluation Date:

Name of girl:

Year and place of birth:

Residential address:

Information about family members living with the child (name and surname of the child, age, contact phone):

Indicate which family member maintains contact with the child:

Information about other family members (name and surname of the child, age, address, telephone):

When the pupil was sent to the SECF:

When released from SECF:

Reason for placement:

* Make contact with family to collect information for evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Where the meeting took place (at home, in the SECF, in the makhalla, in another place, contact by phone—specify exactly)</th>
<th>With whom the meeting was held (specify all participants)</th>
<th>Family name/surname</th>
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Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

* List of documents (copies) attached to the Comprehensive Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Document Title</th>
<th>Availability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Birth certificate \ Passport</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ruling of the court on the direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Housing Survey Act</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Characteristics from the place of study</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Help from mahalla</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School report card</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Certificate of Grade 9?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Copies of parents’ passports</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Medical card</td>
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* For further filling by the tutor and the administration of the SECF.

Brief description of the situation of the child and family:

Child’s needs

Health and Development

What is the girl’s state of health, is there a chronic illness, disability? Is there a need for medicines, aids (crutches, wheelchair, prosthesis), does she need a medical examination? Often, rarely sick, visited a doctor? How did she eat at home, do her weight and height correspond to her age? Does she correspond to the level of development of her age? Did the girl do hard physical work at home? Has she been subjected to physical punishment at home?

Education

Did the girl attend a kindergarten / school, another institution? How many classes did she graduate at the time of entering the SECF? I miss school, why? What was the girl’s educational attainment like? How is it now? What subjects does she like at school? Does she have any learning difficulties, what? What is the girl’s relationship with teachers and classmates? Does she attend clubs, play sports? What?

Emotional and social development / Behaviour

How does the girl feel about herself, what is her self-esteem like? Does she have psychological difficulties, how does this manifest itself (isolation, loneliness, fear, aggression, self-inflicted damage, etc.)? Has there been any psychological trauma in the girl’s life? If so, what? Was the girl separated from her parents (brothers, sisters) for a long time? What is her relationship with her parents and other family members?

Does the girl have behavioural difficulties? If so, what? Can she control her behaviour? Is it aggressive behaviour, antisocial behaviour? How is it expressed? Has she ever used alcohol, drugs, other chemicals? How does she communicate with peers? Does she have friends?

Independence skills

Can the girl care for herself? What can she do (life skills)? Is she able to handle money, make purchases?
Family and environment

Family

What is the composition of the girl’s family? With whom did the girl live, with whom does she maintain a relationship? Who visits her and calls and how often?

Have there been serious illnesses in the family, losses, cruelty, alcohol and drug use, stay in places of detention? Do parents or other family members have problems with alcohol, drugs, lead an antisocial lifestyle, have conflicts with the law? Are there any family members with disabilities, mental disorders, aggressive behaviour? What is the relationship between family members and what are the difficulties?

Does the family receive help from other relatives or friends, from whom and what kind of help? Can we say that the family is accepted and supported by the community (neighbours, mahallas)? Are there any difficulties in obtaining the necessary benefits, paperwork?

Housing

Does the family have housing? What kind (apartment, house, other, specify the number of rooms)? Who owns the housing and who is registered in it? What is the state of housing repairs, availability of water, heating, electricity, sanitation? Are there any difficulties in obtaining, registration of housing, registration and if so, what?

Employment, income

Do parents and other family members work? As what? Is this a permanent job, temporary, is there any official clearance? Is there a need to get a job or get a profession for someone in the family? What is the family income (salary, pension, benefits, etc.). Does the family have other sources of income and if so what?

Further care and safety

Where will the girl return to? Who will she live with? Is the family ready and willing to accept her?

How does the girl feel in her family? Does her family accept her? Who supports her in the family and with whom does she have the closest relationship?

Will parents be able to help the girl in her further education, job placement, obtaining documents, registration? Will the family offer a safe environment? Does the girl have any concerns, or concerns about returning home? What are they?

Conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation:

Main problems / difficulties:

The girl’s strengths / family (character, ability or a particular situation in her life, family opportunities):

What tasks need to be solved to help the girl cope with difficulties (the list of tasks is transferred to the Individual Work Plan):

An individual work plan should be drawn up based on the results of this assessment.

Evaluation Officer ________________________________ (Name, Signature)

Deputy Director of SECF ________________________________ (full name, signature)
### Individual work plan with the pupil of the SECF

#### FULL NAME______________________________________________

Group ____________________________________________________

Tutor _____________________________________________________

Date of preparation of the Work Plan _________________________

The implementation period of the Work Plan _________________

**Responsible staff:**

Name, position_____________________________________________

Signature _________________________________________________

Family members: Full Name_________________________________

Signature _________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>How often/when</th>
<th>Responsible person (specialist, family member)</th>
<th>Expected result</th>
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Comments (if necessary):
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Key questions for the interview with the pupil

Hello! My name is ......................... We came here to chat and talk with you and with the girls who live here. We will talk with you, with your supervisors and teachers, in order to gather more information about your life, and about the difficulties that brought you here.

I will ask you questions and jot down what you say along the way. If you do not want to answer a question, you can choose not to answer it, and if you do not want to remember something, you can say “I do not want to talk about it.” Nothing we will talk about today will be shared with any strangers. The notes that I make will then be entered into a special form or a folder and will remain with the college staff. This information is only needed for those who are trying to help you.

Family / Accommodation

Hello! What’s your name? My name is........ Thank you for agreeing to tell us about yourself.

Please tell us a little about your family. Who did you live with? How many people are in your family? Who are they? How did you feel when you lived in a family? Were you often happy or sad? Why? How was your family treated? Were there any situations when you had to leave the house, or stay outside? Why? Who helped you in such situations?

Who did you have the closest relationship with? Who in the family do you trust most? Who do you miss from your family? Who visits you, how often? How often do they call you, and who usually calls?

Where did you live with your family? Where were you registered? Where does your family live now? Do you know whose house it is (apartment), who owns it, who is registered there?

Please tell me how came to be here. What did you feel when you came here?

Did someone help you get used to the new place? How did they help? What was the hardest thing for you? Have you got used to being here? What difficulties do you have now?

What do you like most here in college, and what is difficult for you? What would you like to change in your college life to make it better?
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Key questions for the interview with the pupil

**Health**

How do you feel? Is anything hurting or bothering you? Have you been ill in childhood or since then? Who in your family cares about your health? Have you ever visited a doctor? What for? Have you ever been to hospital? Why? If you feel bad now, what are you doing about it?

What did you eat in your family? Who cooked the food? Did you have enough food at home? What food do you like? What is your favourite dish? Do you know how to cook? What do you like to cook? Do you know which foods are healthy and which are not? Have you ever had to work much? Where? What were you doing? How did you feel?

Have you ever tried cigarettes, alcohol, or any other substances? Why did this happen?

Did you do any sports? Is there a sport you like? Would you like to practice it? There are dances that you would like to do?

**Education**

Did you go to kindergarten as a child? What did you do there? Did you like being there? Why? Why not? Who as a child in the family played with you, walked, painted, read books? What did you like to do when you were little?

How old were you when you went to school? Did you go by yourself or did someone accompany you and meet you? How did you go to school? What did you like and dislike at school? What subjects did you like? Why? Who were your friends at school with? Who helped you at home with your homework? What was your relationship with teachers at school? Have you missed school lessons? Why? Did you go to any clubs? What?

Please tell me how you study in college are going now. What subjects do you like? Why? Do you think your studies are going well or not? What help do you need to learn better? What clubs do you attend now? Why do you like them? Which clubs would you like to attend?

Would you like to study further? Where? Who would you like to be? Why do you like this profession? And what do you need to do to get into this profession?

**Emotional and Social Development / Behaviour**

Please tell us a little about yourself. What kind of person are you? What is your character like? Are you a confident person or not? Why do you think that? Is there anything you’re afraid of? Do you have scary or unpleasant dreams? Do you ever feel lonely? What do you usually do when you are lonely or scared? Is there someone who can help you at such moments? Do you often take offense? For example? Does it happen that you are very angry at something or someone? How does this manifest itself in you? What do you do at such moments? Can you stop and calm yourself? How do you do this (if the answer is ‘yes’)? Who and how can they help you at such time?

Do you have any friends in college? What kind of girls do you prefer to communicate with? Why? Did you have any friends before college? Do you keep in touch with them? Do you have someone you trust and who you can rely on?
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

Sample re-integration plan

Appendix 4

Visit to the family of ZLS. Mother is a single mother, her common-law husband has died, she lives in her parents’ house, occupying a room that has extremely inadequate living conditions - neither floor nor ceiling, no heating. There is a folded pile of bedding and a hanger on the wall with an old bathrobe - all her belongings. Previously, the girl’s mother received a disability pension (her right arm was damaged), but since 2017 this has been discontinued. The municipality allocated the mother a plot of land (6 acres) for the construction of a house, but due to lack of funds, the site is worthless. In 2017, mother was twice placed in inpatient treatment in a psychiatric hospital. According to khokimiyat workers, the mother was convicted of theft (she stole apples from neighbours). Mother was employed by the makhalla, but she stopped working due to kidney disease, and seasonal day-work was not always available. Her elder brother intends to expel her from the room where she currently lives, despite the fact that it was hers to inherit. According to the doctor of the regional central hospital, her sister placed her in psychiatric care complaining about her inability to control her anger, and said that the reason that she could not live with her daughter due to a diagnosis of psychopathy. According to the girl’s mother, she is waiting for her daughter, and promises to pull herself together if she is helped with housing and work. She wanted to go and see her, but she couldn’t afford to and was unable to due both to her kidney disease, and the location of the college. She said she was happy to speak on the phone with her daughter 2 months ago.

Independence Skills / Creativity

Let’s talk about what you like to do and what you can do.

Is there something you really like to do (sing, dance, draw, read, needlework etc)? Why do you like doing this? What else would you like to learn in clubs you go to?

Please tell me the kind of things you can do that are useful to you in life (cooking, washing dishes, washing, sewing, working on the ground, painting, handicrafts, others)? Did someone at home teach you this? What else would you like to learn? Did you use to have to go to the store, to the bazaar, to shops, to manage the money?

Do you have any dreams? Can you talk about them?

Tell me, please, what will you do after graduation from college? Do you want to return to your family? Do you think you will have difficulties after returning home? Who would you like to live with after leaving college / school? Will your family help you after you return?
Assessing and reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities

The following measures are necessary for the reintegration of ZLS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Responsible person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cancel the decision of the governor to allocate 6 acres of land for the construction of housing and provide the mother with decent housing since she has no opportunity to build a house.</td>
<td>15.01.2018</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To provide medical assistance for the treatment of mother’s kidneys, to allocate a warrant for treatment in the hospital, to provide the necessary medicines.</td>
<td>31.01.2018</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mother needs the help of a psychologist, as well as the supervision of the OILA Center specialists immediately.</td>
<td>immediately</td>
<td>The psychologist and social worker of the OILA Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The girl must be examined and provided support for her bedwetting.</td>
<td>On return</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To assist the mother in employment with the aim of providing her family with income. Explore the possibility of accessing benefits as a poor and especially needy family.</td>
<td>15.01.19</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Examine the child’s needs for further referral to an orphanage or to Termez boarding school, from where the child can visit her mother on weekends or, when housing is allocated to her mother, to consider living together (with regular monitoring of the situation of the mother and girl by the Mahalla specialists).</td>
<td>30.01.19</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Determine a temporary place of residence for mother until the issue is resolved with the apartment.</td>
<td>immediately</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>To help arrange for the child a school and stable class attendance and appropriate clothing for a girl from a poor family, enrolling her in clubs.</td>
<td>On return</td>
<td>Name supplied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>