

2019/2020

SITUATION ANALYSIS

OF CHILDREN

IN UZBEKISTAN

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SITUATION ANALYSIS
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FOREWORD

MUNIR MAMMADZADE
UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE

In 2019, the world celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, and it has significantly changed the way children are viewed and treated globally. Under the Convention children seen as human beings with a distinct set of rights and not just as passive objects of care. As a State Party to the Convention since 1994, Uzbekistan has committed itself to realizing the rights of all children, including the rights to survival, education, dignity and protection from all forms of violence and discrimination. The Government of Uzbekistan has launched comprehensive social and economic reforms and plans to undertake comprehensive measures to advance children's rights. There is a growing recognition of the fact that all such efforts must be grounded on

an informed and substantive overview of the country situation, particularly of children and women.

In this regard, the comprehensive Analysis of the Situation of Children in Uzbekistan was developed to identify critical priorities, as well as the new emerging issues to further advance children rights in Uzbekistan. I believe that this document will also contribute and inform the development of the National Strategy 2030 that should be based on "Leaving no one behind" principle of the 2030 Agenda and leading Uzbekistan to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals with a particular focus and investment in human capital development and wellbeing of children.

The analysis of the situation of children in Uzbekistan was conducted with the engagement of key stakeholders, including representatives of line

ministries, CSOs, academia, donors and the private sector. The analysis is benefited from a number of key publications commissioned by UNICEF and partners and from a wide range of governmental and international statistical and policy sources as well as from academic peer reviewed journals. The findings have confirmed that Uzbekistan has made considerable progress in the realization of the rights of children in the country. It

has also shown that there is still an unfinished agenda when it comes to equitable attainment of the rights of girls and boys to survival, development, education, social security, protection and participation. In this regard, on behalf of UNICEF, let me re-confirm our commitment to supporting the Government and all partners in advancing children's rights in Uzbekistan.

FOREWORD

ALIYA YUNUSOVA

COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Ensuring the best interests of the child remains the main priority in the state policy of Uzbekistan in order to protect the rights, freedoms and interests of the child.

Uzbekistan has made significant progress in protecting and advancing the child rights in the country. The Republic of Uzbekistan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, as well as On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts. The main provisions of the Convention and Optional Protocols are adopted in the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On guarantees of the rights of the child».

Undoubtedly, success in improving the situation of the children in Uzbekistan depends on a detailed understanding

of the problems and their causes.

Situational analysis of children in Uzbekistan, prepared by UNICEF, focuses primarily on assessing the situation with realization of child rights in Uzbekistan and identifies existing vulnerabilities and inequities for children of the country. Particular attention is paid to the rights of the child to survival and development, education, social protection, child protection and participation in life of a society.

Despite major reforms underway, the education system in Uzbekistan needs further strengthening to achieve optimal results in terms of education quality and social inclusion.

The effectiveness of social protection system reform largely depends on the reform of social benefits, improving provision and access to social services and enhancing the system of social work.

In Uzbekistan, important reforms have begun in the child protection system in order to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse by strengthening the national legal framework, increasing legal literacy among the population. The use of the systematic child labor in cotton harvesting has been discontinued. Particular attention is paid to the issues of de-institutionalization of children with the aim of reducing and preventing the placement of children left without parental care as well as children with disabilities in residential institutions.

It is necessary to strengthen the practice and mechanisms of involving the children and youth in decision-making that affect their lives and development of policies at national and local levels, which will expand the opportunities for participation

of children and youth in the life of society.

Uzbekistan, like many other countries today, faces a number of new challenges that will require special attention and a close monitoring in the future. This is the demographic situation in the education sector, including preschool education; widespread use of Internet and access to social media, which can present both new opportunities and challenges for the well-being of children; new and growing health threats, such as coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has dramatically changed the life of population; trafficking in children; minors who have left the child care or are deprived of liberty and who are in need of assistance and reintegration into a society.

There is no doubt that the family

as a social institution and the first protective environment for a child is of great importance for the child survival, development, education, protection and social security.

Recommendations developed by UNICEF within the framework of current Situational analysis of children in Uzbekistan, will help to comprehensively assess the situation with realization of child rights in Uzbekistan in line with provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommendations of the UN

Committee on the Rights of the Child, to expand ongoing reform agenda to advance child rights in Uzbekistan, promote alignment of national legislation with international child rights standards and further support implementation of reforms in the best interests of the children.

I would like to thank UNICEF Uzbekistan for the Situational analysis of children in Uzbekistan report, fruitful cooperation and support provided to ensure the realization of the rights of every child.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Core report team: The Situation Analysis was written by Anna Nordenmark Severinsson, Senior International Advisor on Social Policies and Sector Reform, Senior Associate from Maestral International- a leading global consultancy firm working on children's rights and social policy sector reforms worldwide. She was supported by Farrukh Inazarov, national consultant.

Consultations and validation: The situation analysis was informed from a consultative and participatory process. Several consultations took place between June and August 2019. The consultation and validation meetings with state bodies was attended by the following agencies: Ministry of Public Education, General Prosecutor's Office, General Prosecutor's Academy, Ministry of Pre-School Education, National Agency of Project Management, Pediatrics Scientific and Research Center, Ministry of Health, Oila Center, State Statistics

Committee, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, MP of Oliy Majlis, Supreme Court, Committee of Women. The consultation with civil society was attended by the following organizations: Development Strategy Center, "Yuksalish" Nationwide Movement, SOS Children's Village, "ITA FAKT" private research center, "EKSPERT FIKRI" private research center, National University of Uzbekistan, National Human Rights Center, Human Rights Ombudsman office, National Association of Electronic Mass Media, Westminster International University in Tashkent. Amongst international agencies, the World Bank, UNDP, USAID / US Embassy Public Affairs section, Asian Development Bank, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), European Union (EU), World Health Organization (WHO) took part in the consultation process and contributed with documents to inform the Situation Analysis.

Oversight and guidance: The present update of the Situation Analysis is the result of a collaborative and consultative process led by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) section of UNICEF Uzbekistan. Special thanks go to Mr. Sasha Graumann, UNICEF Representative, and Mr. Afshin Parsi, Deputy Representative, who provided overall leadership and support during their duty stay in Uzbekistan in the preparation of this analysis. The UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) provided technical support and guidance throughout the process. The day-to-day management and guidance for the Situation Analysis was provided

by Ms. Zhanar Sagimbayeva, Head of M&E section, Mr. Zokir Nazarov, Child Rights Monitoring Specialist, and Ms. Komolakhon Rakhmanova, M&E Officer. The program staff in the Uzbekistan country office provided peer review of the thematic chapters, guided the work on the situation analysis with technical inputs and perspectives and commented on the interim drafts of the situation analysis report.

The interpretation of the data in the analysis presented in this report, as well as the recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of UNICEF or the Government of Uzbekistan.

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
(UN) CEDAW	(United Nations) Convention / Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
(UN)CRC	(United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EU	European Union
GSE	General Secondary Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IOM	International organization for Migration
L2CU	Listening to Citizen in Uzbekistan
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
MACR	Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NEET	Not in Employment nor in Education or Training
PEST	Political Economic Social and Technical
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
(P)MTCT	(Prevention) of Mother To Child Transmission

SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SISEQ	State Inspection for Supervision of Education Quality
SitAn	Situation Analysis
TB	Tuberculosis Bacteria
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollars
U5MR	Under 5 Mortality Rate
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update of the 2016 report “Situation Analysis of children and women in Uzbekistan” and focuses on the status in the progressive realization of children’s rights, the identification of remaining deprivations of children and the immediate, underlying and structural causes that stand in the way of the progressive realization of children’s rights in Uzbekistan. The 2019 analysis focuses strongly on identifying inequities and inequalities in the realization of children’s rights in Uzbekistan. It is assumed that success in improving the situation of children in Uzbekistan today depends on a detailed understanding of these inequalities and their causes. This situation analysis has shown that Uzbekistan has made considerable progress in addressing and improving the rights of children in the country. It has also shown that there is an unfinished agenda when it comes to ensuring the progressive realization of the rights of children in Uzbekistan to survival,

development, education, social security, child protection and participation.

Rights to Survival and Development

One of the remaining challenges in the area of survival and development is the fact that the newborn period, the first 28 days of a child’s life, is the time when most deaths occur under the age of 5. Furthermore, children still die of causes that are preventable with relatively simple methods and investments. The outbreaks of measles in 2018 and 2019 suggest that immunization coverage and timeliness of follow-up doses may be lower than thought. Women of reproductive age have nutritional deficiencies: 20% of non-pregnant women are anemic; 40% of non-pregnant women of reproductive age meet the minimum dietary requirements and almost half of non-pregnant women have folate deficiency. Micronutrient deficiency in children is widespread:

15% suffer from anemia, over 50% suffer from iron deficiency and 6% suffer from vitamin A deficiency. In addition, 9% of children have signs of chronic malnutrition and 2% have signs of acute malnutrition. The suicide rate and self-harm has increased alarmingly, especially in the 15-19 age group. There are several fundamental challenges in the continuum of care that need to be addressed to deal with these issues.

Rights to Education and Development

Significant reforms are underway in the field of education, and the government has put the quality of education and learning outcomes at the center of the debate on education. As far as the current situation is concerned, access to pre-school education has improved reaching 53%, but is still low. Primary school enrolment is 100%, but available data suggests that children drop out or repeat classes, as enrollment in secondary grades (grades 5-9) is only 94% and only 91% successfully complete grades 5-9. Few young people have access to higher education. Most children who graduate from GSE enroll in some form of vocational training (84%),

very few have the chance to enroll in higher education. Across the country, only 12% of young people aged 25-30 years have completed higher education. Issues of access to pre-school education, quality GSE education and higher education is highly variable between females/males, children with disabilities, urban/rural areas, children from poor households. In addition, the education system in Uzbekistan needs to be further strengthened to achieve optimal results in terms of learning and social inclusion. For many children, the home environment and parental support is not sufficient to support education efforts. The education system also faces many challenges in terms of infrastructure and quality.

Right to Social Security:

There is a social protection system and the majority (54%) of children in Uzbekistan live in a household receiving some type of social protection programme. However, many (52%) of the poorest households are excluded from any support from the national social protection system and coverage by different schemes has decreased over

time. Today, only 17% of children aged 0-17 years live in a household receiving some form of the existing three child benefits: childcare allowance, family allowance or child disability benefit. The universal child disability benefit excludes 48% of children with disabilities. There is also an imbalance in social assistance coverage between different age groups with children aged 15-17 years excluded due to benefit design. Child poverty is higher than poverty among the general population. The effectiveness of the social protection system is called into question by complicated application procedures, low adequacy of the time-periods covered and fragmented system of social benefits and service provision.

Right to a Protective Environment against violence, Exploitation, Abuse and Neglect

The right of children to protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect has been promoted by a strong legal framework and important reforms in the child protection system have been initiated. The use of systematic child labour in the cotton harvest has ended. However, more knowledge and data

are needed on the incidence and types of violence, abuse, neglect, including sexual abuse, and harsh discipline in the domestic environment of children in Uzbekistan. Child marriage requires close monitoring and particularly so, for girls. Among the victims of human trafficking from Uzbekistan, children have been found in other countries and within the country. There is an increasing rate of children who are left without parental care and many of them are institutionalized, resulting in a high rate of institutionalization of children. Children with disabilities are significantly overrepresented in residential care. There is a need for greater alignment with international standards for children in conflict and in contact with the law as child victims, witnesses or perpetrators. Family factors, lack of support and services, and weaknesses in the system of social services and the capacity of the social workforce hinder the protection of children.

Right to Participation

The law in Uzbekistan sets a legal framework for the participation of children. However, although there is a

declarative intention to guarantee rights that can facilitate child participation, and although children in Uzbekistan are represented in various forums, this is not enough for meaningful participation. There are indications that child rearing practices in Uzbekistan are changing and with it the opportunities for children to participate in family decisions. Participation rights appear to be more explicitly articulated in justice sector and more in criminal proceedings than in civil proceedings. Less clear are the rights of children to participate in other decision-making processes, for example in sectors, such as in education or health, where children receive services or spend their time. Practices and processes for authorities to listen to children's views and to involve them in decisions that affect them, for example when parents are divorced, or children are placed in alternative care need to be further strengthened. The participation of children and young people in policymaking at local and national level remains limited. There are growing opportunities for the participation and involvement of children in life of the society, presented for example through an increasing internet penetration.

Patterns of inequality

Disaggregated data indicate that inequalities in the fulfillment of children's rights depend to some extent on where the child lives in the country- children's outcomes are worse in some regions than in others. The sex of the child also plays a role and there appear to be gender-specific patterns of deprivation. There are also other factors, whether a family or a child lives in an urban/rural environment, whether the child has a disability; and factors related to family income and the ethnicity/language spoken in the family that influence a child's chances of reaching his or her full potential and realizing and protecting his or her rights. Deprivations of children, boys and girls from certain regions, urban/rural areas, children with special characteristics, family background and wealth quintiles accumulate during childhood and lead to vulnerabilities that are reflected in the life outcomes of young people.

Structural causes

The performance of current health, education, social protection and child

protection systems is underpinned by a number of structural causes. On the policy front, it is positive that the social sector is given priority in the country's development agenda. One of the challenges, however, is corruption, which affects service delivery in several sectors. Another challenge is to create more opportunities to give marginalized people and children a voice. Economic barriers include inefficiencies in budget allocation, hidden costs such as out-of-pocket expenditures in health care, unbalanced investments for different age groups in social protection and education and often insufficient budgets to meet standards. The high level of investment by the government in social sector, that is the main formal entity spending budget to advance children's rights and wellbeing in Uzbekistan, are not having the effect that should be expected. In the social field, society and citizens are guided by a legal framework that reflects the social commitment to non-discrimination and gender equality and the desire to curb harmful cultural practices. However, there are significant gaps between legislation, social norms and customary practices. Patriarchal and hierarchical family structures, strong gender norms,

stigmatization and discriminatory norms are obstacles to progress in all areas of children's rights. The public administration is the technical and management system of the government with responsibility for implementing public policy and ensuring public services for citizens. Some of the modernization reforms that are trending globally, such as e-government reforms and Public Private Partnerships, have also begun in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, to ensure the effectiveness of the public sector it would be necessary to articulate clearer functions and reduce existing overlaps between public structures. The data-driven, evidence-based planning and learning culture of organizations, which is so important for public sector effectiveness, must also be promoted in Uzbekistan.

All this, together with the current governance model in Uzbekistan, defines the prospects and challenges that Uzbekistan has to face for rapid and successful reforms in the social sector. Such reforms are necessary to reduce the disadvantages faced by children. But as experience in many other countries shows, such reforms will take a long time to complete. This requires a long-

term commitment of support including from the international community.

Emerging issues

Finally, Uzbekistan is also facing some emerging problems which will require more attention and closer monitoring in the future. This includes the demographic situation and the resulting pressure, especially on the education sector. The demographic situation also highlights the need for substantial investment and support for education sector reform. This is one of the most important areas that will allow Uzbekistan to take advantage of the demographic dividend by creating a well-qualified young population in a few years' time. In addition, the situation analysis identified the increasing use of the Internet and access to social media as something that can bring both new opportunities and challenges for the wellbeing of children in the future. There are some new and growing health threats, such as mental health problems, HIV infection among young people, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, overweight and obesity, which require attention in addition to the unfinished health agenda on which the country has

been working for several years. Young people and children returning from conflict areas have recently demanded the attention of the government and are likely to continue to do so. Other young people who also need help with reintegration are victims of trafficking, young people released from care or serving a prison sentence. The family as a social institution seems to be changing and trends are emerging, such as increasing divorce rates, but also cases of domestic violence, which are being reported and will need to be addressed more comprehensively in the future. The family is the child's first protective environment and so important for the survival, development, education, protection and social security of children. It should be the first place of investment for a government that cares for its children. Finally, climate change creates real and very concrete risks for children, now and definitely in the future. At the very least, it would be useful to start monitoring its impact on children's health and to launch a dialogue on how to mitigate the impact of this global threat on children's education, poverty levels and general wellbeing in Uzbekistan.

Conclusions

Better opportunities for quality of maternal and child health and nutrition from conception, more opportunities for quality early childhood education, better quality of general secondary education to improve children's learning outcomes, more opportunities for participation of children in decisions affecting them, more access to higher education opportunities, greater coverage of social benefits, combined with targeted efforts to reduce the rate of separation of children from their families and combat violence against children could help to make the younger generation in Uzbekistan a prosperous one. However, this is not enough. In order for Uzbekistan to make further progress in the implementation of children's rights, it needs to go beyond averages and consequently start to address disparities by designing and targeting policies that can address disadvantages where they are most prevalent. For Uzbekistan to make further progress, it is also necessary to examine and remove some of the common structural barriers underpinning the performance of current health, education, social protection and

child protection systems, and to define the ways and processes for involving children in decisions that affect them.

Recommendations

In addition to continuing the ongoing reform of the social sector, the following is recommended to contribute to reducing inequalities for children in Uzbekistan:

Recommendation 1: Establish a multi-dimensional measure of child poverty to allow identification of a combination of deprivations experienced by children in their daily lives – such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous among others.

Recommendation 2: Review and revise existing formula for allocating resources to take into account the results of the multidimensional measurement of child poverty.

Recommendation 3: Expand and strengthen the social protection system

to make it more child-sensitive and more shock-responsive, effectively integrating social security and social services as well as active labour market programmes.

Recommendation 4: Update the youth strategy to include specific efforts to reduce the NEET rate for young people; proactively address discriminatory gender norms and promote young women's participation and opportunities; extend scholarship schemes; improve employment services; promote safe use of the Internet and social media.

Recommendation 5: Develop a costed strategy and action plan to reduce the disadvantages faced by children with disabilities through strengthening the prevention, early detection and intervention for children with disabilities, inclusive education reforms, improving the availability of rehabilitation and educational support services for children with disabilities; developing communication strategies to combat stigma and discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities;

facilitating mechanisms for the participation of people with disabilities.

Recommendation 6: Enhance quality of education services at all levels through supporting education sector reforms currently underway to accelerate expansion of early childhood education, to place learning as the central objective of education reform and ensure a comprehensive approach to improving quality of education.

Recommendation 7: Enhance health and nutrition services from conception, through early childhood and youth through health system reforms and nutrition programmes currently underway.

Recommendation 8: Improve the knowledge base on social norms and violence against children.

Recommendation 9: Develop and implement comprehensive, integrated and coordinated actions through pilot reform measures targeting the most disadvantaged regions.

1



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, the Republic of Uzbekistan has initiated a reform process that encompasses all social sectors, defines a new standard for government accountability to citizens and redefines the prospects for fulfilling children's rights in Uzbekistan. These reforms take place in a challenging context. Changes in social policy and social services require innovation and learning, significant capacity building and investment to fill the remaining gaps and inequitable realization of rights of children in Uzbekistan. Like other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan is significantly impacted by climate change and experiences risks of natural hazards, especially earthquakes, landslides and droughts. The ecological catastrophe

in the Aral Sea region in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, remains a major challenge for the entire Central Asia region. As a result of climate change and exacerbated by the Aral Sea disaster, Uzbekistan faces problems of water scarcity with the prospect of potentially leading to food insecurity in some regions¹. Although GDP growth is forecast for the future², in 2017, Uzbekistan experienced a budget deficit that represented 0.1% of GDP³ and the public external debt rose by more than 100% between 2016 and 2019⁴. It is against this backdrop that UNICEF in Uzbekistan is undertaking an analysis of the situation of children.

This report is an update of the 2016 report «Situation Analysis of children and

1 Rakhmatullaev, Adullaev and Kazbekov (2017), Water-Energy-Food-Environmental Nexus in Central Asia: From Transition to Transformation, retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321673745_Water-Energy-Food-Environmental_Nexus_in_Central_Asia_From_Transition_to_Transformation.

2 World Bank (2019), Uzbekistan: Toward a New, More Open Economy, retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/publication/economic-update-summer-2019>

3 PEFA (2018), Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Performance Assessment Report, retrieved from <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewj28a3oiejIAhUkxaYKHRQkDfsQFjAAegQIBBAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdocuments.worldbank.org%2Fcurated%2Fen%2F869221561673501123%2FUzbekistan-2018-Public-Expenditure-and-Financial-Accountability-PEFA-Performance-Assessment-Report.docx&usq=A0vVaw1nkYlv5e2iaVesQBb4-6i0>.

4 State Statistics Committee (2019), National Summary Data Page, retrieved from https://www.mf.uz/media/GDDS/pdf/Public_External_Debt.pdf.

women in Uzbekistan» and is the first in a series of UNICEF’s “New Generation Situation Analysis» (SitAn), which aim to be a flagship product presenting an analytical narrative on children’s rights and wellbeing. The rights-based analysis looks at the progress, challenges and opportunities in implementing children’s rights, the wellbeing and patterns of deprivation that children experience. It analyses the immediate, underlying and structural causes of these deprivations that serve as barriers to the fulfilment of children’s rights. It examines the unequal realization of rights and the extent and depth of disparities between boys, girls, urban/rural areas, regions, and various groups of children. It highlights the situation of children left behind and those most at risk of being left behind. The situation analysis also includes gender and risk lenses in its analysis. In the area of gender, the analysis consistently attempts to identify inequalities and differences in the realization of the rights of boys and girls. The analysis examines to what extent these differences are caused by specific deprivations and unequal treatment of boys and girls, men and women at a more structural level. The analysis of

structural causes identifies deeply rooted political, economic, social and technical factors that influence deprivations and inequitable realization of children’s rights in Uzbekistan. In the area of risk analysis, the situation analysis looks at the risk landscape in Uzbekistan and takes into account how the existing situation, causal factors, strengths and weaknesses of the various responsible parties deal with the risks. Analysis of the data reveals the differences and challenges in the implementation of children’s rights in different areas, and how these are influenced by geographical location and the hazards present in some places.

The Situation Analysis is intended to be used by a wide range of stakeholders, including UNICEF, other international organisations, civil society, the private sector, the government and other stakeholders which might have an impact on the progressive fulfilment of children’s rights in the country. This analysis furthermore feeds into the process of developing UNICEF’s new 5-year country programme with the government of Uzbekistan. The process will help to distil the priorities and emerging issues for children that can

be addressed by UNICEF and partners in the coming years. The report consists of seven chapters. The overview section provides a general background. This by a substantial chapter on the progress and deprivations in the progressive realization of children's rights in the areas of survival and development, education and development, social security, protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, and the participation of children in matters and decisions that affect them. For each area there is also a discussion

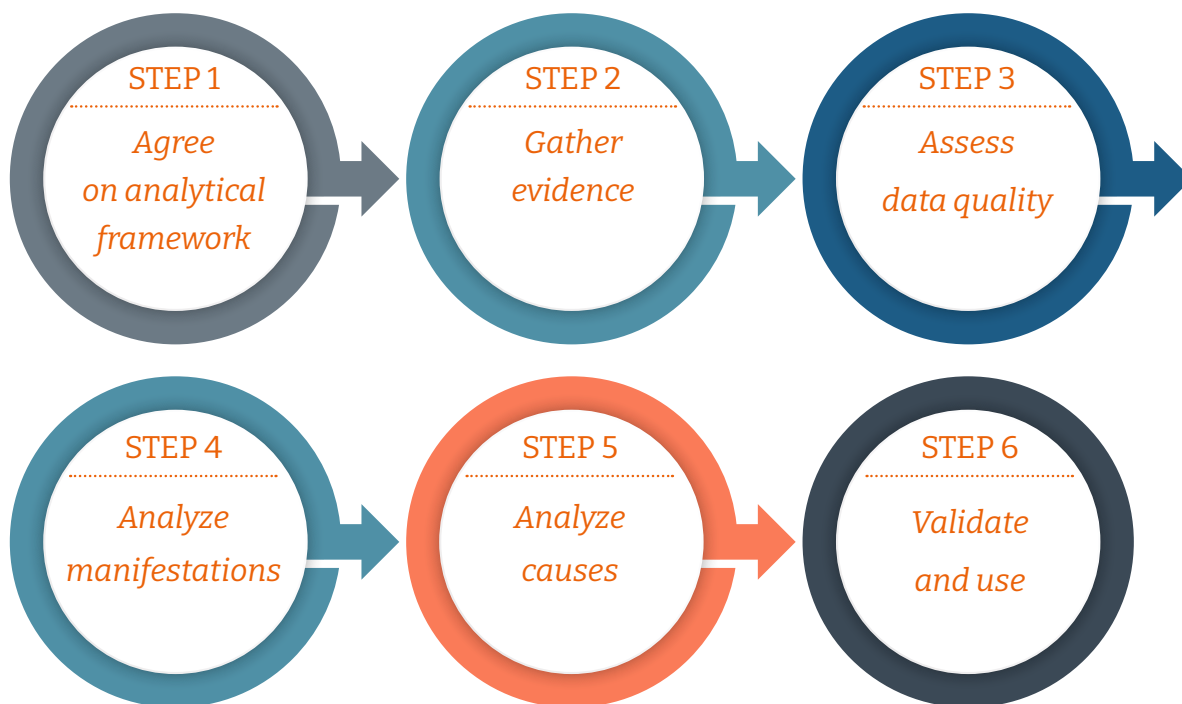
on the immediate and underlying causes that prevent further progress. Chapter four identifies the patterns of inequality in all the areas presented in chapter three. Chapter five analyses the deep-rooted structural causes that affect all areas of children's rights and influence the prospects for progress. Chapter six identifies and provides a snapshot of new and emerging issues that will affect children in the years ahead. Chapter seven contains conclusions and recommendations.



METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITAN

The approach taken to develop the SitAn was consultative and participatory and followed a five-step process, as illustrated in the figure below.

SitAn development process



The analytical framework and assessment questions were informed from UNICEF HQ guidance for the New Generation of SitAns and were adapted to Uzbekistan's context. Once the analytical framework and assessment questions had been

agreed upon with UNICEF Uzbekistan and partners involved in consultations, this was followed by a process of evidence gathering. Evidence gathering, data quality assessment continued throughout the process as gaps in the data were

identified or data were excluded for use. New data sources were identified to supplement or triangulate existing data throughout the process until the full draft of the report was completed.

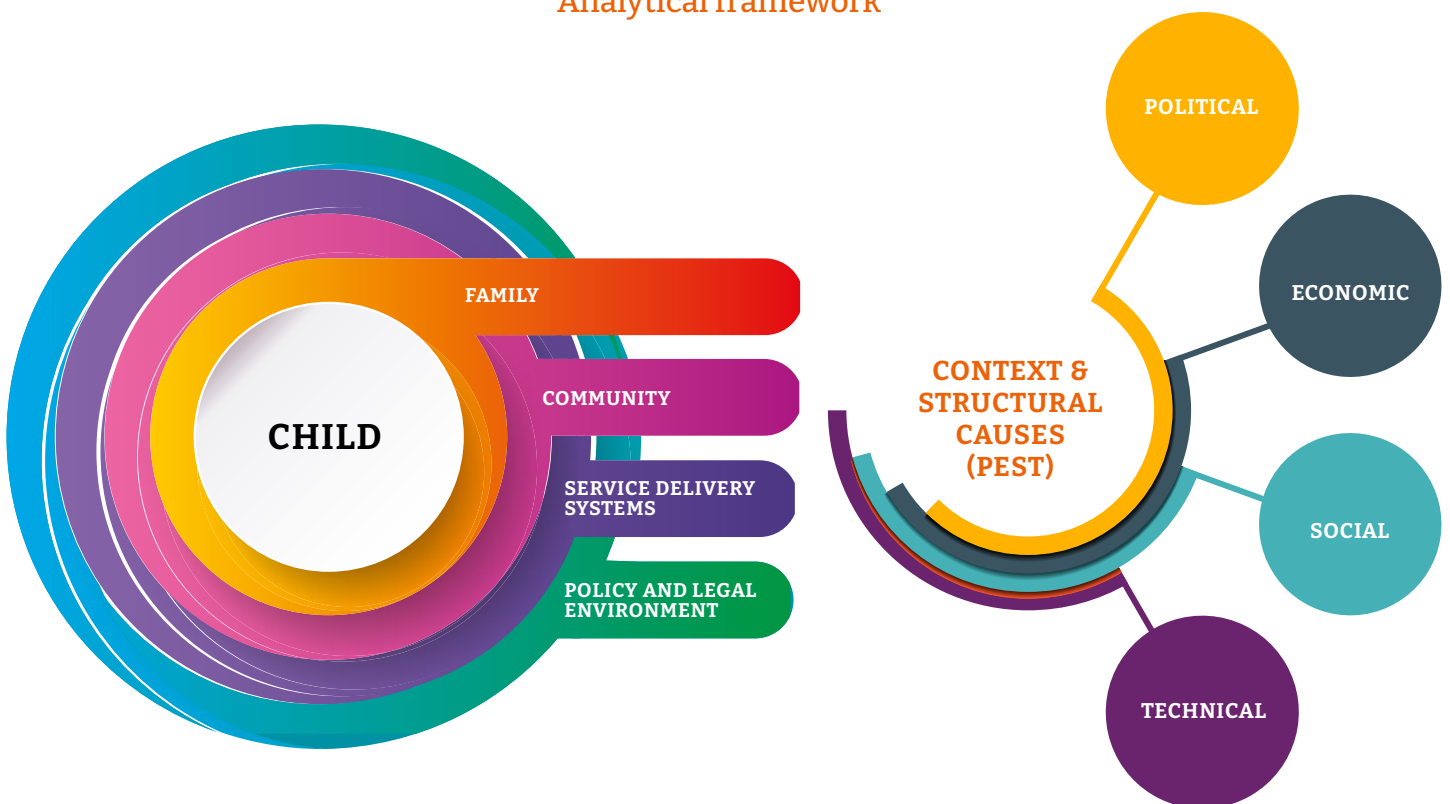
The methodology included a review and analysis of secondary qualitative and quantitative data sources as well as consultations with various stakeholders at national level. Data sources included published and unpublished reports from UNICEF and other stakeholders. This was supplemented by requests to government agencies for quantitative data and a review of the annual statistical reports prepared and published by various government agencies. The SitAn was also based on international reports and research papers, some of which were published in peer-reviewed journals. The data sources were identified in consultation with UNICEF and other international stakeholders. The consultants also independently identified data sources such as peer-reviewed articles, global and regional databases. A few data sources were excluded from the review. This concerned secondary data sources that were considered sensitive and for which an ethical review

would have been necessary. Some reports were also excluded because they did not sufficiently meet quality standards. For example, reports that do not sufficiently reference original data sources that appear to provide contradictory or insufficiently elaborated analyzes have been excluded from use in this SitAn. The data was also collected through larger and smaller group consultations. During a data collection mission in July 2019, separate consultations were held with civil society, state actors, international agencies and UNICEF. These consultations served both to identify published evidence and to consult stakeholders on the main trends, progress and challenges regarding the capacity gaps of different agencies. Smaller sessions were also held with UNICEF program sections for detailed discussions on trends and progress in the various areas of child rights. On the basis of these initial consultations and data analysis, a draft list of the most important deprivations was developed and presented to UNICEF during a second mission and a workshop with UNICEF in August 2019. During the workshop, feedback on the identified deprivations was collected and UNICEF

the teams worked in groups to conduct a causal analysis. This served for further literature data collection and analysis. The available data were used to triangulate and confirm trends, causal analyzes and barriers identified at the August workshop. A validation meeting with the government was held in October 2019. The data presented in the current report were discussed with the government and international stakeholders at a validation workshop organized under the auspices of the Uzbek Women’s

Committee. The analytical framework for this SitAN is rights based. It recognizes that causes to fulfillment and non-fulfillment of children’s rights are to be found within the life context of children and is influenced by the capacity (and gaps in the capacity) of a duty-bearer network. This duty-bearer network exists at several levels, including the most immediate environment of the child, e.g. at family and community-level, in systems, services and organizations available at local and national level.

Analytical framework



2



COUNTRY OVERVIEW

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Demographic profile

With over 33.5 million inhabitants¹, Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia². The gender distribution of the population is balanced: 50.3% female and 49.7% male, a balance that is maintained across all age groups³. Over the last 20 years, the population has grown by an average 1.38%. The UN predicts the population to exceed 37 million mark by 2030⁴. Uzbekistan has a diverse population with 83.8% Uzbeks, 4.8% Tajiks, 2.5% Kazakhs,

2.3% Russians, 2.2% Karakalpaks⁵. The state language of the country is declared to be Uzbek. Uzbekistan is classified as an early demographic-dividend country⁶, which means that the country has a lower child dependency ratio and a higher share of working age population⁷. The population is predominantly young – 45.5% of the population is under 25 years old⁸. Persons under working age constitute 30.5% of the total population, persons of working age – 59.3%, persons above working age – 10.2%⁹.

1 State Statistics Committee (2019), Demographic Situation, retrieved from <https://stat.uz/en/press-center/news-committee/181-ofytsyalnaia-statistika-en/6383-demography>.

2 CIA (2019), The World Factbook, retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>.

3 State Statistics Committee (2019), Gender Statistics, retrieved from <https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/demografiya-en/naselenie-en/411-ozhidaemaya-prodolzhitelnost-en>.

4 UN DESA Population Division (2019), retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>.

5 Uzbekistan Statistics Committee, 2017, retrieved from <https://stat.uz/en/435-analiticheskie-materialy-en1/2075-demographic-situation-in-the-republic-of-uzbekistan>

6 According to the World Bank typology, there are 4 types of demographic dividend countries: pre-dividend, early-dividend, late-dividend and post-dividend countries that measure economic growth that can be attained by having a higher ratio of working age people as a share of the population. See also World Bank Group (2016), Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016: Development Goals in an Era of Demographic Change. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, and Population and Fertility Data from United Nations (2017), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision. New York, NY: United Nations.

7 UNICEF (2018), Generation 2030 Uzbekistan: Investing in Children and Young People to Reap the Demographic Dividend.

8 State Statistics Committee (2019), Demographic Situation, retrieved from <https://stat.uz/en/press-center/news-committee/181-ofytsyalnaia-statistika-en/6383-demography>.

9 Ibid. State Statistics Committee (2019), Demographic Situation, retrieved from <https://stat.uz/en/press-center/news-committee/181-ofytsyalnaia-statistika-en/6383-demography>

Uzbekistan is a natural resource-rich country with an economy in transition from centralized planned to free market economy. The country is undertaking reforms in multiple sectors and domains since 2016.

Uzbekistan is significantly affected by migration. Outward labour migration is mostly characterized by the outflow of workforce from rural areas of Uzbekistan to Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the Republic of Korea, United Arab Emirate and other destinations. Different agencies report different numbers for each destination, as the exact number of migrants is hard to calculate due to non-registration, seasonal nature of migration and frequent border crossing by the same individual. According to experts, Russia accommodates about 3 million labour migrants from Uzbekistan, Turkey – about 1 million and while Kazakhstan reports about 800 thousand migrants.¹ The depreciation of Russian Ruble and general economic downturn in Russia coupled with improving situation in the labour market of Uzbekistan result in return of labour migrants to the country. Different sources quote different figures

for remittances inflow into Uzbekistan. In 2019, World Bank reported that Uzbekistan (together with other Central Asian countries), benefited from a rebound economic activity in Russia, and estimated remittances in 2018 to be at a level of 9% of GDP.²

Political economy and governance

Uzbekistan is a landlocked country rich in natural resources. Although the government has recently started undertaking measure to decrease reliance on the cotton production, the country is still the seventh largest cotton producer and the 15th largest natural gas producer in the world, and the economy still remains largely dependent on cotton production and hydrocarbon extractions³. According to World Bank, the country's GDP is \$49.7 billion and GDP per capita is \$1,535 (2018, in current prices)⁴. In

1 International Organization for Migration (2016), Migrant Vulnerabilities and Integration Needs in Central Asia: Root Causes, Social and Economic Impact of Return Migration. Astana: IOM.

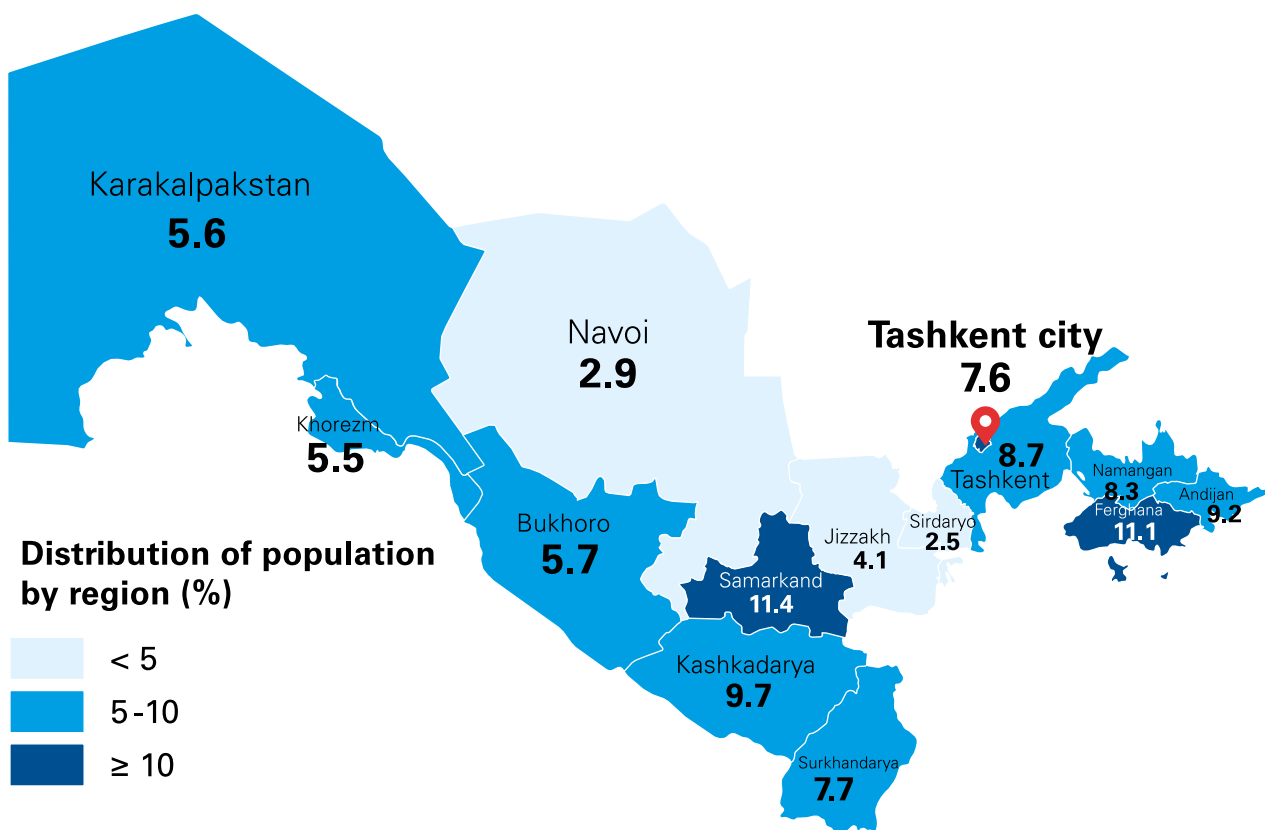
2 World Bank (2019), Migrant Remittance Inflows, retrieved from <https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/Remittance%20Inflows%20Apr%202019.xlsx>.

3 CIA, The World Factbook, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

4 World Bank (2019), Uzbekistan Overview, retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/overview>.

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

Urban population is 16.9 million (50.5% of total), with the largest city being the capital Tashkent (2.5 million inhabitants). Nearly half of the population (44.9%) is concentrated in the Fergana Valley in the east and in Tashkent region (including Tashkent city) in the north-east. The figure below provides the population distribution across regions (in %).



2018, GDP growth reached 5.1%¹. The economy is in transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy². Since 2016, the government has established a process to bring foreign domestic investment into the economy, but this has yet to led to an increase in foreign investors. Due to the “gradualist” approach to move towards a market economy, many sectors have not been yet reformed, and the level of privatization is still low³. According to the government sources, the informal economy constitutes more than 50% of GDP⁴. The new government attempted to curb the informal economy through a number of reforms, including the introduction of national currency conversion to end the double (triple) exchange rate mechanism in 2017. This led to a depreciation of the national currency against the major international currencies⁵.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a

presidential constitutional republic in which the President of Uzbekistan is both the head of state and the head of government. Between independence and September 2016, Uzbekistan was headed by President Islam Karimov. Upon his passing away on 2 September 2016, the Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev was appointed by the Parliament to the President-position in an interim capacity and on 4 December was elected as the President on behalf of the Liberal Democratic Party, with a reported 89% of votes cast⁶. Constitutionally, power is divided between the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The executive power is exercised by the government, while the legislative power is vested in two chambers of the Supreme Assembly (Oliy Majlis), namely the Senate and the Legislative Chamber. The judiciary exercises judicial powers through the Supreme Court and the Constitutional

1 World Bank (2019), Uzbekistan: Toward a New, More Open Economy, retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/publication/economic-update-summer-2019>.

2 CIA, The World Factbook, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

3 See for example Abdullaev U.(2020) “State-owned enterprises in Uzbekistan: taking stock and some reform priorities”, Asian Development Bank Institute, retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/560601/abdi-wp1068.pdf>

4 UzReport (2018), Shadow Economy Has 50% Share in Uzbekistan’s GDP, retrieved from <https://uzreport.news/economy/shadow-economy-has-50-share-in-uzbekistans-gdp>

5 Islamov et al. (2018), Liberalization of Exchange Rate Policies: International Experiences and Lessons for Uzbekistan, Problemy Rynochnoy Ekonomiki, Vol. 1.

6 Source: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2016/12/05/winner/>

Court. The country is administratively divided into 12 regions (viloyatlar), one autonomous republic (respublikasi) and 1 city (shahri). Each region has administrative bodies responsible for implementing state policy. Uzbekistan has institutionalized Mahallas – local self-governing communities. Mahallas have existed for centuries in Uzbek culture and are closely linked to traditions and have a significant influence on social norms and local practices. The Mahalla system currently has more than 30 administrative responsibilities at municipal level, including the management and delivery of social benefits. The chairman and secretary of each Mahalla receive salaries from the state, and candidates for the Mahalla presidency must be approved by the local government, but many other functions of the Mahalla are unpaid. Currently, a Ministry of Mahalla and Family was created in 2020, consolidating the former Women’s

Committee, Mahallas Fund and Nuroniy fund¹.

There are still few international NGOs operating in the country. Since 2018, a new law (Law on Public Control) has been adopted, which sets the legal framework for public oversight of the government. This was followed by several decrees, regulations and resolutions that opened the way to a new role for civil society in Uzbekistan². According to the Ministry of Justice, in 2018 there were registered 9,235 NGOs in Uzbekistan³. However, many of these have been created and subsidized by the government. Mahalla qualifies in Uzbek Law as a non-governmental organization.⁴

Humanitarian risk factors

Uzbekistan is ranked as a low-risk country (score 3 out of 10), with significant risk factor in natural hazards⁵. Earthquakes are the most prominent risk for the country, while landslides, droughts and

1 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan # 5938 from February 18, 2020 “On measures to improve the socio-spiritual atmosphere in society, further support of the mahalla institute, as well as raising the system of work with families and women to a new level”.

2 For example, please see Presidential Resolution from May 2018 “On measures to radically increase the role of civil society institutions in the process of democratic renewal of a country”

3 Source: <https://www.minjust.uz/ru/about/statistics/>

4 The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On citizens’ self-government bodies”

5 Inform Global Risk Index (2018), retrieved from <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/Results-and-data/INFORM-2018-Results-and-data>

Uzbekistan is witnessing clear climate change effects and has significant risks of natural hazards, especially earthquakes, mudslides and drought.

epidemics also are significant hazards¹. Uzbekistan is witnessing climate change effects, such as higher temperatures, divergent precipitation regimes, droughts and decrease in water availability. The average warming is projected to 2-3°C over the next 50 years that is significantly higher than 1.5°C registered over the last 50 years². As a result of climate change, aridity is expected to increase, especially in western Uzbekistan. According to projections, water in two major rivers of Uzbekistan – Syrdarya and Amudarya is expected to decrease by 2-5% and 10-15% respectively by 2050³. This will have strident effects on access to water for irrigation and will adversely affect the entire agricultural sector.

Gender profile

In its fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan, UN’s Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW), noted progress in legislative reforms, efforts to combat trafficking in persons, number of women elected as heads of Mahallas; and in reducing the high number of abortions compared to the fourth periodic report. Legislative progress was further observed with the new Law “On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men” adopted in September 2019, which defines both direct and indirect discrimination and introduces the concept of gender-legal expertise - an analysis of regulatory legal acts and their projects for compliance with the principles of ensuring guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men⁴. However, as noted by CEDAW, there remains several areas where improvements are needed to strengthen gender equality. There are clear gender dimensions in employment: four sectors of the economy are dominated by women,

1 Ibid.

2 World Bank (2013), Uzbekistan – Overview of Climate Change Activities, retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/777011468308642720/Uzbekistan-Overview-of-climate-change-activities>.

3 World Bank (2013), Uzbekistan – Overview of Climate Change Activities, retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/777011468308642720/Uzbekistan-Overview-of-climate-change-activities>

4 Lex.uz (2019), On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, retrieved from <http://lex.uz/pdfs/4494873>

while seven sectors mainly employ men¹. For example, health, education and social services mainly employ women (around 75% of employed are women), while the transportation, storage and construction sectors mainly employ men (over 90% of employed are men)². Cultural and gender norms and stereotypes of the nature and behavior of a woman have a strong influence on the life and career choices of women³. These stereotypes and traditional approach to gender roles are more common in relatively conservative parts of large cities and in rural areas. The CEDAW furthermore noted with concern, among others, lack of shelters for women in difficult life situations; low percentage of women in political and public life; gender pay gap; status of women in rural areas; and general lack of statistical disaggregated data⁴. The

government is working to address several of these concerns⁵.

Public finance and resources for children

The fiscal year 2017 Uzbekistan concluded with 74,865 billion UZS in revenue (30.1% of GDP), expenditures of 75,037 billion UZS (30.2% of GDP), and a budget deficit of 8,240 billion UZS (0.1% of GDP)⁶. According to official statistics, public external debt grew from \$5,8 billion USD in the 1st quarter of 2016 to \$11,7 billion USD in the 1st quarter of 2019 (101.4% increase)⁷.

Public investments are a significant contribution towards fulfilling basic services for children in Uzbekistan. The patterns on public investments in social sectors that benefit children were established in 1990 and reflect a high social commitment on the part of the government. Resources allocated

1 Lex.uz (2019), On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, retrieved from <http://lex.uz/pdfs/4494873>

2 State Statistics Committee (2017), retrieved from <https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/trud-en/zanyatost-naseleniya-en/918-employed-persons-by-sex-and-economic-activity-in-2017>

3 Asian Development Bank (2018), Uzbekistan: Country Gender Assessment, retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/479841/uzbekistan-country-gender-assessment-update.pdf>.

4 United Nations (2015). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women, New York, NY: United Nations.

5 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

6 PEFA (2018), Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Performance Assessment Report, retrieved from <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwj28a3oiejIAhUkxaYKHRQkDfsQFjAAegQIBBAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdocuments.worldbank.org%2Fcurated%2Fen%2F869221561673501123%2FUzbekistan-2018-Public-Expenditure-and-Financial-Accountability-PEFA-Performance-Assessment-Report.docx&usq=A0vVaw1nkYlv5e2iaVesQBb4-6i0>

7 State Statistics Committee (2019), National Summary Data Page, retrieved from https://www.mf.uz/media/GDDS/pdf/Public_External_Debt.pdf.

The State allocates more than 10% of GDP to social sectors and more than 55% of state national budget. Within social sectors, public investments in children constitute about 78% of total annual government spending. In spite of this, impact on children is not fully known, efficiency of investments and their focus on social inclusion need to be improved.

by the State for the development of social sectors exceed 10% of GDP and constitute more than 55% of state national budget. Within these sectors, public investments in children constitute about 78% of the total annual government spending on the development of social sectors, varying from 6.5% in culture to 100% in education.¹ However, a key challenge noted with public investments in social sectors benefitting children is that the per-child public expenditures is low, the direct impact of investments on children is in many cases not known². Budget allocation by purpose (or economic classification) reveals that more than half of funds (52%) are spent on government employee compensation³. Furthermore, public investments to the social sectors have been declining. Impact of public policies and investments of public resources on the social inclusion

of children, e.g. children with disabilities also needs strengthening.⁴ In addition to public investments, non-public investments are also made from NGOs, donors, charities, and businesses but amounts are not known. Children and fulfillment of their rights are also thought to benefit significantly from remittances from the Uzbek workers who have migrated abroad⁵.

A National Development Strategy, called “Strategy of Actions for Five Priority Development Directions of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021” establishes the priority to accelerate growth and development through strengthening rule of law and the development of the social sector. The strategy prioritizes making improvements to the social protection system and healthcare; development of the education and science sectors; and

1 UNICEF (2018), The Patterns of Public Investments in Children in Uzbekistan: Current Status and Development Prospects. Tashkent: UNICEF.

2 UNICEF (2018), The Patterns of Public Investments in Children in Uzbekistan: Current Status and Development Prospects. Tashkent: UNICEF.

3 State Statistics Committee (2019), National Summary Data Page, retrieved from https://www.mf.uz/media/GDDS/pdf/Public_External_Debt.pdf

4 UNICEF (2018), The Patterns of Public Investments in Children in Uzbekistan: Current Status and Development Prospects. Tashkent: UNICEF.

5 UNICEF (2018), The Patterns of Public Investments in Children in Uzbekistan: Current Status and Development Prospects. Tashkent: UNICEF.

the State Youth Policy¹. Thus, children have a central place in Uzbekistan's overall development agenda and the national development strategy sets the stage for a comprehensive and ambitious social reform agenda which is important to progressively fulfill, protect and ensure children's rights. A large number of presidential decrees and resolutions adopted since 2016 that articulate the vision and plans for reforms in the health sector, in the education sector, in the social protection sector and in the area of child protection have already started the implementation of this ambitious social reform agenda.

Poverty

National poverty (less than 2100 kcal per person per day) in 2016 was 12.3%, in

rural – 15.1% and in urban – 9.2%². In 2018, the national poverty was reported at 11.4%³ with three-quarters of the people in poverty live in rural areas⁴. At the same time, relative poverty is estimated to be at a level of 21% of the overall population and 24% among children⁵. The official unemployment rate for 2018 is 9.3%⁶. Between 2001 and 2017, the Gini index, a measure of income inequality, declined from 0.38 (2001) to 0.29 (2017)⁷. Monocultural structure of the economy (depending on a single crop – cotton) is seen as one of the contributing causes⁸. However, the government made an attempt at tackling the issue by elaborating a draft strategy for the development of agriculture until 2030. According to the document, the government provides a plan for state control withdrawal in agriculture

1 The 5 priority areas identified in the Uzbekistan's Development Strategy 2017-2021, include: improving the system of state and public construction; ensuring the rule of law and further reforming of the judicial system; economic development and liberalization; development of the social sphere; security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and implementation of balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy

2 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

3 State Committee on Statistics available at <https://stat.uz/ru/164-ofytsyalnaia-statystyka-ru/6579-uroven-zhizni-naseleniya2>

4 UNDP (2017), About Uzbekistan, retrieved from <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

5 A relative poverty threshold used in the L2CU is set to 50 per cent of the median per capita income of the entire population. This is a common method in high-income countries and is different to the Government's national poverty rate which uses a measure that is calorie based. Source: UN UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

6 State Statistics Committee (2019), retrieved from <https://stat.uz/en/press-center/news-committee/181-ofytsyalnaia-statystyka-en/6384-labor-market>

7 World Bank (2019). Uzbekistan Country Economic Update Summer 2019: Toward a New Economy. Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment Global Practice, retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32042/Uzbekistan-Toward-a-New-Economy-Country-Economic-Update.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

8 The Borgen Project (2017), Cotton: One of the Major Causes of Poverty in Uzbekistan, retrieved from <https://borgenproject.org/major-causes-of-poverty-in-uzbekistan/>.

production, sales and processing of cotton and wheat.¹

Regional and global issues

The Aral Sea disaster remains the major challenge for the entire Central Asia region. As a consequence of concentrated cotton production, drying of the sea “poses a direct threat to the region’s sustainable development, health, gene pool and future of the people” living in Central Asia². Due to inefficient utilization of already limited

water resources, Central Asian countries (including Uzbekistan) are facing the problem of water shortage and the prospect of consequent food insecurity³. Upstream mountainous countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) strive to extract value from hydropower potential of two major rivers in the region, while downstream countries (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) heavily rely on these rivers in irrigation. These competing regional interests may complicate and slow down the process of negotiation and improving the efficiency of water utilization.

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1 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan # 5853 from 23 October 2019 “On approval of the strategy for the development of agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2020 – 2030”

2 The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations (2017), Problems of the Aral Sea and Water Resources of Central Asia, retrieved from <https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/problems-aral-sea-and-water-resources-central-asia>.

3 Rakhmatullaev, Adullaev and Kazbekov (2017), Water-Energy-Food-Environmental Nexus in Central Asia: From Transition to Transformation, retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321673745_Water-Energy-Food-Environmental_Nexus_in_Central_Asia_From_Transition_to_Transformation.

3



CHILD RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IN UZBEKISTAN

CHILD RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IN UZBEKISTAN

The Republic of Uzbekistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994 and two of the Optional Protocols, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, in 2008. The rights and welfare of children are recognized in the Constitution, adopted on 8 December 1992. The Constitution defines the division of obligations and powers within the country and the fundamental rights of all citizens. In addition to constitutional rights, the rights of the child are further specified in the Law on the Guarantee of the Rights of the Child. Under this law, children's rights cannot be restricted unless they are laid down in this specific law, and it gives precedence to international agreements and laws over national laws in the event of contradictions. In practice, the protection of children's

rights in Uzbekistan begins at birth with a universal birth registration, which guarantees children an identity, a name and a nationality. However, the UNCRC notes that although birth registration is almost universal, the application of a birth registration fee for some children, such as children from socioeconomically vulnerable families and refugee children, may serve as an obstacle. The number and proportion of children who are not registered at birth is not known, but there are discrepancies in the data on the number of reported births and the number of birth certificates issued, suggesting that not all births are formally registered. In addition, children are guaranteed access to basic social services from birth and are protected as individuals with their own individual rights, regardless of the rights they receive through their parents¹.

1 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.



3.1. RIGHT TO SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

Overview

In Uzbekistan, the right to health is explicitly recognized in the Constitution¹. The government provides a basic package² of health services, which includes primary health care, emergency care and treatment, medicines, treatment of «socially significant and dangerous» diseases and specialized treatment for population groups classified by the state as particularly vulnerable³. Over the last two decades, Uzbekistan has implemented a number of important health care reforms aimed at improving the quality of health care, management and financing of the health care system. These reforms, which targeted primary, secondary, tertiary and emergency medical services will help the country to make progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 3, and ensure healthier lives for children, improved wellbeing and development.

Status in progressive realization of rights

Key achievements

In a global comparison, Uzbekistan scores well on the most important child survival and development indicators. Infant and child mortality rates vary according to the source of data consulted: UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME), official statistics or survey data. Regardless of the data source, however, the mortality rates have fallen continuously over the last 25-30 years. In 2014 Uzbekistan finally adopted the WHO definition of stillbirth. While this has led to an increase in officially reported rates of both infant and neonatal mortality, it has also provided better data on neonatal deaths and their causes⁴.

1 Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Article 40. The Constitution is available (in English), <http://www.gov.uz/en/constitution>

2 Available (in Russian) at <http://www.med.uz/documentation/detail.php?ID=1028>

3 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent.

4 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers

	UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME)	Official (State Committee on Statistics)
NMR	11.59 per 1,000 live births in 2018	5.7 per 1000 live births per 1,000 live births in 2017
U5MR	21.45 (24.31 for boys and 18.37 for girls) per 1,000 live births in 2018	13.1 (14.5 for boys and 11.5 for girls) per 1,000 live births in 2018
Mortality rates 5-14 years old	3.31 per 1,000 live births in 2018	Not available

Remaining challenges: trends in survival and development of children

Newborn deaths: Despite the progress made in reducing the mortality of children under 5 years of age, the survival rate of babies in the first 28 days of life is worrying. Of all deaths occurring in children under the age of 5, 54% occur in the first 28 days of life. A further 35% of all deaths occur between the time when the child is 1 month and 12 months old and the remaining 11% of children who die before the age of 5 die sometime between the 1st and 5th year of life¹. There are big

differences between regions: Republic of Karakalpakstan, Andijan, Jizzak, Namangan, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Khorezm, Tashkent city have higher U5MR than the national average. The premature birth and low birth weight, infection and asphyxia are leading causes of newborn (neonatal) mortality in Uzbekistan.² Many children who

Seen from a global perspective Uzbekistan is performing well on major survival and development indicators and mortality rates have been reducing over the past 25-30 years.

1 Percentages are estimated from an U5MR at 21.5; IMR 19.12; and NMR 11.59. Source: UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (2019). Uzbekistan. Online. Available at: <https://childmortality.org/data/Uzbekistan> (Accessed 11 November, 2019). No sex-disaggregated data is available from IGME on neonatal mortality

2 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.

are born prematurely in Uzbekistan could probably be saved by focusing on simple techniques such as thermal control, improved hygiene practices and investment in the provision of disposable items in health facilities to prevent infection¹.

After neonatal period: There is an unfinished agenda to improve the chances of survival of children after the newborn (neonatal) period, as most children die from preventable causes. The large majority of deaths (83.10%) in 2017 among children under 5 years of age were caused by various communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases. The single leading cause of death in children under 5 years of age in 2017 are «respiratory infections (including TB)», which account for 41.8% of all deaths². For children aged 5 to 14

years, the group of causes are various injuries, which accounted for 35% of all deaths in 2017. However, respiratory infections (including TB) remains the single most important cause also in this age-group, accounting for 24.17% of all deaths in 2017³.

A high and rising suicide and self-injury rate: Uzbekistan has high rates suicide and self-injury rate among young people in the Central Asian countries⁴. As international studies on the correlation between suicide and mental health issues indicate, this suggests a high prevalence of mental health problems among young people⁵. In 2016 the self-injury and mortality due to suicide for children aged 10-19 years was at 19.6 per 100,000 population⁶ and has increased consistently from year to year and

1 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.

2 The grouping into “Injuries”; “non-communicable diseases”; and “communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases” follows the standard grouping used by the WHO. Data values for various diseases within each group of causes have been added up by the author. Source of data is from: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2019). Global Burden of Disease. Available at www.healthdata.org and <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare>. Accessed 5 September 2019.

3 Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2019). Global Burden of Disease. Available at www.healthdata.org and <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare>. Accessed 5 September 2019.

4 Data submitted by State Committee on Statistics to TransMonEE includes suicides cases and cases of self-harm. Source: TransMONEE database (2016), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

5 Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford, GCDL. (2018). Our World in Data: Mental Health. Online. Available at <https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health> (Accessed 18 March, 2020).

6 Data submitted by State Committee on Statistics to TransMonEE includes suicides cases and cases of self-harm. Source: TransMONEE database (2016), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

There is increasing suicide and self-injury rate, especially for the age group 15-19.

almost doubled since 2008. The highest increases are for the age group 15-19¹. Boys in the 15-19 age group account for about 74% of the total male self-inflicted injury and mortality from suicide in the 10-19 age group. Girls in the 15-19 age group account for about 80% of the total female self-inflicted injury and mortality from suicide in the 10-19 age group².

Children affected by HIV/AIDS:

Uzbekistan has a concentrated HIV epidemic with less than 0.1% of the general population infected. While the vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child has decreased, HIV/AIDS is now one of the causes of death that has increased among children since 1990³. As of 1 January 2018, almost 10% of all HIV deaths were children under 18 years of age⁴. The proportion of children under 18

years of age living in the Republic with HIV was 18.3% in 2017, with the highest proportion of children under 18 years of age with HIV in Andijan (41.9% of all cases), Fergana (31.2%), Namangan (30.9%), Syrdarya (18.1%), Kashkadarya (17.8%) and the Tashkent Region (14.8%). Among children and young people aged 0-24 living with HIV, the prevalence is highest in the 7-14 age group (10.6% of all cases in 2017), followed by the 19-24 age group (8.2% of all cases in 2017)⁵.

Causes to survival and development deprivations

The above data suggests that there are gaps in the continuum of care for children and mothers. These gaps exist both in the immediate environment of mothers and children and in the health system.

1 For girls the rate is increased from 6,3 per 100.000 female child population aged 15-19 in 2010 compared with 15,8 per 100.000 female child population aged 15-19 in 2016. For boys in the same age group, it went from 5,7 per 100.000 male child population aged 15-19 in 2010 to 14,5 per 100.000 male child population of aged 15-19 in 2016. Source: TransMONEE database 2018, retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

2 Calculations made by author based on TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

3 Calculations made by author based on data available from Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2019). Global Burden of Disease. Available at www.healthdata.org and <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare>. Accessed 5 September 2019.

4 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent. p. 25.

5 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent. pp. 20-21.

Immediate family and individual factors

Nutrition of women of reproductive age and pregnant women:

In Uzbekistan a high number of newborn deaths, about 32% of the newborn deaths registered in 2018, are associated with the health of the mother before pregnancy, primarily to nutrition and infections¹. The overall nutrition status of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) and pregnant women has improved over the last two decades. However, women of reproductive age still have significant nutritional deficiencies: about 20% of non-pregnant women are anemic; only about 40% of non-pregnant women of reproductive age meet the minimum dietary requirements and almost half of non-pregnant women have folate deficiency. Folate deficiency is higher among women in urban areas and

there are significant differences in the prevalence of folate deficiency between regions: from 22.9% in Khorezm to 58.8% in Ferghana. About one fifth of non-pregnant women have a vitamin B12 deficiency. The nutrition of pregnant women is also an issue: about one third of pregnant women suffer from anemia, which according to the WHO classification is a moderate public health problem; only about half of pregnant women meet a minimum dietary diversity, and only about one in ten women take recommended vitamin A supplements and one in three take multivitamin tablets.²

Health-seeking behavior, acceptance and knowledge about vaccination needs, nutrition and feeding of children:

The available data indicate that many caregivers are not able to correctly recognize the danger signs of childhood diseases: on average only

Child mortality is from causes that are preventable with relatively simple methods and investments are still prevalent.

1 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.
2 UNICEF (2019). Uzbekistan Nutrition Survey 2017. Tashkent.

15% of caregivers according to MICS 2006, and few as 3% in the Ferghana region and 6% in the Surkhandarya and Kashkadraya regions¹. Reported data on coverage of routine vaccines suggest that an almost universal coverage (99%)². However, measles outbreaks in both 2018 and 2019 raise concerns expressed in various reports, namely that immunization coverage and timeliness of follow-up doses may be lower than thought^{3,4}. Most of the confirmed measles cases came from Kashkadarya region, Tashkent City and Tashkent region⁵. Although the nutritional status of children under 5 years of age has improved over the last two decades⁶, feeding practices of infants and children could still improve: only about 50% of children are

One-third of pregnant women have anemia, posing a moderate public health problem according to WHO classification.

exclusively breastfed until the 6th month; only about one third of children under 5 years of age receive the minimum dietary diversity and only 5% receive the minimum acceptable diet⁷. In addition, micronutrient deficiency is widespread in children: 15% of children suffer from anemia, over 50% of children suffer from iron deficiency and 6% of children suffer from vitamin A deficiency. In addition, 9% of children in Uzbekistan have signs of chronic malnutrition (stunted growth) and 2% have signs of acute malnutrition (wasting)⁸.

Underlying health system challenges:

Availability and quality of health

services: A mix of public and private health service providers offer services to citizens in the Uzbek health system. The public providers are organized as primary, secondary and tertiary health care services and have the task of providing health care within the centrally defined basic package. Private providers

1 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006, UNICEF available at <http://mics.unicef.org/surveys>
 2 UNICEF (2018). Human Resources for Immunization and Health Supply Chain: Rapid Assessment and Improvement planning Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
 3 UNICEF (2018). Human Resources for Immunization and Health Supply Chain: Rapid Assessment and Improvement planning Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
 4 UNICEF (2018). Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of the population on children immunization in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
 5 Data submitted by the Ministry of Health in June 2019 to UNICEF and WHO as part of update of epidemiologic situation with measles.
 6 UNICEF (2019). Uzbekistan Nutrition Survey 2017. Tashkent.
 7 UNICEF (2019). Uzbekistan Nutrition Survey 2017. Tashkent.
 8 UNICEF (2019). Uzbekistan Nutrition Survey 2017. Tashkent



of health services are still few¹. Most pregnant women are followed up by the primary health care system. In recent years, the Ministry of Health has implemented a number of large-scale State programs to improve care for mothers, newborns and children. A policy for the Prevention of Mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV was introduced in 2005 and a new 2019 National Strategy for Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis has been adopted. Overall, Uzbekistan has achieved 100% coverage of births by skilled birth attendants². According to the Ministry of Health, the coverage of newborns of HIV-positive mothers with chemoprophylaxis was 98% in 2017³. Nevertheless, the quality of health services, especially antenatal care and care for high-risk pregnancies, is a challenge: 38% of neonatal deaths are estimated to be related to the quality of antenatal care, and almost 70% of

neonatal deaths are due to the quality of primary outpatient health care for women before and during pregnancy⁴. The screening of pregnant women for syphilis is at a sub-optimal level of about 76% in 2017, which means that the cases may remain undetected and may still be a cause of stillbirths and premature births in Uzbekistan⁵. Moreover, there are large differences between regions in the survival rates of infants with low birth weight and infants with diagnosed birth defects. Such deaths occur due to the inability to resuscitate the newborn, maintain thermal control or treat infections⁶. This points to general challenges in the organization and management of the health care system, but also in the quality of health care and the availability of disposable supplies. Regions with lower survival rates than the national average include the regions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Surkhandarya, Jjizzak and Samarkand,

1 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. *Health Systems in Transition*, 2014, 16(5):1–137

2 WHO (2019). Global Health Observatory Data Repository. Available at: <https://www.who.int/gho/database/en/>. Accessed 19 August 2019.

3 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent.

4 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.

5 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent.

6 UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.

which indicate significant regional differences in the quality of health care¹. For older children and children with special needs, the effectiveness and impact of health services needs to be further improved, e.g. through

the existing system of home visits by patronage nurses. A new home visiting model has been proposed to strengthen support for families with greater needs, while ensuring universal minimum coverage, to be yet implemented².



1 This is based on data provided by regional perinatal centers that are caring for babies diagnosed with birth defects, reported in UNICEF (2018). Situational analysis of neonatal mortality in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis based on BABIES matrices filled out by regional maternal facilities and perinatal centers.

2 Gotsadze (2016). Assessment of the patronage nursing system with equity analysis in Uzbekistan. CURATIO International Foundation

Access to services health services for children with disabilities and with mental health issues:

Data suggests that some families which children with disabilities experience financial barriers to access health services: 2/3 of children with disabilities who have no access to health services come from poorer wealth quintiles¹. The system for early detection of disabilities and early intervention is not well developed. There are few functioning services to provide advice to carers of children with developmental disabilities, and relevant protocols and standards for screening and intervention need to be developed². The mental health issues also require a special attention from public health system in Uzbekistan. Currently services are highly dependent on specialized services in traditional hospitals or institutions. Cross-sectoral strategies to address mental health as a public health issue need to be developed.

The building blocks of the health care system and the quality of the labor force

are also cited as a major cause of many of the challenges identified in the health and immunization system in Uzbekistan. The number of physicians per 100,000 population has declined since 1990 and is now slightly below the average of the Central Asian countries with 225 physicians per 100,000 population³. This has led to an insufficient and uneven distribution of qualified health care providers, especially at the level of primary health centers⁴. The inhabitants of the city of Tashkent and its surroundings have better access to highly qualified personnel and better health facilities than the inhabitants of regions such as Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Karakalpakstan and Khorezm⁵. A lack of a well-established, comprehensive and reliable Information Communication Technology system for tracking human resources and training information

1 Survey data reported in United Nations (2019). Situation Analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

2 United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

3 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. (2014) Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, 16(5):1–137

4 See for example: Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. (2014) Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, , 16(5):1–137 and Gotsadze (2016). Assessment of the patronage nursing system with equity analysis in Uzbekistan. CURATIO International Foundation.

5 Gotsadze (2016). Assessment of the patronage nursing system with equity analysis in Uzbekistan. CURATIO International Foundation.

in the country, limits planning and human resource capacity building. The pre- and in-service medical training system requires further improvement and low salaries and lack of incentives could affect workforce motivation and lead to a high turn-over of health providers¹. In addition, while there is a global recognition that an effective supply chain that provides health workers and patients with essential public health goods is necessary for the effective functioning of the health system, reports on Uzbekistan have identified a lack of cold chain equipment and infrastructure; weaknesses in the procurement and distribution of supplies, including the availability of medicines and basic equipment; challenges in the institutionalization of supportive surveillance; insufficient qualification (due to high turnover rate) of vaccination experts/nurses for the administration of vaccines and the provision of vaccination services; management challenges of health care

facilities as autonomous units; and lack of modern information management procedures². These challenges as well as deficits in the basic infrastructure of health care facilities, such as WASH facilities, contribute to a reduced quality of the care continuum.

Environmental issues: In addition to the direct health and immunization-related causes of survival and development deprivations and risks, there are also environmental underlying causes leading to injuries, accidents and non-communicable diseases. This includes, but is not limited to, the organization of public spaces, such as roads, which do not always divide the driveways and footpaths in such a way that accidents are avoided³. Public policies that regulates the marketing of unhealthy foods, and that enforces food packaging to identify sugary foods are additional underlying causes that can contribute to better health of mothers and children.

1 See for example: Stein, C., Novillo, D. (2018). Report on Health information system and e-health strengthening in Uzbekistan. WHO Regional Office for Europe and Gotsadze (2017). Final report on district health system strengthening and perspectives of reforming patronage nursing/home visiting system in Uzbekistan.

2 UNICEF (2018). Human resources for Immunization & Health Supply chain: Rapid Assessment & Improvement Planning Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

3 J. Sodikov (2018). Road traffic accident data analysis and visualization. Tashkent Highway Engineering Institute. Tashkent. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jamshid_Sodikov/publication/324982701_Road_Traffic_Accident_Data_Analysis_and_Visualization_in_R/links/5aefd9fca6fdc-c8508b95950/Road-Traffic-Accident-Data-Analysis-and-Visualization-in-R.pdf (Accessed 18, March, 2020).



3.2. RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Early childhood development and education for children of different ages helps children develop and reach their full potential and are important building blocks for economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong health and successful parenting in the next generation^{1,2}. Having recognized the importance of education, free and compulsory General Secondary Education (GSE) is guaranteed in the Constitution of Uzbekistan. The Law on Preschool Education of 2019 and the Law on Education of 2020 provide the main legal framework for one-year compulsory pre-primary education as from 2021 and for free and compulsory GSE. Education is identified as one of the key strategies that will drive the transformation in the country's society and economy in the recent National Development Strategy and will help

Uzbekistan to make progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4³. The National Development Strategy and the Education Sector Reform Strategy set ambitious goals in all sub-sectors of the education system. Since 2017, the government has thus placed the quality of education and learning outcomes at the center of the education debate. However, there are significant challenges in achieving the objectives of educational reform and the current system has been characterized as being in a state of flux.⁴

Status in progressive realization of rights

Key achievements

Uzbekistan spends a significant share of GDP (6.4%) and overall government expenditure (30%) on education and has made progress in recognizing

1 Center on the Developing Child (2007). The Science of Early Childhood Development (In Brief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

2 OECD (2018). Education. Available at <https://data.oecd.org/education.htm>. Accessed 21 September 2019.

3 Government of Uzbekistan (2017). Strategy of Actions on the five priority areas for the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021. Tashkent.

4 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

the importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a strategy for child development and school readiness. Recent years saw the establishment of a new Ministry of Preschool Education, adoption of a Concept of the development of the system of preschool education by 2030 and the Law on Preschool Education. Consequently, enrollment in ECE has increased significantly for children aged 3-7 years, from 25% in 2017/18 to 53% in 2019/2020¹. Moreover, Uzbekistan has made great progress in ensuring a high level of access to basic education. In global comparison, Uzbekistan has a low number of children who do not attend school. The GSE cycle is compulsory, which has led to high enrolment rates in primary and secondary education for boys and girls. To facilitate access, GSE institutions provide opportunities to study in eight different languages: Uzbek, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Tajik, Turkmen and English, thus ensuring access to education for

various ethnic groups. Less than 3% of the school age population is not enrolled in school². There is gender parity in GSE enrolment, which has been maintained over time, and the literacy rate is 100%³. Moreover, in the last ten years (between 2008 and 2017) the number of children out of school has decreased from almost 350,000 to almost 142,000⁴. From the 2018/19 academic year, the GSE cycle has been increased from 9 to 11 years⁵ and current educational reforms aim to expand pre-school education facilities and achieve 100% enrolment of children aged 6-7 years by 2021⁶. In order to better monitor trends in educational rights, in 2018 the country has expressed its intention to move to participation in international large-scale student assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In addition, in September 2017, the Government of Uzbekistan established the State

1 Ministry of Preschool Education (2020). Available at: <http://oid.mdo.uz/ru/>

2 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

3 UNESCO (2018). Global Education Monitoring Report: Accountability in education: meeting our commitments, Paris, France.

4 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report.

5 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

6 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent

Inspection for Supervision of Education Quality (SISEQ) with responsibility for quality assurance mechanisms in all sub-sectors of the education system^{1,2}.

Remaining challenges: trends in education and development of children

Access to ECE: Despite the increase in enrollment in ECE in recent years, this is still low by international standards and Uzbekistan will need more time and a continued investment in ECE to continue increase ECE enrollment levels³. Children from poor households, children with disabilities, children in rural areas

Enrollment and drop-out: Access to education differs between age groups, boys and girls, children with disabilities and without, wealth quintiles, urban/rural locations and various regions

and from certain regions are more likely to be excluded from ECE⁴. The regions where children have the least access to ECE services are, Kashkadarya (31 %), Surkhandarya (35 %) and Tashkent region (39 %), while the city of Tashkent has the highest access to ECE services with 87 %⁵. For children with disabilities, ECE services are usually provided by specialized/separate preschools and not by inclusive mainstream preschools. In 2015, there were 20,994 children in 198 specialized pre-schools⁶.

Access to General Secondary Education (GSE) is guaranteed with an enrolment level of 100% in the primary school grades which have increased over time. However, the difference in gross enrolment ratio between primary and secondary grades means that children drop out or have to repeat classes, and this difference has increased over time, indicating a growing problem. In 2010, the difference

1 Cabinet of Minister's Resolution "On the organization of the activities of the State Inspection for Supervision of Education Quality under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan", July 18, 2017 #515.

2 See also Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent and Government of Uzbekistan (2017) and Strategy of Actions on the five priority areas for the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021. Tashkent.

3 UNICEF (2017). Policy Review of Preschool education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent

4 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006, UNICEF, available at <http://mics.unicef.org/surveys>

5 Data from Ministry of Preschool education website, <http://old.mdo.uz/ru/> accessed as of February, 2020

6 Data of State Committee on Statistics for 2015 referenced in UNICEF (2018). Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

Children from low income families, children with disabilities, girls, children from specific regions are more prone to drop-out for school and to be out of school.

in gross enrolment ratio between primary and secondary grades was about 4%, while in 2017 it had increased to about 10%¹. In 2016, only 91% school children graduated successfully from the grades 5-9². Children from low income families, children with disabilities, children from certain regions and girls are more prone to drop out of school and to be out of school. In 2017, there were an estimated 142,000 children out of school, 60% of whom were girls and a large majority of whom are thought to be children with disabilities³. Regions with a higher proportion of out-of-school children compared to the national average (3%) are the Republic of Karakalpakstan (7.5%), Syrdarya (4.5%), Samarkand (4.4%), Bukhara (4.3%) and Tashkent region (4.2%)⁴.

Access to Vocational and Higher Education:

Few young people have access to higher education. Most children who graduate from GSE (84% in 2016/17) enroll in some form of vocational training⁵ while in the case of children with disabilities only 50% enroll in vocational education⁶. Few young people have the chance to enroll in higher education (on average 9%, while 6% for women and 11% for men in 2017/18)⁷. Although enrolment in higher education has been increasing in absolute terms in recent years, the number of university students per 10,000 inhabitants of the country has fallen from 219 students a decade ago to 167 now. Across the country, only 12% of young people aged 25-30 have completed a university education⁸. There are significant equity issues in

1 Calculations made by author based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019). Uzbekistan. Retrieved from: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/uz>

2 GSE-cycle was increased from 9 years to 11 years in the Starting with the 2018/19 academic year. Data referenced predates this change and is from UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report referenced in Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

3 Calculation made from data available from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?querid=181#>) by author of World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis. Final Report. World Bank Group. Washington, p. 48.

4 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

5 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report. World Bank Group

6 Survey data reported in United Nations (2019). Situation Analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

7 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report. World Bank Group

8 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

access: people living in urban areas are twice as likely to complete tertiary education as people living in rural areas (22% compared to 9%)¹; only 3% of young people in the lower income quintile aged 25-30 have completed higher education, compared to 23% in the wealthiest quintile². There are also large gender differences in access to higher education: only 37% (103,299) of students enrolled in universities are women³.

School readiness: It has been proven that children who have attended a pre-school before GSE perform better than children who have not received early childhood education. The considerable number of children aged 3-7 years who are currently not attending pre-school are deprived of this opportunity and are behind their pre-school educated peers when they enter the GSE⁴. This is likely to change as ECE enrollment increases.

Children from poor households, children with disabilities, children from rural areas and from certain regions are currently more likely to be behind in school readiness when they enter the GSE⁵.

Attainment of skills at school:

Students in the Uzbek education system lack the basic foundational and transactional skills needed later in life, and the quality of the GSE and the learning outcomes of students remain very variable and uneven⁶. A World Bank survey carried out in 2013/14 among people who had already entered the labour market showed that higher educational attainment did not necessarily lead to better cognitive skills such as logical and creative thinking, verbal skills, numeracy, problem solving, memory and mental speed, something which is interpreted as students not learning enough while in school⁷. The

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 1 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.
 2 UNICEF (2019). Building a Social Protection System fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.
 3 Calculation made from data available from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=181#>) by author of World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis. Final Report. World bank Group. Washington, p. 40.
 4 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities. A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent
 5 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities. A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent
 6 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.
 7 Ajwad, Mohamed Ihsan, Ilhom Abdulloev, Robin Audy, Stefan Hut, Joost de Laat, Igor Kheyfets, Jennica Larrison, Zlatko Nikoloski, and Federico Torracchi (2014). "The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in Uzbekistan." World Bank. Washington, DC

The purposes of the education system need to be more firmly focused on learning outcomes of education and contributing to social inclusion.

recent study by the Ministry of Public Education and UNICEF on Learning Achievements from 2018 showed that pupils performed at average levels compared to expectations for their grade and that the pace of learning was low in primary school classes. While the pupils coped well with the simpler tasks in reading comprehension, mathematics and science, they struggled with more complex information, problem-solving or reasoning tasks. The study also highlights the determinants of high and low performing students and schools, learning inequalities and differences in learning performance between boys and girls. Children and schools in six regions, namely Republic of Karakalpakstan, Fergana, Khorezm, Bukhara, Surkhadarya and Syrdarya, have a high concentration of underachieving children compared to regions such as Jizzak, Navoi and Tashkent city. The language of instruction and whether a child is taught in his or her mother tongue were also

important factors influencing the level of learning¹.

Contribution to life outcomes and labour market skills:

young people coming out of the education system lack the appropriate skills required by the labour market. The young people face challenges in the transition from the education system to the labour market, as evidenced by the high number of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET-rate). Of the 8.5 million young people aged 15-29 years, an estimated 42% (3.6 million) are inactive and not in employment, education or training. Nationwide, the NEET rate for women is 66%, compared to 34% for young men. Among young people with disabilities, the NEET rate is 77%, rising to 91% for people with severe disability². Moreover, youth unemployment is twice as high (18%) as the average unemployment

1 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent.

2 UNICEF (2018). Building a Social Protection System fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

rate in the country¹. Among those who succeed in entering the labour market, there are some indications that there are skills gaps and that employers are not satisfied with skills of their employees: e.g. their socio-emotional skills such as «taking responsibility for one’s own actions», «self-motivation» and «creativity»². The data also suggests that some children experience social exclusion as a direct effect of the education system. This is particularly accentuated for children who are educated in closed institutions and for children with disabilities. The majority of children with disabilities that receive special education are residents of boarding schools where children stay overnight and are not living with their families and in their communities of origin most of the time.³ In 2017-18, a total of 19,858 children were studying in schools and boarding schools for special education⁴.

Causes to deprivations in children’s education and development

Factors, both in the immediate environment around children and in the functioning of the education system influence children’s access to quality education and learning levels.

Immediate family and community factors:

Deprivations in access education:

Prior to the adoption of the Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing in December 2019, ECE services in Uzbekistan have been neither free nor compulsory⁵ and this has influenced the demand for and supply of pre-school services. Current provision is uneven, and in some regions, there are not enough places to cater for all children in the eligible age groups, while in other regions places are underused⁶. This has led to situations of overcrowding in ECE

1 UNICEF (2018). Building a Social Protection System fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent.

2 Ajwad, Mohamed Ihsan, Ilhom Abdulloev, Robin Audy, Stefan Hut, Joost de Laat, Igor Kheyfets, Jennica Larrison, Zlatko Nikoloski, and Federico Torracchi (2014). “The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in Uzbekistan.” World Bank. Washington, DC

3 UNICEF (2018). Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent

4 State Committee on Statistics (2019). Social Protection of the Population in Uzbekistan (translated from Russian). Tashkent. Online. Available at: <https://stat.uz/uploads/docs/ijtimoiyHimoya17-ru.pdf> (Accessed 18, March, 2020).

5 See for example: IPE Global (2019). KAP of Parents’ Demand for ECCE Services and Development of Behavior Change Communication Strategies: Inception Report. Tashkent

6 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent



facilities in regions with high demand, and in facilities and regions with little demand a lack of available resources has led to poor quality infrastructure and staff¹. The cost of preschool is a major obstacle for parents to send their children to preschool². Access to GSE is particularly an issue for children with disabilities. Demand for education of children with disabilities is influenced by the current supply of services and there is still a predominant belief that segregated education or homeschooling is the appropriate model for children with disabilities³. In higher education, the quotas set by the government limit the level of admissions, with the gap between the number of applications and the number of students admitted growing ever wider⁴.

Deprivations in learning outcomes:

A significant proportion of students do not have sufficient support for their education from their parents at home

and do not have optimal materials, tools and resources to support them in their studies⁵. This contributes to lower learning levels in particular for those students who may have special needs and require additional support to benefit from formal education.

Underlying challenges in the education system

There are also a number of underlying challenges in the education system that are barriers to achieve higher demand for ECE services and better education performance of children overall.

Management, governance, monitoring and regulation of education system:

The Government has recently articulated a revised long-term vision of development of all education sub-sectors by 2030⁶. To support the scale-up and quality of service provision for early childhood

1 IPE Global (2019). KAP of Parents' Demand for ECCE Services and Development of Behavior Change Communication Strategies: Inception Report. Tashkent.
 2 UNICEF (2017). Policy Review of Preschool education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
 3 UNICEF (2018). Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.
 4 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.
 5 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent.
 6 See Presidential Resolution from 8 May 2019 (PP-4312) "On approval of Concept of development of preschool education by 2030"; Presidential Decree from 29 April, 2019 (UP-5712) "On approval of Concept of development of general secondary education by 2030"; Presidential Decree from 8 October, 2019 (UP-5847) "On approval of Concept of development of higher education by 2030".

Selection and recruitment of the best teachers could be improved, and professional development and pre-service practical classroom teaching is needed to improve quality of teachers.

education, a new Ministry of Pre-School Education was established in 2017. However, the full implementation and effect of ongoing efforts for the development of the ECE subsector will take time. In addition to a need for new facilities and more staff, many existing facilities need to be repaired and maintained and existing staff capacity needs to be improved: The majority of existing pre-school teachers (almost 77%) only have a vocational secondary education qualification, and more attention needs to be paid to improving and monitoring the quality of pre-school programmes¹ Legislative documents to support structural and systemic reforms in the GSE system have also been adopted. This includes the introduction of new management mechanisms, quality standards, improvement of the material and technical condition of educational

institutions², and increasing the prestige of the teaching profession through higher salaries, better accommodation and other conditions for teachers³. It is considered that the Law on Education requires further strengthening to reflect a more integrated, life-cycle-oriented approach to education. The Law furthermore needs to be strengthened with mechanisms for the protection of children in the school from all forms of violence, corporal punishment, bullying or abuse and with provisions for greater community participation in shaping education⁴. At present, education standards as well as the systematic and standardized assessment of learning outcomes for monitoring the quality of the education system in Uzbekistan require strengthening as well⁵.

Adequacy and safety of the current infrastructure: A significant proportion

1 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent

2 See Presidential Decree from 5 September 2018 (UP-5538) "On additional measures to improve the management system of the public education"

3 See Presidential Resolution from 14 August, 2018 (PP-3907) "On the measures of raising to the new quality level of the system of spiritual-ethical and physically harmonious education of the youth, its learning and upbringing"

4 UNICEF (2018). Uzbekistan's Law on Education (1997): A Review and Suggestions for Revisions. Tashkent.

5 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent

preschools and schools have problems with the suitability of buildings and equipment. It is estimated that half of all preschools need major repairs and about 15% of GSE institutions require significant capital repairs¹. The physical condition of the buildings of Uzbek vocational schools is reported to be more satisfactory, but still needs to be renovated. Common infrastructure challenges for services in all education subsectors include lack of functioning heating and lighting, water and sewage services and appropriate sanitation facilities.² Higher education facilities require upgrading of laboratories and increasing access to Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities³.

Elements of quality education: The ECE system, including measures to ensure quality of ECE services is being reformed. While a curriculum

and early learning standards have been developed there is not yet a system in place to measure outcomes of preschool education. There is currently a low share, only around 9% of preschool teachers, with higher education⁴. Current reforms of the GSE-system are expected to improve many of the factors influencing the quality of education at this level. But the full effect of reforms on children's learning outcomes will take time. Current barriers to quality in education include the existing curriculum which is very content-oriented, focusing on the direct transfer of knowledge rather than improving the children's ability to learn and apply knowledge⁵. While Pupil-Teacher Ratio in GSE schools is quite low at around 13:1 in 2018⁶, there is a shortage of teachers in some schools, regions and in subjects. A double shift system has become a predominant strategy to respond to pressure on the

1 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis: Final Report. World Bank Group

2 In the 2018 learning achievement study student's perception of their physical environment was tested through asking students to report on the suitability of chairs and desks/tables they have, and availability of a visible board. One-thirds of the students reported that the boards are not clear and visible; 39% of the students reported that during winter, classroom is cold; and around 51% of students reported classrooms were hot or lacked air during summer. Source: UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent.

3 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

4 Please see data available from <http://old.mdo.uz/ru/>

5 UNICEF (2018). Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

6 Data submitted by from State Statistics Office, July 2019



education system, but it is affecting the quality of education¹. Around 75-80% of all GSE schools now operate in two or more shifts². Existing pre-service training is not equipping teachers with sufficient practical experience and the in-service teacher training require adaptation to address specific individual teacher-needs and incentivize teachers. Mechanisms for teacher evaluation based on professional standards need to be improved. The preparation and professional development of school staff and managers need to take into account needs of disadvantaged regions and schools³. The learning environment and learning culture in many schools require further improvement: 25% of surveyed pupils in schools are reporting to have experience of one type of bullying or another at varying

degrees of frequency⁴. A favourable learning environment is also an inclusive environment for all children that actively puts in place measures helping to remove barriers to participation and educational achievement for all children. Although the current legal framework provides for 'free and compulsory' education, hidden costs for education materials could become a burden for low-income families. In Uzbekistan mainstream schools need to be adapted to respond to the needs of children with disabilities and children who otherwise do not «fit” the learning norms⁵. ICT in schools offers students and schools the opportunity to bridge the digital divide, but currently only 7% of schools in Uzbekistan use some form of ICT-based education⁶.

1 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent

2 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis: Final Report. World Bank Group.

3 UNICEF (2018). Gaps and Limitations in Teacher-related Legislation in Uzbekistan. Tashkent

4 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent

5 UNICEF (2018). Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

6 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.



3.3. RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY

Overview

Social security programmes around the world play an important role in helping families and children to alleviate poverty, reduce inequality, food insecurity, and facilitate access to health care, education and other services. Compared to other middle-income countries, Uzbekistan's investment in social protection is on the lower side¹, spending 6% of the GDP on its national social protection system.² Important reforms have recently been announced to overcome the fragmentation of the current system, clarify the criteria for social security benefit recipients and reform the pension system³. If fully implemented, these reforms will help Uzbekistan to reduce poverty including child poverty, which are articulated as the 1st and 2nd of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Status in progressive realization of rights

Key achievements

Social assistance for children comprises a child benefit system consisting of three main schemes: A Childcare Allowance for families with a child under 2 years of age; a Family Allowance for families with children aged 2-14 years; and a Child Disability Benefit. In addition, families are eligible to receive maternity benefit for working women, childbirth allowance and a number of benefits in kind, such as free provision of winter clothes and school supplies for children from low-income families⁴. Children who leave institutional care are considered to be particularly vulnerable and therefore have the right to housing support and a lump sum for starting

1 Asian Development Bank (2019). The Social Protection Indicator for Asia: Assessing Progress. Manila. Available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/516586/spi-asia-2019.pdf> (Accessed, 24 September, 2019).

2 ILO, UNICEF, World Bank (2020). An assessment of social protection system in Uzbekistan. Tashkent. (forthcoming)

3 The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2019). New Social Protection system to be introduced. Retrieved from: <https://www.stat.uz/en/press-center/news-of-uzbekistan/7823-aholini-ijtimoiy-muhofaza-qilish-sohasida-yangi-tizim-joriy-etiladi-3>

4 No data on the coverage of these benefits was available for this report. The current level of spending in the Maternity Benefit, Childbirth allowance and the provision of winter clothes and school supplies to low income families is 0.18 per cent of GDP. Annual budget that is spent on in-kind benefits for orphans and children left without parental support is 0.02% of GDP, and 0.02% of GDP for the provision of winter clothes and school supplies to school children from low-income families. Source: UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

In Uzbekistan, 54% of children live in a household receiving a social protection benefit. Among young people aged 18-30 years 44% live in a household receiving a social protection benefit. But the availability of social security to children is in practice mainly indirect, through schemes that are not specifically for children.

an independent life. Up to 23% of the population of Uzbekistan are direct recipients of social protection benefits. More than half (54%) of children under 18 and 44% of young people between 18 and 30 in Uzbekistan live in a household receiving social assistance of some sort.¹

Remaining challenges: trends in children’s access to, and impact of social security

Social security coverage and outcomes for children and families:

Despite the general social protection coverage, the availability of social security for children is in practice mainly indirect, through schemes

that are not specifically designed for children². Moreover, 52% of the poorest households are not receiving any support from the national social protection system³. In addition, there has been a steady decline in coverage for the three specific child benefits designed to support families with children. For example, childcare allowance recipients have fallen by 60% since 2009, and the coverage of poverty-targeted family allowance that is paid to families with a child between 2 and 14 years of age has also decreased over time, reaching only 10% of children^{4,5}. Today, only 17% of children aged 0-17 years live in a household receiving some form of child benefit (childcare allowance, family allowance

1 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent.
 2 There is there is an imbalanced level of investments across the lifecycle with a heavy emphasis on old age pension schemes. Data source: UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent.
 3 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent.
 4 The Childcare and Family Allowances are household-based schemes. Each household can only receive one of these allowances at any point in time. Households with a per capita monthly average income lower than 1.5 times the monthly minimum wage are eligible. Source: UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent
 5 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan’s children and young people. Tashkent referencing original source: Background figures for UNICEF and WB study using CODI, Aliev (2017) and administrative data

or child disability benefit).¹ Families with children are today over-represented among the poorest. In 2018, an estimated 11.4% of the population of Uzbekistan were living below the national poverty line², however additional survey data demonstrates that poverty rates are highest amongst families with children. About 30% of children up to 9 years old and 24% of children aged 10-14 years old live in families that belong to the poorest quintiles of the population³. Although the poverty rate has fallen in both urban and rural areas (in rural areas from 30 % in 2006 to 15,5 % in 2016 and in urban areas from 18,3 % in 2006 to 9,2 % in 2016) the overall poverty rate is higher in rural areas than in urban areas and children living in rural areas are more affected by poverty⁴.

Social security coverage and outcomes for children with disability;

The current social protection system

does not sufficiently protect households with a family member with disability: 14% of such households, self-report that they do not have enough money to buy basic food; 48% of rural households with a member registered as having disability are in the poorest quintile⁵. As for the child disability benefit, the budget allocated for this benefit remained rather low and around 0.21 % of GDP⁶. To be eligible to receive this benefit, children need to go through a disability assessment, which is costly and cumbersome⁷. Consequently, many (48%) of entitled children with disability do not receive this benefit⁸.

Social protection coverage and outcomes for young people: Another challenge in the current design of the social protection system is that eligibility to child benefits ends at the age of 14. The best covered group is children under 2 years of age and the least covered age group is children

1 UNICEF (2018). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent. P. 40.

2 The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2019). Share of Population living below the National poverty line. Retrieved from: <https://stat.uz/ru/164-ofytsyalnaia-statistika-ru/6579-uroven-zhizni-naseleniya2>

3 L2CU survey referenced in UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent

4 Data submitted by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics to TransMonEE in 2018

5 United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

6 L2CU survey referenced in UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent

7 United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

8 L2CU survey referenced in UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

The age-group best covered by social security is children under 2, and the least covered age-group is children aged 15-17.

aged 15-17. The gap in social security coverage and broader social protection and labour market programmes leaves young people in Uzbekistan vulnerable at a time in their lives when they may be leaving school, starting a career.

Causes to limited access and impact

Immediate causes

Barriers to access at individual level:

Lack of knowledge about eligibility, complicated application procedures, poor adequacy of the periods covered may result in beneficiaries not applying for social security benefits¹. There is a lack of professional social services or community-based social workers to inform vulnerable families with children of their potential eligibility or to help beneficiaries to access the documents required for an application². The lack of this capacity are reasons that often

contribute to a low coverage of social security systems³. In addition, eligibility to universal child disability benefit is subject to the condition that the child has a disability certificate which is issued after a disability assessment. Obtaining such disability certification requires hospitalization and can be costly, making it difficult to access for the low-income families. Moreover, the assessment of disability does not follow the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health and limits the disability certification to a fraction of those who may be affected by functional limitations⁴.

Underlying causes in the social protection system

At a deeper level, the causes leading to sub-optimal outcomes of the social protection system include insufficient funding and system design issues that

1 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent

2 Columbia School of Social Work (2018). The Social Service Workforce (SWW) in Uzbekistan: Strengths, Challenges and Ways Forward.

3 Ainsworth, P., Gaia, E., Nordenmark Severinsson, A. (2012). Keeping families together: Making social protection more effective for children. Insights: Child Rights in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Issue 1:2012. UNICEF. Available at: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Child%20Rights%20in%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe%20and%20Central%20Asia.pdf> (Accessed 2, September, 2019).

4 United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.



Complicated procedures for applications, low adequacy in terms of amounts and time-periods covered, may lead beneficiaries to not apply for social security benefits, consequently leading to low coverage.

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affect the availability, eligibility, adequacy and demand for social protection.

Legislation and funding define (and limit) the availability and entitlement to social protection in Uzbekistan. The limited impact of social protection on child poverty depends to some extent on the existence of gaps in the availability of social protection schemes for groups that might have needed it. In Uzbekistan, for example, there is no provision to compensate carers of children with disabilities, mostly women, for loss of income due to care responsibilities. For young people, social protection measures such as labour market programmes, capacity building and empowerment initiatives, social entrepreneurship and volunteering opportunities could help to fill gaps in social security systems but are not yet available to support the transition from childhood to adulthood and from education to the labour market. Parental leave, which can be

an important social protection measure to support families with young children, is granted in Uzbekistan to mothers who have the right to maternity leave. However, the legislation makes the employer responsible for providing this benefit, which discourages the recruitment of women of reproductive age, increasing the vulnerability not only of these women but of young families as a whole. None of the available social protection programmes take into account the higher vulnerability of people living in regions that suffer from severe impacts of climate change or where large areas of land have become unusable and people are losing their livelihoods due to environmental disasters, such as in the Aral Sea region¹. In other cases, social security schemes exist, but eligibility is too narrowly defined or targeting methods exclude those for whom they are intended. Although the child benefit amount is adequate, the main reason for the limited impact and exclusion

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¹ UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

of many families in need of child benefits, is the low level of funding to the schemes, which contributes to low coverage. The financing of child benefits in Uzbekistan has been considerably reduced over the last 20 years and is now almost negligible.¹ Given funding shortages, it is likely that the Mahallas, who are responsible for selecting beneficiaries, ration limited number of benefits by distributing them among the large number of eligible families. The downside of this rationing is that it significantly reduces the effectiveness of child benefits when families are unable to access regular and predictable transfers for sufficient time². The lack of objective criteria for selecting beneficiaries also leaves room for biased selection and there is no mechanism for appeal³.

Integration of support to vulnerable families: In many cases, social security benefits alone can have only a limited impact on poverty and reducing

vulnerability if they are not integrated and combined with a broader support package that enables beneficiaries to overcome the causes of their poverty⁴. A system of integrated support requires case coordination. In Uzbekistan, there is no specific, consolidated agency for social protection and welfare. The responsibilities for social security benefits and social protection services are spread over many bodies. At the local level, Mahalla's specialists help to manage social benefits. However, these professionals have neither a mandate nor a specific professional qualification to integrate social services and social security packages through a case management approach⁵. The current methods for defining eligibility do not include a professional assessment of a client's situation by inspectors. When low-income families receive services from several different sources, each unit defines needs on the basis of its own criteria and the support packages are not linked. There is no monitoring

1 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

2 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

3 See for example: World Bank (2019). Uzbekistan Social Assistance Targeting Assessment. Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/756191577683400252/pdf/Uzbekistan-Social-Assistance-Targeting-Assessment.pdf>

4 Ainsworth, P., Gaia, E., Nordenmark Severinsson, A. (2012). Keeping families together: Making social protection more effective for children. Insights: child Rights in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Issue 1:2012. UNICEF. Available at: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Child%20Rights%20in%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe%20and%20Central%20Asia.pdf> (Accessed 2, September, 2019).

5 Columbia School of Social Work (2018). The Social Service Workforce (SWW) in Uzbekistan: Strengths, Challenges and Ways Forward.

to assess how different support services and benefits strengthen the ability of families to achieve economic independence¹. Integration between support for access to social security benefits or job search assistance and access to childcare is also necessary, especially for young women.

Evidence and data: As in many other countries², the capacity to monitor the basic data on program expenditure and the number of beneficiaries needs

to be further improved, also because of the need to coordinate information between many different departments and government agencies. Child poverty is not measured and monitored, and there is no monitoring and evaluation framework or system to assess the overall impact of the social protection system on specific beneficiaries such as children. This leaves the government with a little evidence to shape an improved social protection system.

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1 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

2 World Bank (2018). Measuring the Effectiveness of Social protection: Concepts and Applications. Washington. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29802/9781464810909.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y> (Accessed: 23 September, 2019)



3.4. RIGHT TO A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT AGAINST VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Overview

In view of the growing global awareness of the significant social and economic costs of violence against children, the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect has become increasingly important worldwide¹. In Uzbekistan components of a child protection system exist at the institutional level, and the protection of children is governed by a comprehensive policy and legal framework. The priorities for national reforms of family and childcare and child protection and the judicial system are set out in the National Development Strategy 2017-2021 and contribute to the SDG target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development².

Status in progressive realization of rights

Key achievements

Uzbekistan has taken significant steps over the last decade, and particularly since 2016, to bring its legal framework and child protection practice in compliance with international standards. The 2008 Law on the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child articulates the right of the child to protection from all forms of violence and recognizes the right of the child to a family environment. The protection provisions are also included in other laws that institutionalize all the structures and services that underpin the

The use of systematic child labour in the cotton harvest has been discontinued and children were not mobilized for cotton picking in 2018.

1 Ferguson, H. (2004). Protecting Children in Time: Child Abuse, Child Protection and the Consequences of Modernity. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan; and Gilbert, N. Parton, N. Skivenes, M. (2011). Child Protection Systems: International Trends and Orientations. New York. Oxford University Press

2 Sustainable Development Goals (2019). Violence Against Children. Available at : <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/violenceagainstchildren> (Accessed 20 September, 2019)

child protection system¹. The adoption of a new law «On the protection of women against harassment and violence»² in 2019 was a breakthrough. Also, in 2019 the Family Code was revised to equalize the age of marriage for men and women to 18 years instead of 17 years for women and 18 years for men. In addition, since 2016, high priority has been given to strengthening the family support system³, developing the profession of social work, family-based alternative care for children without parental care and working on the prevention of juvenile crimes through the development of community support programs. As a result of these reforms, in 2018 the government established a Specialized Department of Social Work in the National University of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Interior set up the country's first child-friendly investigation room to improve the protection of the rights of children who are victims and witnesses of crime. In 2019, the Ministry of Interior made

further efforts to address the UNCRC recommendations and established social workers and psychologists' posts in Social and Legal Support Centers⁴ across the country. A breakthrough was also achieved in access to correctional-educational facilities and prisons for juvenile offenders. In 2019, 167 girls in two closed, specialized educational correctional facilities were assessed by social workers and plans for their reintegration were developed. A Presidential Resolution of May 2019 expressed plans for the restructuring of specialized educational institutions and the closure of two out of four correctional institutions. Last but not least, Uzbekistan, which has been internationally criticized for years for the systematic use of child labor in the cotton harvest and has been monitored by the ILO since 2013, has put an end to this practice. In 2018, the ILO declared that the cotton harvest was carried out without mobilizing children to pick cotton⁵.

1 Sammon, E. M. (2017) The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent

2 US Daily (2019). The Senate approves the law "On the protection of women from harassment and violence". Available at: <http://uzdaily.com/en/post/51455> (Accessed 28 August, 2019).

3 President Resolution #5325 of 2 February 2018 on "On measures to radically improve activities in the field of supporting women and strengthening the family."

4 The Ministry of Interior operates Social and Legal Support Centers, which replaced former Transit Centers for minors.

5 ILO (2018). Third party monitoring of child labour and forced labour during the 2018 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan. Geneva. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_norm/--ipec/documents/publication/wcms_681372.pdf. (Accessed, 2 September, 2019)

In spite of recent legislative changes equalizing age of marriage for boys and girls, child marriage is prevalent and especially affects girls

Remaining challenges: trends in the protection of children

Violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children happen to children in various settings in Uzbekistan¹, as in other countries of the world², but prevalence is not known³. An assessment of the situation of children in closed educational institutions revealed the prevalence of family violence: a difficult family atmosphere, and lack of care, poor relations between family members and a lack of material opportunities, were situations which shaped the experience of family-life of girls with so-called «anti-social» behavior⁴. The regions of origin

with the highest rates of children coming into correctional care in 2017 and thus having experience of this type of maltreatment at home were the regions of Tashkent, Tashkent City, Surdarya, Bukhara and Navoi⁵. In addition, in 2018, the General Prosecutor Office recorded 174 cases of crimes against the sexual freedom of children under 16 years of age, and 136 applications from minors were made to their Helpline⁶. Child marriage in Uzbekistan has decreased from 2.82% of all marriages in 2010 to 1.54% of all marriages in 2018 but is still prevalent. The vast majority of child marriages are to girls (4,786 out of 4,787 cases in 2018)⁷. The two regions with a higher proportion

1 See for example: United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent and statistics from General Prosecutor's Office on "reported crimes against the sexual freedom of children", and on the "number of applications from minors to the General Prosecutor's helpline" etc.

2 United Nations (2006). Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. General Assembly. Sixty First Session.

3 Sammon, E., Isayeva, D., Ahayeva, S., Lakhomova, I: (2017). Functional Analysis of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Authorities and Interagency Commissions on Minors in Uzbekistan. UNICEF. Tashkent.

4 Previously there were four closed specialized educational institutions for children with behavioral difficulties, including two for girls and two for boys of different ages. Two of these institutions are under closure because in line with the international standards, placement of children in these institutions is considered as deprivation of liberty and not recommended for children.

5 Rates were calculated based on the number of cases reported for 2017 from each region / regional child population x 100,000.

6 Data received from Prosecutor General's Office , July, 2019

7 Calculations made by the author based on indicators: The number of under ages in marriages (up to 18 years) -Male and Females (Gender Statistics); Number of Marriages (Demographic indicators) available from Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.stat.uz/en/>

of child marriages than the national average are Kashkadarya (2.03% of all marriages in this region were child marriages) and Samarkand (4.64% of all marriages in this region were child marriages), with Samarkand representing 36% and Kashkadarya - 13% of all child marriages in Uzbekistan in 2018¹. Trafficking, sexual exploitation and the spread of children living and working on the streets are also reported in Uzbekistan as in many other countries. According to international sources, Uzbekistan is a country of origin and destination for trafficking in women and children². In 2018, the government conducted 123 investigations and prosecuted 168 cases of crimes related to trafficking in human beings and convicted 230 defendants for crimes related to trafficking and sexual exploitation^{3, 4}. Concerns have also been expressed

about the children living and working on the streets and measures to address the situation of children on streets⁵.

Separation of children from families and institutionalization

are prevalent challenges in Uzbekistan. In 2016, the rate of children who were left without parental care was 71 children per 100,000 population aged 0-17 years. In 2016, 52% of these were boys and 48% girls. The largest proportion of children left without parental care is between 7 and 17 years old, but an increasing proportion of children left without parental care appears to be under 3 years old.⁶ Many of the smaller children are most likely adopted domestically: 3,345 children were adopted domestically in Uzbekistan in 2018⁷. The regions that in 2018 had a higher rate of children left without parental care than

1 Calculations made by the author based on indicators: The number of under ages in marriages (up to 18 years) -Male and Females (Gender Statistics); Number of Marriages (Demographic indicators) available from Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.stat.uz/en/>

2 Adult and child victims from Uzbekistan have been identified in Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Thailand according to the report: USA Department of State (2019). Trafficking in Persons Report 2019). Available at : <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf> (Accessed: 2 August, 2019).

3 USA Department of State (2019). Trafficking in Persons Report 2019). Available at : <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf> (Accessed: 2 August, 2019).

4 It is not known how many of these cases were involving minors.

5 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

6 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

7 State Statistics Committee, data provided in July 2019.

There is a high rate of institutionalization of children in Uzbekistan who consequently are deprived of the right to grow up in a safe and nurturing family environment. In particular children with disability affected.

the national average include Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent Region, Khorezm, Syrdarya regions, and the Republic of Karakalpakstan¹.

Even if most of the children in Uzbekistan who are left without parental care are placed in guardianship/trusteeship or adopted, the rates of institutionalization and deprivation of family environment for children are high. The five regions that adopted or placed most children in guardianship and trusteehip in 2018 were Samarkand, Surkhandarya, the Tashkent region, Bukhara and Kashkadarya. In contrast, 20,169 children who were placed in various forms of institutional care in the country in 2016². However, it is known that most children living in institutions are boys (60%), that the proportion

of boys and girls in institutions has remained similar over time, and that 416 (2%)³ were children under 3 years of age, the age at which institutionalization is most harmful to child development⁴. In 2018, 255 children for every 100,000 children lived in residential care⁵. Children with disabilities are clearly and increasingly over-represented in this type of care: 69% of all children placed in institutions were disabled in 2010 and 84% in 2016⁶. Most children with disabilities in institutions are in the 7-17 age group. Given that this is children of school-age, they are likely placed in institutions for educational purposes⁷. For children placed in the alternative care system, there is a need to introduce effective mechanisms for monitoring the outcomes for children. For example, the development of

1 To identify these regions, rates were calculated by author based on child population statistics for 2017 available from State Statistics Committee, and data on numbers of children left without parental care within 2018, by region, data provided by State Statistics Committee in July 2019

2 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

3 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

4 See for example Better care network (2019). Effects of Institutional care. Available at: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/particular-threats-to-childrens-care-and-protection/effects-of-institutional-care> (Accessed 23 September, 2019)

5 UNICEF estimations based on data is from State Committee on Statistics. This figure includes sanatorium type institutions.

6 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

7 TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.



individual care plans is not a standard practice. After placement in care, children do not receive continuous support to maintain contact with their family and the recommended principle of not separating siblings needs to be systematically applied. Moreover, the current alternative care system provides care for children only up to the age of 16, which means that children over 16 who do not have a family can be left particularly vulnerable without care and support¹.

Children in conflict with the law:

Juvenile delinquency accounts for a small proportion of total crime in Uzbekistan, between 2.5% in 2009 and 3.1% of all crimes in 2013² and has decreased significantly over the last decades. In 2018, a total of 1,100 offences by/or involving children under

18 years old were registered³. Most cases involving children are for types of offences such as theft (52%) and hooliganism (8%) which accounted for over 60% of juvenile delinquency cases⁴. As in most countries, the overwhelming majority of offences committed by boys (92% of all cases committed in 2018)⁵ and with most cases being reported in regions with higher population density, such as Tashkent City and Tashkent Region⁶. The legislation and treatment of children in conflict with the law needs to be improved to meet international standards⁷. Deprivation of liberty in closed institutions is common for children with so-called «anti-social behaviour»⁸ or for children who commit socially dangerous offences when they are too young to be prosecuted⁹. The minimum age for criminal responsibility

1 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

2 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

3 State Committee on Statistics available at <https://stat.uz/ru/2-uncategorised/6018-minimalnye-pokazateli-garantii-prav-detej-2>

4 State Committee on Statistics available at <https://stat.uz/ru/2-uncategorised/6018-minimalnye-pokazateli-garantii-prav-detej-2>

5 State Committee on Statistics, “Men and Women 2015-18” Statistical Bulletin

6 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

7 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

8 Anti-social behaviour is often used as a terminology to describe behaviors such as such as alcohol or drug use, begging, prostitution or running away from home.

9 See for example: United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.; UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated Report. Tashkent

(MACR) is 16 years but can be reduced to 13 years for more serious offences. Children below the MACR may receive sanctions in the form of placement in a special educational institution for up to three years and for children above the MACR the most severe penalty may be imprisonment for up to 15 years. Contrary to international standards, children can also be arrested and held in police custody for 48 hours and then remain in pre-trial detention for up to seven months¹. Committee on the Rights of the Child also expressed its concerns of reports of ill-treatment during investigations², including among juveniles, the use of solitary confinement cells («kartcers») and labour as a form of punishment³.

Child victims and witnesses: As in other countries, a number of children in Uzbekistan are in contact with justice as child victims and witnesses. In 2018, the Prosecutor

General's Office reported a declining trend in the number of court hearings involving children, from 1101 cases in 2014 to a total of 772 in 2018⁴. Children who have been victims or witnesses of crime are particularly vulnerable, as participation in criminal proceedings can cause stress and lead to trauma and revictimization. The successful prosecution of a person who has committed a crime against a child therefore often depends on whether the criminal proceedings are child friendly. In Uzbekistan the law and practice provide for special protection of the rights and interests of children in civil, criminal and administrative proceedings⁵. A review of victim case files conducted in 2014 in four regions of Uzbekistan revealed 111 cases in which a child victim was involved. The conviction rate of perpetrators was high: 88.3% of the cases referred to the court resulted in the defendant

1 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

2 See for example OMCT SOS-Torture Network (2019). Uzbekistan Written information for the List of Issues (LOI) to be adopted at the 66th session of the UN Committee against Torture. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/UZB/INT_CAT_ICO_UZB_34801_E.pdf (Accessed 23 September, 2019) and United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013).

3 See for example United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva. and UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent

4 Data submitted by the Prosecutor General's Office, July 2019

5 See for example Law on Guarantee of Children's Rights, Art 11 and Law on Guardianship and Trusteeship

being found guilty. The majority of child victims were girls (67%), most of them in the 13-16 age group¹.

Causes to child protection risks and trends

Immediate family factors:

The ability of parents to respond to the specific needs and behavior of children is a direct factor influencing current trends in child protection. Persistent or sudden vulnerability of a family, such as in cases of poverty, death of one parent, single parenthood, migration or divorce of parents, lack or loss of housing, combined with the inability to cope with such situations, can put children in risk situations, leading to so-called 'antisocial behavior', vulnerability to child trafficking or homelessness². Weak parental ability to develop a bond with children, the lack of knowledge about how to deal with impulsive and difficult behavior of children and changes in children's behavior during adolescence

are other direct causes that put children at higher risk of being subjected to harsh discipline and violence and create conflicts between child and family that can lead to a disruption of bonds³. In addition, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence and the general dysfunctionality of the family are also situations that often contribute to exposing children to an immediate risk of harm⁴. Even though it is still not socially acceptable to talk about domestic and gender-based violence such cases exist also in Uzbekistan. According to the records of the Centers for Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Women Victims of Violence and for Suicide Prevention, 8,822 women were seeking assistance at these centres in the first 6 months of 2019. Most cases came from Namangan (24%), followed by Surkhandarya (19%), Kashkadarya (11%), Andijan, Tashkent region and Fergana (8% each), Khorezm, Samarkand and Tashkent City (4% each), Karakalpakstan, Bukhara, Jizzak and Navoi (2% each)⁵.

1 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

2 UNICEF (2018). Assessing and Reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities. Tashkent.

3 Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child (2017). In brief: Applying the Science of Child Development in Child Welfare Systems. Available at: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-applying-the-science-of-child-development-in-child-welfare-systems/> [Accessed 31 July 2019].

4 UNICEF (2018). Assessing and Reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities. Tashkent.

5 Data submitted by the Women's Committee, July 2019.

Locally provided social services such as information and awareness, counselling, support to find employment, parenting programs and rehabilitation of children need further strengthening.

Underlying child protection system factors

Policy, legislation and institutional frameworks need strengthening in spite of recent legislative reforms and an extensive legal framework for the protection of children. Best interests of the child, forms of violence and the framework for the provision of services to children who are victims of violence need to be further defined in legislation. Furthermore, the complexity of many child protection cases requires a cross-sectoral response with sufficient capacity and coordination between sectors; social services, police, justice, health, and education. In Uzbekistan different stakeholders often have overlapping functions, coordination and integration between them needs to be improved, and the institutional framework of

the child protection system has been described as fragmented¹. At national level, the capacity to plan, monitor and systematically assess the child protection system and outcomes for children needs to be further strengthened in the relevant ministries.

The availability, quality and integration of social services

supporting families and children at risk must be improved in order to strengthen preventive and family support measures, professional early detection of vulnerability and risk, reporting and referral of families and children at risk². In Uzbekistan the state-funded social service system still consists mainly of very intensive services in the form of residential care³ while social services such as information and awareness, counselling, support to find employment, parenting programs

1 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

2 See for example: Gilbert, N. Parton, N. Skivenes, M. (2011). Child Protection Systems: International Trends and Orientations. New York. Oxford University Press and Ferguson, H. (2004). Protecting Children in Time: Child Abuse, Child Protection and the Consequences of Modernity. Basingstoke, Palgrave Mac-Millan

3 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva

and rehabilitation of children need to be further strengthened^{1,2}. Alternative family-based care services are limited and the capacity of service providers is constrained by the lack of specialized professionals^{3,4}. The effectiveness of the protection system also depends on the ability to provide an integrated and holistic support package for families and children at risk, facilitated by a social work function that follows a case management approach⁵. The adoption of such an approach is made difficult by the fact that Uzbekistan does not yet have a well-trained social service workforce⁶. Furthermore, the system of social services is not fully integrated. Territorial planning is driven by centralized planning and provision of services, and the planning of sufficient and appropriate service provision to meet the needs of families and children at risk is hampered by the weak data

and evidence base on the extent of violence, abuse and neglect of children.

Services for children who come into contact with the justice system: The justice system is not yet fully capable of handling child cases in accordance with international standards. Child-friendly investigation rooms are being set up, but investigators are not yet qualified to undertake forensic interviews with children and many judges are not sufficiently trained to deal with cases involving child victims and witnesses. Furthermore, children often go through court proceedings without a defense lawyer and the involvement of other organisations and professionals in providing any form of victim/ witness support services remains limited⁷. There is no a devoted juvenile justice system in Uzbekistan. The application of a restorative justice approach

1 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

2 See for example: Columbia School of Social Work (2018). The Social Service Workforce (SWW) in Uzbekistan: Strengths, Challenges and Ways Forward and Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

3 See for example: Columbia School of Social Work (2018). The Social Service Workforce (SWW) in Uzbekistan: Strengths, Challenges and Ways Forward and Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

4 Sammon, E., Isayeva, D., Ahayeva, S., Lakhomova, I. (2017). Functional Analysis of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Authorities and Interagency Commissions on Minors in Uzbekistan. UNICEF. Tashkent.

5 See for example: European Commission (2015). Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery – part I and part II. Brussels. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13784&langId=en> and <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13785&langId=en> (Accessed 25 August, 2019)

6 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

7 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

needs to be incorporated in national legislation by placing more emphasis on the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been in conflict with the law. Diversion schemes in form of community-based alternatives to post trial detention must be developed for

children who come into conflict with the law. Projects are underway to pilot test reintegration services for children who have served a prison sentence or to reintegrate children from correctional facilities¹ but such services are not yet available in all the regions^{2,3}.

1 UNICEF (2018). Assessing and Reintegrating girls from closed institutions in Uzbekistan back into their families and communities. Tashkent

2 UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report. Tashkent.

3 Taleshi, M. (2019). Social and Legal Service Centers: Capacity Assessment and System Analysis. Tashkent.



3.5. RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION

Overview

Effective child participation can be empowering and help to ensure accountability for children's rights at all levels of society, including government accountability, as set out in the 16th Sustainable Development Goal. The right to participation presupposes freedom of thought, freedom of expression, the right to be heard and the right to information¹. If these rights are not fulfilled the participation of children becomes symbolic rather than empowering for children².

Status in progressive realization of rights

Key achievements

In Uzbekistan the right of the child

to be heard is enshrined in the legal framework while there is also a tradition of state-sponsored youth participation. Previously, the «Kamolot youth movement» was known as one of the largest NGO dealing with youth in Uzbekistan. This organization was discontinued and the «Youth Union of Uzbekistan» was created in 2017^{3,4}. Currently, the Youth Union is under reform and plans to establish an Agency for Youth Affairs had been announced⁵. International literature recognizes that there are different forms of child participation and it will be important that such youth organization supports young people's own aspirations and is not used as a form of decorative child participation that in international literature is categorized as "tokenistic"^{6,7}. Further legislative amendments on the role

1 General comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard (CRC/C/GC/12)

2 For more details see Hart's classification in Youth Participation: UNICEF's Experience Working with Young People, Programme Experience Series, Gender, Partnerships and Participation, No. 1. New York. UNICEF, 1999

3 Law «On State Youth Policy» of 14 September 2016 available at <https://www.lex.uz/acts/3026250#3026857> (in Russian)

4 Human Rights Ombudsman of Uzbekistan (2017). The civic movement of Youth Uzbekistan "Kamolot" has been reorganized into the Union of Youth in Uzbekistan. Online. Available at: http://ombudsman.uz/en/press_center/news/uzbekistan/the-civic-movement-of-youth-uzbekistan-kamolot-has-been-reorganized-into-the-union-of-youth-of-uzbe/?print=Y (Accessed 30 September, 2019)

5 Source: Kun.us (2019). Youth Union of Uzbekistan to be terminated, Agency for Youth Affairs will be created. Online. Available at: <https://kun.uz/en/news/2019/12/27/youth-union-of-uzbekistan-to-be-terminated-agency-for-youth-affairs-will-be-created> (Accessed 18, March, 2020)

6 According to the generally accepted concept of child participation as per Roger Hart, Children's Participation From Tokenism to Citizenship, Firenze, UNICEF, Innocenti Essays N. 4, 1992

7 International Crisis Group, Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation, 31 October 2003, at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia-central-asia/tajikistan/youth-central-asia-losing-new-generation>

of the mass media, information, the professional activity of a journalist and the transparency of state bodies¹ have clarified the right to freedom of opinion and expression and created important foundations for a more meaningful participation of children. Following these developments, the President initiated monthly meetings with “Khokim va Yoshlar” (Local Governor and Youth). Building on this initiative, in 2019 UNICEF supported Nationwide Movement Yuksalish and the Youth Union in conducting 4 youth consultations in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Khorezm and Fergana regions. The aims of the consultations were to enhance capacity of young people and local governors for a constructive dialogue and to model a more effective platform for youth engagement in decision-making processes. This could be the beginning of a more meaningful participation of youth in Uzbekistan.

Remaining challenges: trends in the participation of children

Child participation as a continuous process: At best, child participation is a continuous process that is facilitated through all phases of a child’s life^{2,3}. This requires a safe and supportive environment that enables children to play an active role in family affairs, school, health care, community life, society and policy⁴. Giving children the space to participate in decisions that affect them has an empowering effect and helps develop identity and self-confidence and gives children a sense of control over their own lives. On the other hand, limited child participation can have a negative impact on the socio-emotional state and wellbeing of children⁵. In Uzbekistan there is a stated intention to ensure participation rights, but meaningful participation goes beyond this.

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 1 United Nations (2018). Uzbekistan Fifth’s State Party Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Committee on the Rights of the Child. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fUZB%2f5&Lang=en (Accessed 30 September 2019)
 2 Gal, T. (2015). An ecological model of child and youth participation. Children and Youth Services Review. Vol. 79, pp. 57-64. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740917302955> (Accessed 30 September 2019)
 3 Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. Childhood A Journal of global child research. Volume 11, Issue 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0907568204040182> (Accessed 30 September, 2019)
 4 UNICEF Yugoslavia, A Brave New Generation: Youth in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 2004
 5 Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. Childhood A Journal of global child research. Volume 11, Issue 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0907568204040182> (Accessed 30 September, 2019)

Evidence suggests that child rearing practices in Uzbekistan are changing and with that so are also opportunities for child participation in family decisions.

Several studies in Uzbekistan point to issues of children’s socio-emotional skills, self-confidence and mental health¹, which may to some extent indicate that more emphasis needs to be placed on the participation of children as a continuous process in all phases of a child’s life, in order to promote citizenship through a learning process that starts at an early age and allows children to participate actively in matters that affect them in family and community life².

Participation of the child in family affairs and decisions: There is little research on how children are involved in family life decisions in Uzbekistan. In a small study commissioned by UNODC involving 210 families participating in a family strengthening

initiative, 67% of parents said they never, rarely or only some of the time, found ways to involve their children in family decisions; 23% of parents included children «a good deal of the time» in family decisions and only 12% «most or all the time»³. In many other countries, it has been found that the norms of child rearing often reflect the economic and political order of a society in the broader sense. Societies that value collective social order and stability over individual development often employ child rearing practices that place obedience above independent thinking⁴. In Uzbekistan obedience and following instructions were have been found to be valued as good behavior by a child, at least in more traditional households⁵. Furthermore, adult expectations have been found

1 See for example earlier chapters on mental health, socio-emotional skills of students in the education system.

2 Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. *Childhood A Journal of global child research*. Volume 11, Issue 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0907568204040182> (Accessed 30 September, 2019)

3 The figures are baseline data collected before the project started. Source: UNODC (2018). Evaluation of Strengthening Families Program. Tashkent.

4 Crowley, K. (2016). Understanding Uzbek child rearing as a mediating factor in the government’s reliance on child forced labor during the annual cotton harvest: A pilot project. In C. Roland-Lévy, P. Denoux, B. Voyer, P. Boski, & W. K. Gabrenya Jr. (Eds.), *Unity, diversity and culture. Proceedings from the 22nd Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Available at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/176 (Accessed 25 June 2019)

5 Nizamedinkhodjayeva, N., Bock, B., Mollinga, P. (2017). Gender, Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Uzbekistan in times of Change. In *Gender and Rural Globalization: International perspectives on gender and rural development*. Cabi. Croydon.

to be different for boys than for girls. Girls are expected to live at home until marriage, care for elderly relatives¹ and they therefore have less influence on decisions about how they want to live their lives as married or unmarried women. Boys, on the other hand, often have stricter rules, higher expectations at home than girls, suggesting that boys also have limits on the scope for participation in matters that affect them². However, there are signs that child rearing practices in Uzbek society are changing, possibly to be more open to child-centered educational styles and to value communication as a way of conveying different views in the family, including those of children³.

Participation of children in administrative and judicial proceedings and in services:

Professionals and services that come into contact with children can act as gatekeepers to enable children to participate⁴. In Uzbekistan participation rights seem to be more explicit in legislation related to criminal proceedings than in civil proceedings as well as in other sectors where children receive services or spend their time^{5,6,7,8}. In addition, the environment for enforcing the right to be heard needs to be strengthened to ensure child-friendly processes, procedures and spaces where children feel safe to express themselves in such

1 Nizamedinkhodjayeva, N., Bock, B., Mollinga, P. (2017). Gender, Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Uzbekistan in times of Change. In *Gender and Rural Globalization: International perspectives on gender and rural development*. Cabi. Croydon.

2 Crowley, K. (2016). Understanding Uzbek child rearing as a mediating factor in the government's reliance on child forced labor during the annual cotton harvest: A pilot project. In C. Roland-Lévy, P. Denoux, B. Voyer, P. Boski, & W. K. Gabrenya Jr. (Eds.), *Unity, diversity and culture. Proceedings from the 22nd Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Available at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/176 (Accessed 25 June 2019)

3 Crowley, K. (2016). Understanding Uzbek child rearing as a mediating factor in the government's reliance on child forced labor during the annual cotton harvest: A pilot project. In C. Roland-Lévy, P. Denoux, B. Voyer, P. Boski, & W. K. Gabrenya Jr. (Eds.), *Unity, diversity and culture. Proceedings from the 22nd Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Available at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/176 (Accessed 25 June 2019)

4 Gal, T. (2015). An ecological model of child and youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Vol. 79, pp. 57-64. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740917302955> (Accessed 30 september 2019)

5 See for example: Daniel O'Donnell (2011), *Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform Achievements in Uzbekistan*, UNICEF

6 Civil Code, Articles 22 and 28; Civil Procedure Code, Article 38. Cited in UNICEF (2014), *Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Analysis of the Legal Framework*

7 Law "On Guarantee of Children's Rights", Article 11. Cited in UNICEF (2014), *Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Analysis of the Legal Framework*

8 UNICEF (2015). *Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated report*. Tashkent., pp.84-86

Participation rights are more explicitly articulated when it comes to criminal proceedings than for civil proceedings and in other sectors where children receive services or spend their time.

proceedings¹. There is not much data on the participation of children in school decision making. When children are placed in alternative care services, they are rarely consulted before the decision on placement, for example in residential care^{2,3,4}. In addition, at the community level, the Mahallas are often the first point of contact for families who need support with mediation in family problems, but they do not have standardized tools and training for listening and involving children in such processes⁵.

Participation of children in policy making and social movements: The opportunities for children to make their voices heard and participate in

opinion making are changing in Uzbek society as access to the Internet and social media becomes more frequent and available. However, in a recent media survey conducted in three regions of Uzbekistan, young people reported that they use the Internet to inform themselves about news rather than to discuss news and social issues that affect them⁶. According to the National Youth Survey 2019, youth participation is most common in various school committees and councils (45.7% of young people surveyed), followed by participation in the Youth Union (27.6%), various cultural and entertainment clubs (25.4%), political organizations or movements (15.5%) and least in NGOs (14.8%)⁷.

1 For example, almost all judges (96.2%) surveyed in a UNICEF-study from 2015, that included questions on measures taken by judges to create a more conducive environment for child victims and witness to participate in trial proceedings, agreed that child victims and witnesses should be questioned with extra sensitivity. Source: UNICEF (2015). Justice for Children in Uzbekistan: Consolidated Report. Tashkent.

2 See for example: Columbia School of Social Work (2018). The Social Service Workforce (SWW) in Uzbekistan: Strengths, Challenges and Ways Forward

3 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

4 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

5 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

6 Focus group discussions with youth asked “Are you browsing websites that discuss news about health, nutrition, education, work and employment, social protection, disability, ecology, etc.?”; participants in focus group discussions responded that they were generally interested in this information, but more for educational purposes and / or for work. Source: UNICEF (2019). Survey to understand the media preferences of general population in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. Draft Report.

7 UNICEF (2019). National Survey “Youth of Uzbekistan: aspirations, needs and risks”. Tashkent. Draft Report.

Causes to limited participation of children

Immediate factors

Children's and parents' expectations and capacity:

The most immediate factors influencing a child's ability to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them are related to the expectations and ability of the child, as well as to the immediate family environment and the ability and motivation of adults to involve children in family decision-making¹. Young people do not necessarily expect to be involved in decision-making, as participation is not traditionally encouraged as part of family values. In addition, access to information and key tools such as newspapers, the internet, books, libraries for children and young people for information and opinion making has been more limited in the past, but this is changing since 2016. International media houses such

as the BBC have returned to Uzbekistan² and the independence of the media³ and the population's access to the mass media⁴ is improving. Internet penetration in rural areas is more limited and it has been found that girls use the Internet less than boys⁵. If the tools and access to the channels that can facilitate children's participation are still generally limited, the situation is even worse for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities have fewer opportunities to meet, access information, form opinions and express them in almost all the different types of activities in which children would normally have the opportunity to access information and to meet other children and young people to share and exchange views, such as reading books and magazines, playing and surfing the Internet, communicating with friends, sports, going to the theatre, cinema or museum, eating and walking outside the home, attending hobby classes⁶.

1 Gal, T. (2015). An ecological model of child and youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Vol. 79, pp. 57-64. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740917302955> (Accessed 30 September 2019)

2 See for example: List of correspondents from foreign media accredited with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan <https://mfa.uz/ru/press/161/>

3 President Resolution "On further measures to ensure the independence of mass media and the development of press services of state authorities and organizations" #4366 dated 27 June 2019 <https://mfa.uz/ru/press/library/2019/06/19757/>

4 President Decree "On additional measures for further development of the information sphere and mass communications" #5653 dated 2 February 2019 - <http://lex.uz/docs/4188801>

5 UNICEF (2019). National Survey "Youth of Uzbekistan: aspirations, needs and risks". Tashkent. Draft Report.

6 United Nations (2019). Situation analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

Children's participation and engagement in influencing social movements is changing and children participate in various forums. Children use such tools more to access information than for debate and to influence.

Underlying causes in the system

Willingness, capacity and

accountability of professionals

to engage with children in a participatory manner are factors that can greatly facilitate (or hinder) children's rights to meaningful participation. The relevant regulatory environment and organizational structures, whether local or national, could in theory facilitate the participation of children. Together with the social changes currently taking place and within what is acceptable in local culture, Uzbekistan still needs to diversify the opportunities and mechanisms for child participation¹. At present, child participation is seen as a task for selected few agencies and mechanisms, and the role that professionals and the public officials can play as gatekeepers across

sectors: facilitating and promoting child participation can be further clarified. The current management culture has imposed a vertical system of accountability. International experience has shown that such centralized accountability system can prevent local initiatives from constructive participation of children in the design and implementation of services². The concerns of loss of control among professionals and the pressures to achieve centrally defined results can take up the attention, time and space of professionals and public officials and prevent them from engaging in dialogue with children, actively seeking children's perspectives and taking the time to build trust and respect with children, which is a prerequisite for effective child participation³.

1 Gal, T. (2015). An ecological model of child and youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Vol. 79, pp. 57-64. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740917302955> (Accessed 30 September 2019)

2 Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. *Childhood A Journal of global child research*. Volume 11, Issue 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0907568204040182> (Accessed 30 September, 2019)

3 Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. *Childhood A Journal of global child research*. Volume 11, Issue 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0907568204040182> (Accessed 30 September, 2019)

4



PATTERNS
OF INEQUALITY

PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY

Each area of children's rights has its specific challenges, immediate and underlying causes that influence outcomes for children. Disaggregated data indicate that inequalities in the fulfillment of children's rights depend to some extent on where the child lives in the country- children's outcomes are worse in some regions than in other.

The sex of the child also plays a role and there appear to be gender-specific patterns of deprivation. There are also other factors, whether a family or a child lives in an urban/rural environment, whether the child has a disability; and factors related to family income and the language spoken in the family that influence a child's chances of reaching his or her full potential and of realizing his or her rights. Deprivation of children, inequalities between boys

and girls, regions, urban/rural areas, children with specific characteristics, family background and wealth quintiles, accumulate during childhood and lead to vulnerabilities that are reflected in the life outcomes of young people.

Geographic disparities

Regionally disaggregated data shows that for each area of child rights there are specific regions where children are more disadvantaged than in other regions. Three regions that appear on the list of poor performers across all themes covered in this report are the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya. All these three regions have a per capita income below the national average and are among the five regions with the lowest per capita

Deprivations for children accumulate during childhood and lead to vulnerabilities that are seen in life-outcomes of youth.

income in Uzbekistan¹. In addition, all three regions have a larger number of children than the national average². Due to the drainage of the Aral Sea the Republic of Karakalpakstan has become one of the poorest regions of the country. This region is exposed to drought and changes in weather conditions and is therefore increasingly vulnerable.

Gender-disparities

There are clear gender differences and patterns of inequality in outcomes for boys and girls. Although both boys and girls are disadvantaged in a number of areas and indicators, they are disadvantaged to varying degrees and their degree of disadvantage is different. Boys perform worse than girls in the indicators for child survival. However, both boys and girls are affected by the

trend of growing number of reported cases of self-harm and suicides³. Like in many other countries, both boys and girls suffer abuse and violence, but the types of violence, abuse and protection issues seem to differ. Some data suggests that boys suffer from stricter discipline at home, but there is more data on girls and young women exposed to early marriage, gender-based violence. More girls than boys come into contact with the justice system as victims or witnesses, while more boys than girls come into contact with the justice system as perpetrators.

Some gender patterns are particularly evident in education and employment, and girls are more disadvantaged than boys in a number of indicators. For example, fewer girls than boys enroll to early childhood education⁴, so they are less prepared than boys for GSE education⁵. There are more girls than

1 This conclusion is based on official data for 2018 on the indicator "Total per capita income by region" available from the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on statistics. Available at: <https://www.stat.uz/en/>

2 This conclusion is based on official data for 2017 on the indicator "Number of children below 18" available from the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on statistics. Available at: <https://www.stat.uz/en/>

3 Data submitted by State Committee on Statistics to TransMonEE includes suicides cases and cases of self-harm. Source: TransMONEE database (2016), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/database/>.

4 State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on statistics, Gender Statistics, Gender equality in educational institutions, 2016. Source: <https://gender.stat.uz/en/analytical-materials/education/780-gender-equality-in-educational-institutions-in-2016>

5 See for example evidence from a representative sample of children who have transitioned to GSE, and who had attended a preschool before entering GSE, that children who received ECE perform better in their learning achievements than those who did not receive ECE reported in UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent

boys among out-of-school children¹, and out-of-school children (who are often girls) often have disabilities². At the same time, more boys than girls are placed in institutions and children with disabilities are overrepresented in residential care. This indicates that a boy with a disability has a better chance of receiving an education than a girl with a disability, as these boys are then often educated in institutions. Overall, girls are much more excluded from higher education than boys. Finally, there are also significant gender dimensions in the NEET rate; the female NEET rate is consistently higher than the male NEET rate in all regions.

Other drivers of inequality

There are also other drivers of unequal realization of rights in Uzbekistan.

Urban / rural disparities

The available disaggregated data suggests that the place where children live, in urban or rural locations, has an additional influence on the prospects

of having their rights fulfilled. In some areas, especially in the area of survival and protection, there is a specific dynamic in and around urban areas that seems to influence outcomes for children. For example, women of reproductive age living in urban areas have a poorer nutritional value (e.g. suffering folate deficiency), thus having greater risk of giving birth to a child with a disability. Children living in urban areas are more likely to suffer from iron deficiency and anemia. In addition, wasted growth resulting from acute malnutrition is more common in urban children, while stunted growth- a sign of long-term chronic malnutrition- is more common in children living in rural areas. This suggests that children in urban areas are exposed to short-term risks in their food security compared to rural children who may be more exposed to long-term nutrition and health risks. There is also a potential dynamic related to child protection, which may be linked to the dynamics of cities. From the available data, Tashkent City and the Tashkent region top the list of regions that have worse results

1 Calculations made by author based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019). Uzbekistan. Retrieved from: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/uz>

2 Calculation made from data available from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queried=181#>) by author of World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis. Final Report., p. 48



in indicators of child protection. In education, students living in rural areas are consistently more disadvantaged than their urban peers across several educational indicators. For example, it is known that children/young people living in rural areas are less likely to receive higher education and that the overall educational infrastructure in rural areas is poorer.

Disability

Disability is another factor that strongly influences children's prospects of having their rights realized. In many areas, children with disabilities are consistently more disadvantaged. Children with disabilities are often educated in specialized pre-schools, over-represented in special education institutions, which provide an environment that deprives these children of parental care and the benefits of social inclusion in the communities from which they come. Children with disabilities are over-represented among out-of-school

children and NEET rate is significantly higher among young people with disabilities. In a survey conducted in 2018, about 30% of children with disabilities were unable to access health services when they needed them (compared to 6.3% for children without disabilities¹). The prevention, early detection and intervention work for children with disabilities must be further improved in comparison to other countries². Children with disabilities are not given priority in the social protection system: 48% of children with disabilities do not have access to the universal disability benefit³. The representation and participation of children with disabilities in various activities is also lower than for children without disabilities, as discussed in the chapter on participation. All this means that children born with a disability or acquiring a disability in childhood or later in life have much lower chances of reaching their full potential than other children. This is also reflected in the high NEET rate among children with disabilities. Among young people with

1 United Nations (2019). Situation Analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

2 United Nations (2019). Situation Analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

3 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

severe disabilities, the NEET rate is 77%, rising to 91% of severely disabled people¹. This means that Uzbekistan has much to gain by tapping into the untapped potential and talents inherent in all people, including children and young people with disabilities.

Wealth and poverty

It is not surprising that family wealth and poverty also influence the prospects for the fulfillment of children's rights. Indicators related to micronutrient deficiency, chronic and acute child malnutrition are worse for children from the least affluent income quintiles. Children from poorer households are more deprived of early childhood education. As a result, they are less well prepared for school than their peers from the higher income quintiles. Students with mothers with a low level of education perform worse than those with well-educated mothers. Children from the poorer income quintiles are more excluded from higher educational

opportunities, which means that fewer families from poor families will have well educated mothers in the next generation. All this helps to perpetuate the inequalities into the next generations. The influence of wealth and poverty on deprivations of children and the unequal realization of rights in different regions, between boys and girls and for children with specific characteristics, should also be seen in the context of the general social cohesion in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has been characterized as having a Gini coefficient² at 0.445, above the threshold of 0.27 identified by IMF economists as a high level of inequality that could be detrimental to economic growth³. Poverty rates in Uzbekistan are higher among children, adults who are likely to raise children, and people aged 80 and over⁴.

The multiplication effect: vulnerability of youth

There is no study in Uzbekistan that documents how and whether different

1 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

2 Gini coefficient is a measure of income and wealth distribution among a country's citizens

3 Data from the Listening to Citizen in Uzbekistan (L2CU) survey were used to calculate the Gini coefficient in UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent, p. 7.

4 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

child vulnerabilities discussed above combine for children and how this affects the fulfilment of children's rights. However, there is some data suggesting that in Uzbekistan, as in many other countries, many vulnerabilities are strongly interconnected. For example, available survey data suggests that 35% of registered people with disabilities live in households of the lowest wealth quintile; that in rural areas 48% of registered people with disabilities live in households of the lowest wealth quintile; that about 2/3 of people with disabilities who have no access to health services and 3/4 of people with disabilities who have no access to education services come from poorer wealth quintiles¹. This suggests that there is a potential multiplier effect for many children, and some children risk experiencing multiple deprivations, all at once or during their childhood. As children accumulate deprivations over their life cycle, they are not as healthy, well-educated or do not have the high welfare status they should have had if

their rights had been better met over their life cycle. This kind of multiplier effect is reflected in the fact that young people in Uzbekistan, when they reach adulthood, have several very specific vulnerabilities that are very likely to have accumulated during childhood: As discussed in the chapter on survival, the suicide and inflicted self-harm rate among young people in Uzbekistan is rising ; as discussed in the chapters on education and social security, there is a high NEET rate for young people; the vulnerability and lack of access to opportunities in Uzbekistan is also manifested in high-outbound labour migration patterns. Among the working age population in Uzbekistan, one in five men is an international migrant, and among the youth population the international migration rate is even higher: one in three men between the ages of 20 and 24 is a migrant². Despite their high vulnerability, only a small proportion of young people have access to public work programmes and unemployment benefits³.

1 Survey data reported in the United Nations presentation at the launch of the United Nations (2019). Situation Analysis on Children and Adults with Disabilities in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

2 Ajwad, Mohamed Ihsan, Ilhom Abdulloev, Robin Audy, Stefan Hut, Joost de Laat, Igor Kheyfets, Jennica Larrison, Zlatko Nikoloski, and Federico Torracchi (2014). "The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in Uzbekistan." World Bank. Washington, DC.

3 UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.





**STRUCTURAL
PATTERNS
CAUSING
DEPRIVATIONS**

STRUCTURAL PATTERNS CAUSING DEPRIVATIONS

The performance of current health, education, social protection and child protection systems is underpinned by a number of structural causes that together with the underlying and immediate causes discussed in the previous chapters, influence the realization of children rights in Uzbekistan. Structural causes are organized in an adapted PEST framework¹ of political, economic, social and technical factors and are summarized below.

Political structural causes

In Uzbekistan, there is political priority given to the social sector, which is defined as a priority for the social development of the country. But

as international experience shows, corruption is often an obstacle in many countries to the effective use of public resources for optimal results for children². Transparency International currently ranks Uzbekistan 158 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Index³. In 2013, the Committee on the Rights of the Child specifically identified corruption as a major obstacle to achieving better outcomes for children, with negative effects on birth registration, access to health care and education⁴. Mahallas currently lack

Strengths: *Political priority given to social sector; social sectors are defined as priority for country's social development*

1 PEST usually refers to Political, Economic, Social and Technological, however, for the sake of this analysis technological has been replaced with technical, under which issues related to the public administration are treated

2 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

3 Transparency International (2019). Uzbekistan. Online. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/country/UZB> (Accessed 8 October 2019)

4 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

Challenges: *There is a room for increasing the voice of marginalized and children and corruption can be an obstacle to effective use of public resources for optimal outcomes for children also in Uzbekistan as in many other countries.*

professional qualifications to perform many of the functions delegated to them and this leaves room for potential bias¹ in the selection of social security beneficiaries, which has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the social protection system for families and children. Moreover, there is scope for greater participation of citizens in setting public priorities and this should also pave the way for greater child participation. The reforms that have been underway since 2016 have led to an increasing scope for citizens to exercise their rights and freedoms. A number of new complaint mechanisms have been introduced, such as an online mechanism for submitting complaints and reporting problems with public services and public affairs consultations.² But these are still relatively new practices. Events in

other parts of the world³, where youth movements play an important role in political processes, may have contributed to the stigmatization of youth.⁴ Efforts therefore need to be made to build this trust with youth.

Economic structural causes

Despite public commitments and allocations to the social sectors, insufficient budgets and budgetary inefficiency are a major structural obstacle to achieving better outcomes for children. The child protection system invests a large proportion of public funding in residential care services, which have been documented globally as producing poor outcomes for children. This type of expenditure on non-inclusive policies that keep children, and

1 Micklewright, J. and S. Marnie. 2005. "Targeting Social Assistance in a Transition Economy: The Mahallas in Uzbekistan." *Social Policy and Administration* 39 (4), 431–447.

2 See for example The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan from September 11, 2017 "On Amendments and Additions to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities".

3 See for example: Al-Momani, M. (2011). The Arab "Youth Quake": Implications on Democratization and Stability. *Middle East Law and Governance*. Volume 3. Issue 1-3.

4 Gallagher (2012) referenced in Gal, T. (2015). An ecological model of child and youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Vol. 79, pp. 57-64. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740917302955> (Accessed 30 September 2019)

***Strengths:** High investments in social sector by the government that is the main formal entity spending budget to advance children's rights and wellbeing.*

especially children with disabilities, in institutions, rather than investing in inclusive education or community-based services for vulnerable families, tends to perpetuate vulnerabilities rather than address them. Although the National Development Strategy has provisions for development of social services, this is neither explicit nor is there any budget for the development of such services¹. Financial capacity at local level to meet the specific community needs of vulnerable families and children at risk need to be further strengthened². In the field of education, the government spends about 32% of its budget (in 2017) and Uzbekistan has one of the highest public spending on education, above the average in the Europe and Central Asia region³. Nevertheless, the results for children are not at the same level.

Expenditure for the different age cycles is unbalanced, as most of the funds are spent on general secondary education, while spending on higher education and early childhood education is much lower. Spending on higher education is among the lowest in the world⁴. Moreover, centrally determined formulas for the allocation of budgetary resources do not take fully into account regionally specific needs and disadvantages⁵. Uzbekistan spends relatively little in the health sector compared with other countries⁶. The financing of the health care system has changed considerably in recent years and today the Uzbek health care system is dependent on a mix of different sources of financing⁷. Studies have documented that the current level of funding is insufficient to implement the existing clinical guidelines,

1 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

2 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

3 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report.

4 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report.

5 UNICEF (2018), The Patterns of Public Investments in Children in Uzbekistan: Current Status and Development Prospects. Tashkent: UNICEF.

6 UNICEF (2018). Human Resources for Immunization and Health Supply Chain: Rapid Assessment and Improvement planning Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

7 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, 2014, 16(5):1–137

resulting in funding gaps for many health facilities¹. Furthermore, the current financing arrangements do not take into account the different needs of the various health facilities². Low salaries of professionals are often compensated by informal payments, which can be a barrier for the use of health services, especially for the poor³. Voluntary Health Insurance accounts for only a very small share of total health expenditure in Uzbekistan. Currently, very few companies in the country offer this type of insurance⁴. Investment in the social protection system is considerable, but most of these benefits go into pensions, while child benefits represent only a fraction of this investment⁵.

Social structural causes

Structural causes in the social sphere, including gender norms, culture and traditions, stigma also influence outcomes for children and contribute to the unequal realization of the rights of boys and girls.

Gender norms: In 2017, Uzbekistan ranked 59th out of 189 countries in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index⁶; ⁷. The legislation and the Constitution express the principles of non-discrimination and equality between women and men. However, there are important differences between law and customary practices⁸ that favour patriarchal and traditional gender norms have re-emerged⁹. These

1 See for example: Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, 2014, 16(5):1–137. Gotsadze (2016). Assessment of the patronage nursing system with equity analysis in Uzbekistan. CURATIO International Foundation; UNICEF (2017). Costing of perinatal care services across three different levels in selected regions of Uzbekistan. Oxford Policy Management. Oxford.

2 UNICEF (2017). Costing of perinatal care services across three different levels in selected regions of Uzbekistan. Oxford Policy Management. Oxford

3 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, 2014, 16(5):1–137

4 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition, 2014, 16(5):1–137

5 The tax-financed childcare allowance represents 0.29% of GDP; the family allowance 0.14% of GDP; child disability benefit 0.21 % of GDP; the social insurance financed childbirth allowance represents 0.08% of GDP compared with the social insurance financed old-age pensions which take up 6.94% of GDP. Source: UNICEF (2019). Building a national social protection system fit for Uzbekistan's children and young people. Tashkent.

6 UNDP (2019). Human Development Reports: Gender Inequality Index. Online. Available at: <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII> (Accessed 8 October 2019)

7 Higher values indicate higher inequality. Percentages range from 0 to 100%.

8 Brück, T., Esenaliev, D., Kroeger, A., Kudebayeva, A., Mirkasimov, B., Steiner, S. (2014). Household survey data for research on well-being and behavior in Central Asia. Journal of Comparative Economics. Vol. 42, Issue 3, pp. 819-83. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596713000164> (Accessed 1 October, 2019).

9 Brück, T., Esenaliev, D., Kroeger, A., Kudebayeva, A., Mirkasimov, B., Steiner, S. (2014). Household survey data for research on well-being and behavior in Central Asia. Journal of Comparative Economics. Vol. 42, Issue 3, pp. 819-83. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596713000164> (Accessed 1 October, 2019).

***Strengths:** Legislation reflects a social commitment to non-discrimination, gender equality and to curb harmful cultural practices.*

social norms define unwritten gender contracts that influence stereotypes which prescribe certain roles for women and men in the family and in society¹. These norms influence the position of women in society more than formal legislation and have a significant impact on women: There are for example gender gaps in property ownership and in labor markets, where women are under-represented in high-level decision-making positions, and there is a tendency for women to be employed in the social sector, in part-time, seasonal, low-paid or unskilled jobs in the formal and informal sectors². There is a strong correlation between the empowerment of women in a society and outcomes for children, including child survival,

development, education, protection and participation³. In Uzbekistan girls' access to education, especially to higher education, employment opportunities⁴, NEET-rates, the marriageable age of women and the poverty rate are influenced by gender-specific norms regarding women's behavior and social roles⁵. Educational background of mothers has an influence on the learning outcomes of their children⁶. Gender stereotypes also effectively increase the dependence of women on men and impact on the social security and the poverty level of children, especially when a couple divorces. In addition, patriarchal norms define a hierarchical family structure. This influences the mother's health-seeking behavior, nutritional habits and could impede

1 Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila.

2 Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila.

3 Gates, M. (2019). The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World. London.

4 Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila.

5 Two thirds of higher-level education facilities are based in bigger cities and points to the risk that rural families might prefer to send boys to higher education. Source: Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila. and Nizamedinkhodjayeva, N., Bock, B., Mollinga, P. (2017). Gender, Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Uzbekistan in times of Change. In Gender and Rural Globalization: International perspectives on gender and rural development. Cabi. Croydon.

6 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent.

greater participation of children in family decisions, especially in traditional and rural households¹.

Culture and traditions: International evidence has shown that cultural acceptance contributes to perpetuating certain types of violence against children, such as corporal punishment for misdemeanors. Violence against children is often seen as an internal family matter, making external interventions unlikely². Traditions also influence infant feeding practices, nutritional practices, and the demand for pre-school education. In a society with a tradition of multi-generational households³, in which there are few, expensive pre-school services of a quality that requires improvement, many families prefer instead to care for and educate their children in their own family environment⁴.

Stigmatizing beliefs and

discrimination: International evidence, moreover, has also shown that stigmatization, leads to discriminatory norms defining who is «worthy» and who is «not worthy» of support, e.g. in social protection systems^{5,6}. It influences decisions made for children, the design, priorities and availability of systems and services, professional skills and behaviour and family dynamics. It is a major structural obstacle to better outcomes for children in all areas and can hinder progress towards the realization of children's rights across generations. Furthermore, international experience demonstrates that the stigmatization of disabilities often hinders the social inclusion of children with disabilities⁷. The stigma of being labelled as low income influences the belief that social assistance leads to dependency. Stigmatization

1 See for example: Nizamedinkhodjayeva, N., Bock, B., Mollinga, P. (2017). Gender, Migration and Rural Livelihoods in Uzbekistan in times of Change. In *Gender and Rural Globalization: International perspectives on gender and rural development*. Cabi. Croydon. and Jans, M. (2004). Children as Citizens: Towards a contemporary notion of child participation. *Childhood A Journal of global child research*. Volume 11, Issue 1.

2 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

3 UNICEF (2016). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Uzbekistan*. Tashkent

4 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). *Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023*. Tashkent.

5 See for example: Huszka, B. (2007). Decentralization in Serbia: The Minority Dimension, Center for European Policy Studies Policy Brief, No. 137 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ceps.eu/book/decentralisation-serbia-minority-dimension> (Accessed 2 September, 2019).

6 See for example: Barrientos, A. and Pellissery, S. (2013). Delivering effective social assistance: Does politics matter? ESID Working Paper, No. 09. [Online]. Available at: http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/ESID/esid_wp09_Barrientos-Pellissery.pdf (Accessed 6 September 2019); and Moreno, L. (2007). Europeanization, Territorial Subsidiarity and Welfare Reform. *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 487-497.

7 UNICEF (2018). *Policy Brief: Legislation and Policy Review of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan*. Tashkent; and United Nations (2019). *Situation Analysis on children and adults with disabilities in Uzbekistan*. Tashkent.

***Challenges:** Gaps between legislation and social norms and customary practices; patriarchal and hierarchical family structures, strong gender norms, stigma and discriminatory norms could perpetuate and aggravate deprivations for children.*

also influences the service-seeking behaviour of victims of domestic and gender-based violence, who are often discouraged from reporting their perpetrators¹. As there is a close link between intimate partner violence against women and negative outcomes for children² stigma therefore hinders progress for children. While violence by intimate partners is one of the most common forms of violence against women in most societies³, the reporting of such cases in Uzbekistan is relatively low⁴. However, there is a greater tendency to report on it today than there was a few years ago.

Ethnic dimensions: Although there are no detailed studies on the ethnic dimensions of child deprivation in

Uzbekistan, it was found that one of the main factors influencing the performance of children in different schools is the language of instruction⁵. If children are allowed to learn in their own language, they perform better. This suggests that more evidence may be needed to better understand how and whether language and ethnicity influence deprivations and opportunities of children in Uzbekistan in general.

Technical structural causes

Governance: Effective public administration is a prerequisite for the implementation of policies that can contribute to the realization of children's rights. Since the 1980s, reforms of public administrations have been a global trend

1 See for example: UNHCR (2016), "Sexual and Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response." Training Package. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/583577ed4.pdf>

2 WHO and Pan American Health Organization (2012). Understanding and addressing violence against women: Intimate partner violence. Online. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/en/> (Accessed 8 October, 2019)

3 WHO and Pan American Health Organization (2012). Understanding and addressing violence against women: Intimate partner violence. Online. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/en/> (Accessed 8 October, 2019).

4 Please see for example, reported cases of violence against women by intimate partners and non-partners, State Committee on Statistics, available at <https://gender.stat.uz/ru/index.php?Itemid=947&lang=ru-RU>

5 UNICEF (2019). Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018. Tashkent

to increase the effectiveness, quality and accountability of public administrations to citizens^{1,2}. Uzbekistan inherited a centralized public administration after independence³. Uzbekistan, that still has a large number of different types of public administration bodies, is yet to follow the global trend of downsizing the public administration, privatization, decentralization with an aim to clarify public administration functions and reduce overlaps⁴. Such overlaps can otherwise make coordination and cooperation between public authorities a challenge and contribute to inefficiencies in the implementation of public policies^{5,6}. While decentralization is not a panacea for more

effective service delivery, a sound balance between centralized and decentralized functions, accompanied by sufficient and well-qualified human resources and budgets, is required. In Uzbekistan the health, education, social protection and child protection sectors provide centrally planned services that leave little scope for adapting service systems to local conditions and needs. Although the local government (Mahallas) system has been established by law since 1993, it has been found to have limited financial, institutional and professional capacity to meet the specific needs of the community and provide professional services to families and children at risk^{7,8}.

Strengths: *System of public administration available at national, regional and local levels; start of e-government reforms in 2013 and nascent experience with Public Private Partnerships contribute to technical and managerial capacity of government to deliver on public policies.*

1 According to OECD e-government means that governments use ICT, especially the Internet, as a tool to for a better government services.

2 Flynn, N. (2002) "Managerialism and public services: some international trends", in: Hope SR., K. R. (2001) "The new public management: context and practice in Africa, International Public Management Journal, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 119-134.

3 Condrey, S. E., Goncharov, D. and Liebert, S. (Eds.) (2013). Public Administration in Post-Communist Countries Former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mongolia. Boca Raton: CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group.

4 See for example review of the multiple public administration bodies in the social protection system Available at: <https://www.stat.uz/en/press-center/news-of-uzbekistan/7823-aholini-ijtimoiy-muhofaza-qilish-sohasida-yangi-tizim-joriy-etiladi-3>

5 B. Ergashev (2014). Public Administration Reform in Uzbekistan. Problems of Economic Transition. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2753/PET1061-1991481202> (Accessed 3 October, 2019).

6 See for example review of the multiple public administration bodies in the social protection system Available at: <https://www.stat.uz/en/press-center/news-of-uzbekistan/7823-aholini-ijtimoiy-muhofaza-qilish-sohasida-yangi-tizim-joriy-etiladi-3>

7 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

8 UNICEF (2016). Situation analysis on children and women in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

Management and learning culture:

The effectiveness and capacity of organizations are strongly correlated with their ability to create a learning culture. But organizational learning is dependent on the availability of data, analytical skills and a management culture that encourages learning through open discussion of successes and failures¹. In all sectors in Uzbekistan, such a data-based planning and learning culture needs to be improved through stronger data collection systems, including disaggregation of data and stronger capacity to analyze the data collected². Combined with a non-penalizing management culture³, which needs to be strengthened in Uzbekistan, this would help to promote systematic improvements in organizations, including in education⁴, health⁵, social protection⁶ and other service systems for children and families. In the

education sector, it has been found that the lack of measurement of the quality of education, a fragmented monitoring system and a general lack of strategic planning hinders the development of this sector⁷. In the health sector, doctors and nurses can be penalized for making mistakes that are due to systemic limitations rather than incompetence or negligence. This leads to errors in reporting systems due to fear of prosecution, weak databases and a culture in which learning from mistakes is not allowed⁸.

Partnerships in public policy

implementation: The government remains the main supplier and stakeholder in the provision of services to children in Uzbekistan. This is a structural obstacle to increasing the availability, improving the quality and innovation of services in some

1 Dibella, A. J. (2003) 'Organizations as learning portfolios', in: Easterby-Smith, M. and Lyles, M. (eds) (2003) *The Blackwell Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management*, Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 145-160.

2 United Nations (2013). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Uzbekistan, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-third session (27 May–14 June 2013). Committee on the Rights of the Child. Geneva.

3 Forrest, J. (1995) 'The Challenger shuttle disaster: A failure in decision support system and human factors management'

4 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report.

5 See for example: Gotsadze (2017). Final report on district health system strengthening and perspectives of reforming patronage nursing/home visiting system in Uzbekistan

6 See for example analysis on multiple challenges of social protection system. Available at: <https://www.stat.uz/en/press-center/news-of-uzbekistan/7823-aholini-ijtimoiy-muhofaza-qilish-sohasida-yangi-tizim-joriy-etiladi-3>

7 World Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Education Sector Analysis Final Report.

8 See for example: Gotsadze (2017). Final report on district health system strengthening and perspectives of reforming patronage nursing/home visiting system in Uzbekistan.

areas. In the field of child protection, international experience shows that a thriving NGO sector often contributes to innovation and new service models at local level that may not have existed before¹. In Uzbekistan the number of international NGOs is still small, which means that there are few providers who can offer new services based on international best practices and standards². In education, the idea of public-private partnerships to extend coverage in sectors such as Early Childhood Education is beginning to take root³. Starting in 2018, the cities of Tashkent, Nukus and all regional centers will test a model of public-private partnership in pre-school education. However, sufficient capacity in the non-governmental sector would be required if the Government of Uzbekistan were to consider commissioning the provision of «core» education services. Furthermore, the existing regulatory and administrative systems need to be strengthened to facilitate the

effective implementation of PPPs in the education sector⁴. In the health sector, there are no restrictions on the type of private providers that have access to the market for the provision of health services, as long as health professionals and health care institutions are licensed by the Ministry of Health and meet other requirements set for private companies or NGOs. However, there are only a few providers of private health insurance, which hinders the development of a flourishing private health care system⁵. As discussed in the previous section, social norms, stigma and discrimination are important informal regulators that influence outcomes for children in Uzbekistan. In many other countries, the faith-based sector has been an important ally in tackling behaviors that negatively affect the wellbeing of children. In Uzbekistan cooperation between the faith-based sector and the government to achieve better outcomes for citizens seems to be growing. This is an opportunity that

1 Ferguson, H. (2004). *Protecting Children in Time: Child Abuse, Child Protection and the Consequences of Modernity*. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.

2 ICNL (2019). *Civic Freedom Monitor: Uzbekistan*. The International Center for Not-For-Profit-Law. Online. Available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/uzbekistan.html> (Accessed 3 October, 2019).

3 UNICEF (2018). *Public-Private Partnerships in Early Childhood Education: International Experience and Lessons for Uzbekistan: Document for Discussion*. Tashkent

4 UNICEF (2018). *Public-Private Partnerships in Early Childhood Education: International Experience and Lessons for Uzbekistan: Document for Discussion*. Tashkent

5 Ahmedov M, Azimov R, Mutalova Z, Huseynov S, Tsoyi E and Rechel B. Uzbekistan: Health System Review. *Health Systems in Transition*, 2014, 16(5):1–137

***Challenges:** Extensive public sector with many structures with sometimes overlapping functions; need to foster a data-driven, evidence-based planning and learning culture of public administration; lack of human and budget capacity at local level; limited diversification and de-monopolized service delivery systems*

needs to be further enhanced in the future¹.

E-government: E-government implies an increasing use of ICT in the public sector and has been recognized worldwide as a great potential for reinventing and improving the public sector². In Uzbekistan, since 2013, a comprehensive e-government reform has been promoted. In June 2018, a law on e-government came into force, and the UN e-government rating ranked Uzbekistan 174th in the 2004 but 81st in 2018. E-government thus represents a real opportunity for Uzbekistan to improve access to public services, increase their transparency and accountability to citizens. In the health sector, e-government reforms have started. For example, the Ministry of

Health's website now accepts electronic submissions of patient proposals and complaints, paper-based birth and death registration systems are being replaced by automated systems, and a strategic framework for a National Integrated Information Healthcare System (NIIHS) has been developed³. E-government reforms in education have also been initiated and the government is in the process of implementing pilot Management Information Systems projects (MIS) in several sub-sectors. In the area of social security and employment, e-government reforms are somewhat further behind. The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations has recently expanded the Integrated Single Window Office for registration of job seekers online to employment services and programs, but a Labor

1 Durso, J. (2018). Deradicalization in Uzbekistan: It's about the Economy. The Diplomat. Online. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/deradicalization-in-uzbekistan-its-about-the-economy/> (Accessed 9 October, 2019)

2 See for example: Heeks, R. (2002) Reinventing Government in the Information Age, Chapter 1, London, Routledge.

3 Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Online. Available at: <https://minzdrav.uz/en/documentation/detail.php?ID=54773> (Accessed: 9 October, 2019)

Market Information System (LMIS), which is needed, is not yet in place¹. In this and other sectors, Uzbekistan still faces a number of challenges in the administrative capacity to effectively implement policies through e-government reforms^{2,3}. Many

technical issues remain to be resolved, basic equipment is needed, and e-government does not automatically solve the problems related to data collection procedures, data quality and capacity to analyze information which exist⁴.

1 World Bank (2019). Strengthening the Social Protection System: Project Information Document. Online. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/554521556969289734/pdf/Project-Information-Documents-Uzbekistan-Strengthening-the-Social-Protection-System-Project-P166447.pdf> (Accessed 9 October, 2019).

2 Shin, S-C., Rakhmatullayev, Z. (2019). Digital Transformation of the Public Service Delivery System in Uzbekistan. International Conference on Advanced Communications Technology (ICTACT). Tashkent.

3 United Nations E-Government Survey 2018, New York, 2018

4 Heeks, R. (2006). Implementing and managing eGovernment: an international text. London, Sage. Pp 3-11.

6



EMERGING ISSUES

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In addition to an unfinished agenda for fulfilling children's rights to survival, education, development, social security, protection and participation, for eliminating disparities in the outcomes observed for children, data available for this report, as well as the consultations carried out in the course of preparing this situation analysis, have identified some emerging issues that merit specific monitoring and attention in the coming years.

Demographic situation

Uzbekistan is facing a demographic situation that represents an opportunity for investment in children and allows to take advantage of demographic dividend¹. To seize this opportunity, Uzbekistan would have to invest in human capital of tomorrow by providing high-quality services to improve

outcomes for children. Education is an area that will help to equip this generation of children and young people for the future. Strengthening and improving the quality of health care is another critical agenda for human capital development. Strengthening social protection of children is critical to ensure that all children have an opportunity to realize their full potential. In addition, the demographic situation creates a unique time window for investment in creating jobs for young people, strengthening entrepreneurship and investing in access to technology. However, the demographic situation also means that the significant reforms that have begun in the education sector, for example, are taking place in a context of high demographic pressure on the systems undergoing reform². Tackling this pressure while reforming and innovating service delivery will may be challenging³.

1 UNICEF (2018). Generation 2013 Uzbekistan: Investing in children and young people to reap the demographic dividend. Tashkent.

2 UNICEF (2018). Generation 2013 Uzbekistan: Investing in children and young people to reap the demographic dividend. Tashkent.

3 Government of Uzbekistan (2018). Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023. Tashkent.

Media, internet and social media

The media landscape in Uzbekistan is changing. From November 2018 to March 2019 several new media were officially registered. A total of 57 newly created media resources began their work¹. The international media are also increasing their presence and access to the Internet is growing. Since the registration of the domain .uz in 1995, the number of websites created on its basis has grown every year. Internet journalism has begun to take shape with the creation of information sites on various topics². The increased Internet use and access to social media can create both new opportunities and challenges for children. The Internet and social media provide important channels for accessing news and information and can open up participation channels for young people to which they previously had no access. It can also provide

opportunities for peer-to-peer support³. At the same time, access to and use of the Internet poses new risks for children. As confirmed by the UNICEF study on the media preferences of the population in 2019 young people in Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in the world, use all modern opportunities to access information within the still existing access barriers⁴. The increasing spread of the Internet and the use of social media by children and young people in Uzbekistan should be worked with in the coming years in order to take advantage of this opportunity to improve the wellbeing of children while at the same time reducing the risks the Internet can create for children⁵.

New and growing health threats

The rising HIV infection rate among young people is a worrying trend that will require close monitoring and

1 UNICEF (2019). Survey to understand the media preferences of general population in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. Draft Report.

2 UNICEF (2019). Survey to understand the media preferences of general population in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. Draft Report.

3 Naslund, J., Aschbrenner, K., Marsch, L., Bartels, S. (2016). The future of mental health care: peer-to-peer support and social media. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* Vol. 25, pp. 113–122. Online. Available at: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/DC0FB362B67DF2A48D42D487ED07C783/S2045796015001067a.pdf/future_of_mental_health_care_peertopeer_support_and_social_media.pdf (Accessed: 10 October, 2019).

4 UNICEF (2019). Survey to understand the media preferences of general population in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. Draft Report.

5 UNICEF (2019). Survey to understand the media preferences of general population in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Tashkent. Draft Report

intervention in the future¹. Available studies have identified population groups, especially migrant workers, who are at higher risk of HIV infection². In view of a significant and growing population migrating in search of work and many young people moving for lack of opportunities in their home country, it is important to provide targeted and tailored information for them and other known risk groups. There is also a resurgence of tuberculosis in Uzbekistan which is one of 30 multidrug-resistant TB burden countries in the world. This places Uzbekistan among the 18 countries with a high priority to WHO in the fight against tuberculosis (TB)³. In particular, multidrug TB resistance has been identified in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. TB is a major public health problem that may increasingly affect children in the future.⁴ Furthermore, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in women and children appears to be rising rapidly and has reached the alarming level

of 76% for women aged 45-49 years. The UNICEF nutrition survey showed that 25.2% of non-pregnant women of all ages were overweight and 15.5% obese. Although childhood obesity is not yet considered to be of major health relevance, monitoring of the situation is justified. The 2019 nutrition survey showed that on average 4.6% of children under 5 years of age were overweight, with Syrdarya (7.5%) and Surkhandarya (7.3%) being significantly above the national average⁵.

Return and reintegration of vulnerable youth

In an increasingly globalized world, many countries in the world are affected by the migration and refugee flows that have followed, for example the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Uzbekistan has not been immune. In May 2019, 156 Uzbek citizens, mostly women and children were returned to Uzbekistan from the zones of armed conflict in

1 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent

2 Ministry of Health (2018). Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis: Situation Analysis. Tashkent

3 WHO (2016). Tuberculosis Country Brief Uzbekistan. WHO Regional Office for Europe. Copenhagen. Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/335543/UZB_TB_Brief_0223-AM-edits-D1-20-03-17.pdf?ua=1 (Accessed: 21, November, 2019)

4 Médecins Sans Frontiers (2019). Impact of pyrazinamide resistance on multidrugresistant tuberculosis in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan. The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. Online. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10144/619120> (Accessed: 5 September, 2019)

5 UNICEF (2019). Uzbekistan Nutrition Survey 2017. Tashkent.

the Middle East¹. In October 2019, the Government repatriated another group of 64 unaccompanied children from Iraq, with ages ranging from 1.5 to 17 years. The Cabinet of Ministers issued an action plan with comprehensive package of services for different social sector ministries, to ensure smooth re-integration of returned children. As a result, currently 80% of repatriated children have been successfully re-united with their families and/or relatives. Other young people in need of reintegration assistance are victims of human trafficking, young people released from institutional care or serving a prison sentence. Together with young people returning from conflict areas, they represent a significant pool of young people at risk of stigmatization. Reintegration processes can only run smoothly if these children and the communities that receive them are supported. So far, government support has focused on access to education and other social programs, including the

provision of housing and jobs, in order to prevent further social exclusion and marginalization².

Changing family-institution

In Uzbekistan many see the traditional values of family and community and their mutual support as fundamental to the cohesion of society. However, several data sources suggest that the current situation is contributing to the erosion of these close and supportive community and interpersonal relationships^{3, 4}. For example, divorce rates are rising. In 2018 a total of 32,326 divorces were registered in the country. Some regions are particularly affected. In 2018, most divorces were registered in Tashkent City, followed by Andijan, Samarkand and Tashkent Region, while the regions where the number of divorces appears to be increasing the most are Andijan, Samarkand and Syrdarya⁵. As the number of divorces increases, a

1 Press-Service of the President of Uzbekistan, "Gumanitarnaya Aktsiya Dobro", 2019, <https://president.uz/ru/2605>

2 Press-Service of the President of Uzbekistan, "Gumanitarnaya Aktsiya Dobro", 2019, <https://president.uz/ru/2605>

3 Sammon, E. M. (2017). The child protection system in Uzbekistan: Now and in the future. UNICEF. Tashkent.

4 Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila.

5 State Statistics Committee, data provided in July 2019.

growing number of children are affected by parental divorce¹. Other indicators of changes in family arrangements are the rising rates of children left without parental care and the increasing use of services for women victims of domestic violence. As in many other countries, the erosion of traditional community support systems and the breakdown of traditional family relationships can have negative effects on children. Several recent measures aim to radically improve support for women and the family as an institution². However, comprehensive approaches to family support are needed to reverse the above trends.

Climate change, risks and emergencies

Climate change is another important issue that affects and will continue to affect families and children in Uzbekistan. Forecasted average

temperatures will rise by 2-3°C over the next 50 years³. Climate change creates new risks for children and risks of aggravating disadvantage. The warmer and drier climate, combined with progressive desertification throughout the country, is responsible for a higher risk of extreme events. Climate change also increases the risks of extreme weather and the threat of droughts, seasonal floods and landslides. Moreover, Uzbekistan is the most important consumer of water resources in the Central Asia region and is dependent on water from neighboring countries. The increasing drought throughout the region risks aggravating the already existing challenges over water resources⁴. Other direct effects that climate change has and will continue to have on children include the learning environment in schools, especially in hot and cold weather. Water availability, nutrition, health issues and food security in arid areas

1 Calculations made by author based on TransMonEE Database (2018), retrieved from <http://transmonee.org/country/uzbekistan/>

2 Asian Development Bank (2018). Uzbekistan Country Gender assessment: Update. Manila.

3 World Bank (2013). Uzbekistan: Overview of Climate Change Activities. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/777011468308642720/Uzbekistan-Overview-of-climate-change-activities> (Accessed 3 July, 2019)

4 World Bank (2013). Overview of Climate Change Activities. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/777011468308642720/Uzbekistan-Overview-of-climate-change-activities> (Accessed 3 July, 2019)



will affect the health, education and development of children^{1, 2}. At the same time, the social protection system in Uzbekistan is not designed to mitigate the shocks and threats posed by climate change. In this context, a comprehensive strategy to improve the social protection system, including to make it shock-responsive, needed.

Political environment and participation

With the political changes that have taken place since 2016, the environment for child participation in Uzbekistan is changing. This makes new initiatives such as the youth consultations a useful way of building capacity and gaining positive experiences of more constructive youth participation.

1 UNICEF (2015). Unless we act now: The impact of climate change on children. New York.

2 WHO and UNDP (no date). Climate adaptation for protection of human health in Uzbekistan 2010-2014. Available at <http://www.who.int/globalchange/projects/en> (Accessed 10 August, 2019) and World Bank (2013). Overview of Climate Change Activities. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/777011468308642720/Uzbekistan-Overview-of-climate-change-activities> (Accessed 3 July, 2019).

7



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This situation analysis has shown that Uzbekistan has made considerable progress in addressing and improving the rights of children in the country. It has also shown that there is an unfinished agenda for the progressive realization of the rights of children in Uzbekistan to survival, development, education, social security, child protection and participation.

The path towards greater progress

Better opportunities for quality maternal and child health and nutrition from conception, more opportunities for quality early childhood education, better quality of general secondary education to improve children's learning outcomes, more opportunities for participation in decisions affecting them, more access to higher education opportunities, greater coverage of social benefits; and targeted efforts to reduce the rates of children who are left without parental

care each year and to combat violence against children could help to make the younger generation in Uzbekistan a prosperous one. However, this is not enough. For Uzbekistan to make further progress in progressively realizing children's rights, there is a need to look at the situation of children that are the most disadvantaged and to design national policies and plans to reduce inequalities by targeting measures where vulnerabilities are most prevalent. For Uzbekistan to make further progress, it is also necessary to examine and remove some of the common structural barriers underlying the performance of current health, education, social protection and child protection systems, and to define the ways and processes for involving children in decisions that affect them. Otherwise, these political, economic, social and technical barriers may slow down or significantly impede the progressive realization of the rights of children in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan must also monitor and address emerging issues. This includes the demographic situation and the resulting pressure, especially on the education sector. In addition, the situation analysis identified the increasing use of the Internet and access to social media as something that can bring both new opportunities and challenges for the wellbeing of children in the future. There are some new and growing health threats, such as mental health problems, HIV infection among young people, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, overweight and obesity, which require attention in addition to the unfinished health agenda on which the country has been working for several years. Children returning from conflict areas have recently demanded the attention of the government and are likely to continue to do so together victims of trafficking, children released from care or serving a prison sentence. The family as a social institution seems to be changing and trends are emerging, such as increasing divorce rates, but also cases of domestic violence, which are being reported and will need to be addressed more comprehensively

in the future. The family is the child's first protective environment and so important for the survival, development, education, protection and social security of the children. It should be the first place of investment for a government that cares for its children. Finally, climate change creates real and very concrete risks for children, now and definitely in the future. At the very least, it would be useful to start monitoring its impact on children's health, to launch a dialogue in the fields of education and social protection on how to mitigate the impact of this global threat on children's education, poverty levels and general wellbeing.

Recommendations

This situation analysis concludes with some recommendations that complement the ongoing reforms in the social sector:

Recommendation 1: Establish a multidimensional measure of child poverty

It is recommended that the Government of Uzbekistan,

with the support of international organizations, establish a multi-dimensional measure of child poverty. Poverty in Uzbekistan is defined by a one-dimensional measure based on nutrition intake. This measure does not capture the multiple dimensions of poverty. Nor does it allow identification of how children and families with children are affected by the multiple dimensions of poverty they may experience, how this differs between various regions and population groups. A multidimensional measure of child poverty would allow to assess the combination of various deprivations experienced by people in their daily lives – such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others. A multidimensional measure of child poverty can incorporate a range of indicators that capture the complexity of this phenomena in order to inform policies aimed at reducing poverty and deprivation for families with children. The indicators can also be selected to be able to

measure and identify specific needs and priorities in different regions and communities. This measure could be based on available regional data on key outcome indicators of child wellbeing. It could serve to identify, on the basis of a scientific methodology, the regions where children are most disadvantaged, and which require targeted measures to reduce disadvantages.

Recommendation 2: Review and revise existing formula for allocating resources to take into account the results of the multidimensional measurement of child poverty.

This situation analysis did not have access to data on how the government currently calculates and allocates funding for services to different sectors and regions. A comprehensive review of the procedures and formulae currently used would help to develop new methods for deciding on the allocation of resources that take into account regional differences in the realization of children's rights and wellbeing.

Recommendation 3: Expand and strengthen the social protection system to better respond to children's needs and be more shock responsive

The social protection system needs to be reformed to effectively integrate social security, social services and active labour market programmes. The system needs to become more child-sensitive and inclusive. Specifically, to reduce child poverty and strengthen human capital development, the following is to be taken into account in social protection system reform:

Child benefits need to be redesigned and coverage expanded, including for the currently excluded 15-17-year-old age group.

Child benefits need to be effectively connected to relevant social services to support families and improve child outcomes.

The social protection system needs to contribute to mitigate the impact of hazards and risks to which the population is currently exposed, particularly in some regions. Small adjustments in the design of core social protection programmes could be made, increasing support to beneficiaries living

in risk zones, or temporarily extending support to new households in times of drought, floods or other hazards that temporarily increase the vulnerability of the population. Special consideration could be given to mitigating the impact on the population in areas with unusable land, especially in the Aral Sea region.

Recommendation 4: Update the Youth Strategy

The national development strategy already provides for an update of the existing youth policy. As mentioned above, young people are one of the most vulnerable groups because they suffer from the consequences of the multiple deprivations that have accumulated during their childhood and life cycle. Targeted investments in this group to reduce its vulnerability and also to address some emerging trends could be part of this:

Develop participatory and evidence-based policies and programmes to reduce the NEET rate among young people. This should include programmes to tackle gender norms, expand opportunities for girls and young women and support the transition of the most

disadvantaged young people, including young people with disabilities, into the labour market.

Establishment and expansion of scholarship programmes in Uzbekistan and abroad

Improve employment services by promoting social entrepreneurship, experiential learning, the creation of internship and volunteer opportunities and by increasing the involvement of the private sector and civil society organisations.

Increasing information for parents on how to teach their children safe and healthy use of the Internet and social media.

The development of other strategies to reduce vulnerability and risk would be the continuation and expansion of reintegration programmes for vulnerable groups, such as young people and families returning from conflict areas, victims of trafficking, children graduating from an institution and ending prison sentences.

Continue and extend reforms of child protection in the field of justice, alternative care and the strengthening of social service workforce, in particular taking into account how to create

a more integrated social and child protection system that can support families through both cash- and service-based measures.

Recommendation 5: Costed strategy and action plan to reduce disadvantages for children with disabilities

Uzbekistan has carried out a comprehensive analysis of the situation of adults and children with disabilities. A costed strategy and action plan to implement cross-sectoral measures that take into account the needs of children with disabilities would help to reduce child disadvantage in a number of areas of rights domains analyzed in this report. In addition to addressing the comprehensive set of recommendations provided by earlier situation analyses on people with disability in Uzbekistan, a disability strategy would include measures to Accelerate inclusive education reforms as a comprehensive part of ongoing education reform. Indeed, inclusive education systems are often learning focused systems, capable of placing each child's learning needs at the center;

Assessing the background of children with disabilities in residential care, identifying their needs for rehabilitation and educational support in their communities of origin

Test such services and expand them in the regions that send the most children to residential care/boarding schools.

Develop communication strategies to combat stigma and discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Facilitate mechanisms for the participation of people with disabilities in the design of policies and measures aimed at them

Recommendation 6: Enhance quality of education services at all levels:

Reforms of all subsectors of education are currently underway. As these are implemented the following is to be taken into account:

Accelerate expansion of early childhood education. In expanding these services, consider alternative forms of preschool education, PPP-models, family type ECE. Also pay particular attention to how these services can be inclusive of children with disabilities, how the

infrastructure can be adapted to future climate risks and changes. It would also be useful to consider how pedagogy could address gender-specific norms and practices to ensure that they are not perpetuated, how parents and caregivers can be involved in the design, organization and management of these services;

Place learning as the central objective of education reform and with this, strengthening national capacity to shape evidence-based, sound policies, strategies and programmes; and enhancing the capacity of government to generate data and evidence on performance of the education system in this regard;

Ensure a comprehensive approach to improving quality of education, including but limited to revising the curriculum that enables a competency-based, lifelong learning approach, development of pedagogical methods and assessment tools; and

Improving the capacity to support programmes that enable the teacher workforce and managers to provide efficient, effective, gender-sensitive and quality education services, particularly enhanced instructional /pedagogical

services that result in improved learning outcomes, while also introducing alternative options and education pathways to address the needs of all children.

Recommendation 7: Enhance health and nutrition services from conception, through early childhood and youth.

Reforms of the health system and nutrition strengthening programmes are also underway. As these are implemented, ensure sufficient attention is given to:

Strengthening prevention, early detection of disability and intervention for children with disability during pregnancy and the early childhood;
Expand patronage nurse-system while taking into account their role in the early detection and intervention of children with disabilities, children at risk or victims of violence, and to consider how these nurses can be trained to address gender norms in families and communities in which they intervene.
Continued strengthening immunization and nutrition programmes;
Improving access to mental health

services, psychosocial counselling, reintegration and rehabilitation services for children at risk

Promoting healthy lifestyle campaigns, including information and measures to combat alcohol, drug use, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV

Recommendation 8: Improve the knowledge base on social norms and on violations of rights and disadvantages for which there is insufficient data

This would involve carrying out a comprehensive analysis of social norms and cultural practices to inform communication for behavioral change strategies that can help reduce child deprivation. Knowing that addressing and changing gender and discriminatory practices will take a long time, work in this area could start within families, assess and address parenting and care practices in traditional households and communities, involve faith leaders to design and implement strategies to reduce the vulnerability of women, address negative cultural practices such child marriage, and address gender-based and domestic violence

against women. More knowledge and understanding of children affected by migration and of mental health problems among young people is also needed. More research is also needed to better understand the prevalence and exposure of children to different types of violence.

Recommendation 9: Develop and implement comprehensive, integrated and coordinated actions through pilot reform measures targeting the most disadvantaged regions

Current reform initiatives are undertaken top-down and based on a centralized planning style. In contrast, many countries that are undergoing successful reforms have combined a top-down reform planning approach with bottom-up planning. In order to make sure that national policy reforms are informed from the diverse realities in different regions, it is recommended to design and test a pilot for a comprehensive integrated and coordinated support package for families and children that responds to the specific needs. To implement this

recommendation, the following steps could be taken:

Carry out baseline study(ies) in selected regions identified as particularly vulnerable. Through the baseline study(ies) identify family vulnerabilities, risks of specific groups of children (e.g. children with disabilities), care practices, patterns of service use, barriers and bottlenecks in service use, social and cultural norms and capacity gaps of key governmental agencies and service providers in responding to needs of vulnerable families.

Design a package of support aimed at helping remove barriers to children's access to health services, early childhood education and education, improve learning at school, enhance the protection of children against violence, increase access to social protection and participation opportunities. This package should cover several sectors, including health, education, labour and social protection and child protection, to work in a coordinated way.

Monitor and evaluate effect of local pilot regions in reducing vulnerability of families and risks for children to inform national policy reform.



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