

UZBEKISTAN NEWS

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FOREWORD



One of UNICEF's mandates is to improve the living conditions of children around the world. Two key strategies we use to follow this mandate are capacity building – providing training, competences and skills

where needed; and empowerment – helping people to become active contributors to their development.

In this second newsletter, we are pleased to share more information about our partnerships with the Republic of Uzbekistan and how we are working together to train, encourage and equip those who are making a direct impact on the lives of women and children on a daily basis in this country.

In our cover story on early-childhood education, you will read about new kindergartens throughout Uzbekistan that have been transformed to offer child-centred learning and innovative play centres. These schools are being used as model kindergartens to help train other teachers and educators.

Our story about the UNICEF-Prix Jeunesse workshop in September highlights an exciting opportunity we had to work with local television producers to promote quality in children's programming and encourage producers to expand their knowledge about their young audience and involve them in the creative process. At the end of the workshop, participants were invited to produce new programmes using criteria developed during the training.

Other stories include: a report about a regional stocktaking meeting hosted by UNICEF that reviewed the work being done to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission; a story on UNICEF's efforts to forge a stronger partnership between the government of Uzbekistan and local non-governmental organizations; and another one about a new training campaign to promote the benefits of breastfeeding among young mothers.

All of these stories shed light on what UNICEF Uzbekistan is doing as it partners with the government to cover the key strategies of training and equipping, ultimately improving the lives of children in Uzbekistan.

We hope you find the information inside this newsletter useful and encouraging.

Jean-Michel Delmotte
Representative



Model Kindergartens Help Train Teachers

Outside Tashkent city in the region of Jizzak sits a small, unimposing kindergarten. Housed in an old-style building constructed in 1960, Kindergarten #6 was a bit rundown when the new director assumed her duties in 2008.

Although it could hold up to 110 children, enrollment was only 35. The struggling preschool needed help to change. That change came in the form of a new approach, which included child-centred learning and creative play centres supported by UNICEF.

Child-centred learning gives every child freedom to explore new things based on his or her own needs and interests. A teacher becomes a guide who supports young learners along the way.

Teachers at Kindergarten #6 were given training in this new educational approach. It inspired them to change old habits. They also encouraged parents to come along. Both groups worked together to do minor renovations on the building such as painting and cleaning. Parents even created play centres for the children, making their own handmade toys and manipulatives as shown in the trainings.

As a result, enrollment at the school steadily began to increase. Members of the community became motivated and the kindergarten became a popular choice for families with preschool children. Today, more than 100 children attend the kindergarten in Jizzak.

"The atmosphere at this kindergarten is very friendly and lets children develop in their own way. I come often here to help teachers run play centres. We, parents, now learn and grow with our kids," says Markhabo Buzrukova, mother of 4-year old twins Fatima and Zukhra.

Improving the quality and access of early-childhood education throughout Uzbekistan is one of UNICEF's priorities. In many cases, parents choose not to send their children to these facilities because of poor infrastructure and low quality of educational services.

UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Education (MOPE), is working to improve all aspects of early-childhood education nationwide and increase school-readiness. The current preschool enrollment rate for children under age 7 is only 20 percent nationwide whereas attendance in the compulsory grades of 1–9 is almost 100 percent.

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Model Kindergartens

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One way UNICEF is improving this is through model kindergartens like the one in Jizzak. Today there are 54 model kindergartens throughout the country. New teachers receiving training can visit these schools and see first-hand how this new approach is applied.

UNICEF plans to create a team of 90 regional trainers who can go into preschools throughout their districts and spread the new techniques. Trainings have begun initially in Tashkent city and six regions - Karakalpakstan, Fergana, Kaskadarya, Samarkand, Bukhara and Jizzak.

Trainings are being done in accordance with the Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) based curriculum recently created and adopted by the MOPE with technical assistance from UNICEF.

For more information on early childhood care please visit:
<http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood>

New child-centred teaching methods in early education are currently being modelled in 52 schools throughout the country.

Regional Conference to Eliminate Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission

The global challenge of preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) was examined by health care professionals and policy makers from Central Asia and other countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) at a stocktaking meeting held in Tashkent from 14 to 16 September.

"The forum has been designed to help assess the level of success achieved in preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission in the countries of the region as well as give participants an opportunity to work together, share experiences and accelerate progress," said Jean-Michel Delmotte, UNICEF Representative in Uzbekistan.

The event was jointly hosted by the Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNICEF.

Conference participants included the MoH Deputy Minister Asamidin Kamilov, HIV specialists and partners from different regions of Uzbekistan, technical experts from the UNICEF Country Office and the Regional Office in Geneva, plus health care professionals from Tajikistan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, the World Health Organization, UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS.

Topics discussed included educating young women about HIV, the prevention of unintended pregnancies among HIV-positive women, providing proper treatment for infected women and their family members, and helping HIV-positive children and teens live with HIV.



Health professionals from different countries share their own experience and best practices on PMTCT at the Regional Conference held in Tashkent.

"Involving whole families in any PMTCT programme is essential," said Nina Ferencic, senior regional advisor on HIV/AIDS at the UNICEF Regional Office in Geneva. *"We need to look at the whole family; even if not every family member is infected. There needs to be a family-centred approach,"* she said.

On the last day of the conference, participants brainstormed goals and objectives for the future. Among other important recommendations the following points were identified for follow up:

- improving the capacity of national health professionals working on PMTCT;
- promoting early infant diagnosis;
- strengthening monitoring and evaluation of PMTCT programmes;
- conducting joint research; and

- facilitating further exchange of knowledge and experience within the region.

"This is a great opportunity for us. Every country has its own experience and from this experience there may be something we can take for our next steps," said Dr. Diyora Arifdjanova, head of the maternity division of the MoH.

Svetlana Komar from Ukraine echoed these sentiments. *"People need to communicate on these issues. All of them have their own experiences and are pioneers in their own areas,"* she said. *"This type of conference is very useful."*

PMTCT is one of UNICEF's global priorities with a call to eliminate pediatric HIV transmission worldwide within the next five years.

For more information on PMTCT please visit:
<http://www.unicef.org/aids>



Participatory Programming With and For children

UNICEF Uzbekistan/2011/Kodirov

Local television producers of children's programming spent four days in late September examining how they do their jobs by looking through the eyes of children. What they saw and what they discovered will hopefully broaden the way children's television is created in Uzbekistan.

The producers were part of a workshop sponsored by UNICEF in partnership with the Prix Jeunesse Foundation based in Germany. Steve Hocking, a media consultant and former children's television producer for BBC facilitated the workshop.

"The purpose of the Tashkent workshop was to allow local programmers to explore the issue of children's television by talking directly with children, observe what is being done in other countries and hopefully gather new ideas for producing quality programming for children," said Jean-Michel Delmotte, UNICEF representative.

This was the first time television professionals from competing channels in Tashkent gathered together to share ideas and work toward a common goal of creating quality programming for children.

Another unique element for the participants was the inclusion of children in the training process.

On the third day of the workshop, 12 children ranging in age from 6 to 16 years joined the group to share their ideas about television, what they watch, what they like to do in their free time, and what types of books they read. They also watched samples of award-winning children's programs from other countries with the adults and offered their own ideas and impressions.

Their insightfulness and depth of understanding, even regarding complex issues, impressed the producers. Having children join the workshop to personally share their own experiences was a valuable and eye-opening part of the process, participants reported.

"One of the main challenges of creating children's programming is to understand children in the right way," said Bakhtiyor Turakhanov, one of the children's television producers.



Steve Hocking, facilitator from Prix Jeunesse and Maksim Fazliltdinov, UNICEF C4D Officer discuss criteria for children's programming with workshop participants.

For the children, the opportunity to share their ideas with adults was also new and exciting.

"This was very interesting," said 16-year-old Katya. *"It's very good that you want to know about our opinions. It's nice to see that someone cares about our ideas."*

The work process included sessions on developing programme concepts jointly, taking and giving constructive feedback, and learning how to involve children in all stages of production.

"The workshop was an opportunity for producers to view and critique some of the best practices in children's programming from around the world. It enabled them to step out of stereotypes and dabble with innovations," said Savita Varde-Naqvi, Communication for Development Specialist at UNICEF. *"They also saw the value of sharing ideas and working together."*

By the end of the workshop, the producers had collectively drafted a 10-point list of criteria they considered important for creating quality in children's programming. One of the criteria was the importance of inclusiveness, specifically incorporating children with disabilities into the programmes. Using these criteria, UNICEF has announced a contest for producers to create their own children's programmes that should be aired before December 15.

Encouraging New Mothers to Breastfeed

A six-piece comprehensive manual on breastfeeding for healthcare professionals is being piloted in the regions of Karakalpakstan in the Aral Sea basin and the Fergana Valley as part of UNICEF's campaign to promote exclusive breastfeeding and build an educational link between health providers and new mothers. This important resource will be available in local Uzbek and Karakalpak languages.

Designed to not only advocate this essential form of infant feeding but also re-educate women about the positive health implications of breastfeeding, the manual is part of an overall strategy-enhancing campaign to involve communities in the promotion of maternal health and child well-being.

"Research has shown that more than 75 percent of new mothers in Uzbekistan stop

breastfeeding their infants within three months of leaving the maternity centers," according to Bakhodir Rahimov, nutrition officer at UNICEF.

One main reason for this drastic drop is a lack of connection between healthcare providers and mothers once they leave the hospitals. Without this connection, mothers do not receive the encouragement and education they need to continue breastfeeding.

To combat this, UNICEF works with clinics and mahalla committees within the targeted communities to find and train local professionals who can work directly with mothers by using the new manual as a key tool.

The campaign is being piloted in nine districts of Karakalpakstan in the west and the urban areas of Fergana, Namangan and Andijon regions in the east. Eventually UNICEF hopes to broaden the campaign to the rest of the country.

NGOS STAND UP FOR CHILDREN

For nearly two years, UNICEF, in partnership with the Cabinet of Ministers, has worked with approximately 90 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in different regions of the country. Many of these NGOs focused on children's issues, but had limited capacity and experience needed to make a difference in their communities.

UNICEF is supporting trainings for NGOs to equip them with skills and knowledge to monitor child rights. Simultaneously, UNICEF is also promoting NGO participation in local level decision making that can influence the wellbeing of children and their families. Regional Intersectoral Working Groups were set up under the regional governments in 2007 as a result of UNICEF advocacy to have children's issues addressed in a comprehensive manner across social sectors.

Twenty-six regional NGOs are now engaged with local governments and line ministries in a dialogue about children and are able to contribute to safeguarding their interests in the areas of health, education and protection.

In Namangan province for example, an NGO supported by UNICEF conducted research and identified a water delivery problem in a remote village. The NGO advocated with the Government to fix this problem and even suggested a solution. The existing pumps will now be repaired and 1,200 meters of new pipes will be laid. Mrs. Yusupova, Chairperson of the Association to Support Children and Families, is excited about the increasing importance of the role of NGOs in Uzbek society. "NGOs can make a difference," she says, "and what's more, the Government now understands the significant role they can play."

Following an Intersectoral Working Group discussion in Ferghana, the Prosecutor's Office initiated a meeting with UNICEF, NGOs and ministries to explore the correlations between school drop-out rates and juvenile delinquency. UNICEF emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes that lead to increased vulnerabilities. The Intersectoral Group is currently designing joint activities to prevent juvenile delinquency in a more sustained manner.

Eight Million Children Immunised Against Measles and Rubella



Clinics, schools and orphanages across Uzbekistan immunise eight million children from 1 to 14 years against measles and rubella.

UNICEF and the Uzbekistan Ministry of Health (MoH) took another important step towards protecting the health and wellbeing of children by conducting a week-long immunisation campaign in September against measles and rubella (MR). Eight million children aged from one to fourteen were vaccinated.

The campaign was organised to achieve Uzbekistan's target to eliminate MR by 2015. The previous MR campaign in 2006-2007 kept the country measles-free for about three years. However, in 2010 and early 2011 immunity gaps emerged and almost 500 new measles cases were reported unexpectedly.

Consequently, in this year's MR campaign, vaccination points were

opened in all primary health facilities, schools, preschools and orphanages. Teachers, community and religious leaders and social activists were mobilized to help in the campaign, along with 9,000 specially-trained vaccinators and doctors and 15,000 nurses.

To help spread the message about the importance of immunisation and to build trust among parents, 120 street plays were staged by a professional theatre group in the high-risk regions of Fergana, Tashkent, Samarkand and Surkhandarya. These skits were followed by community dialogues that gave families an opportunity to ask questions and clarify doubts.

To watch a video on the MR campaign please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE03VD3XPLE>

C4D Manual Now in Russian

UNICEF partners in countries where Russian is the working language, now have a new resource package to help them implement Communication for Development (C4D) strategies, a key element in promoting equity for children worldwide.

The package is based on the C4D capacity building workshops conducted in Tashkent for UNICEF programme officers and partners in November 2010 and 2011. At the time, well known C4D facilitator Dr. Erma Manoncourt and UNICEF Communication Advisor for CEE/CIS John Budden encouraged the Uzbekistan

team to create a resource package in Russian, so workshops could be easily replicated in Russian-speaking locations.

The package of training materials was compiled and translated by the UNICEF Uzbekistan communication team.

A DVD of the training materials includes the final workshop reports, PowerPoint presentations, readings as well as participant assessments.

This resource package is available to the CEE/CIS regional office in Geneva and upon request, to other UNICEF offices where Russian is one of the working languages.



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Cotton Harvest Observations

In line with its child rights protection mandate, UNICEF is observing the situation with regard to the use of children in the cotton harvest of 2011 as it has been doing in the past in Uzbekistan. UNICEF teams have been travelling from district to district within specific regions gathering information and making observations.

The information gathered provides a snapshot of the situation on the ground and is shared with the authorities and partners so that concrete steps can be taken towards progressive elimination of forced child labour. Observations are going on until the end of the harvesting season.