



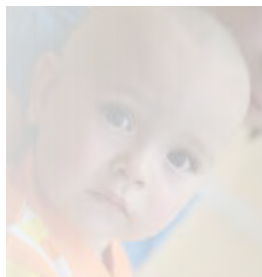
UNICEF Turkmenistan Annual Report 2016

Partnerships for Children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNICEF Turkmenistan expresses its gratitude to all donors and partners whose contributions supported the office's efforts in regards to young child survival and well-being, quality and inclusive education, reducing social inequities and protecting child rights. The achievements presented in this report were also the results of these trusting and effective partnerships.

In particular, UNICEF Turkmenistan would like to thank: The Government of Turkmenistan, Parliament of Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, State Medical University, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Finance, State Statistics Committee, National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, National Institute of Education, Ministry of Justice, ECD centres in Turkmenabat and Abadan, rehabilitation centres, media, academic institutions, local government authorities, civil society organizations, National Red Crescent Society, Yenme, United Nations agencies, Humanitarian Aid Department Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Embassy of Israel, Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency and Arbeiter-Samariter Bund Deutschland.





UNICEF Turkmenistan Annual Report 2016

Partnerships for Children



Partnerships for Children

FOREWORD



It is my pleasure to present the 2016 UNICEF Turkmenistan Annual Report, *Partnerships for Children*. The report illustrates our concerted effort with the Government of Turkmenistan to deliver results for children and women throughout the year and analyzes the progress made towards the realization of children's rights.

Turkmenistan has achieved impressive gains over the past decade. That progress is a testament to the Government's strong commitment to improving the well-being of its children, through investments in cutting-edge infrastructure and human resources for child and maternal health, early learning and the ratification of key international human rights instruments and conventions.

As we embarked on the year 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided a renewed vision and clear pathways for promoting children's well-being and child rights. The results presented in this report were made possible by that roadmap, as well as the Government's increasing attention to health and education programming. We feel privileged to have been a part of this growth story and are eager to continue working with the Government to improve the coverage and quality of services for children.

The year's achievements, and the strong partnership that the Government and UNICEF have forged, have laid important groundwork. In 2016, as part of the UNICEF's 70th anniversary celebration, we encouraged Turkmen youth to tell their own, powerful stories of child rights and participation. In a landmark achievement for the Government, with the support of the State Statistics Committee, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2015–2016 was finalized and disseminated. The findings, which have demonstrated the incremental progress made for children, will inform policies and programmes moving forward and serve as baselines for measuring progress towards the SDGs.

Today, Turkmenistan has the information, foundations and frameworks it needs to learn from past successes, identify the remaining challenges and renew its commitment to achieving sustainable development for children. The country is poised to expand health, education and protection programming; to generate evidence and data that will inform future responses; to improve child survival and well-being; to increase the number of centres providing early childhood learning and development; to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities and those who are hardest to reach, can access education, health and social services so our work achieves maximum impact.

Through the stories, images and voices of the people of Turkmenistan, this report illustrates that vision and how achievable it is. In the pages that follow, you will read powerful dispatches from the field that demonstrate how positive change can happen, be it through training health workers to save children's lives, integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education or teaching youth how to claim their rights. These stories are of motivated, passionate and hardworking staff, beneficiaries and parents, whose energy and desire for results inspire us to build more effective and sustainable interventions at the community, system and policy levels. Their stories propel us forward, keep us focused on our goals, and motivate us to create a better future for the nation's children.

As we embark on yet another year, I would like to extend my deep sense of appreciation for a fruitful collaboration with the Government and for the support and cooperation of ministries and civil society organizations in helping the children of Turkmenistan realize and achieve their dreams and aspirations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shaheen Nilofer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shaheen Nilofer
UNICEF Representative in Turkmenistan



TURKMENISTAN AT A GLANCE ¹

44 
Infant mortality rate
 per 1,000 live births

23 
Neonatal mortality rate
 per 1,000 live births

 **Under-five mortality rate**
 per 1,000 live births

51



12% **Children at low height for age (stunted)** 

Exclusive breastfeeding
59% 

95% 
Full immunization coverage

Contraceptive prevalence rate
50% 

96% **Antenatal care coverage**
 (at least four visits) 

81% **Mother's support for early learning**



15% **Father's support for early learning**

44% **Children in Grade 1 of primary school who attended pre-school** during the previous school year (school readiness)



Literacy rate among young women
100%

83% **Use of improved drinking water sources** 

6% **Young women (15-19) currently married** 

Number of children in residential care
4,389



14,086 **Number of children receiving a disability allowance**

25% **Comprehensive knowledge about HIV prevention** 

4% **Public education expenditure as a percentage of GDP**





For more than a decade, Turkmenistan has experienced strong economic growth, which has created fiscal space for social development, including efforts to improve the health and well-being of children.



Turkmenistan is an upper middle-income country located in Central Asia that shares borders with Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Caspian Sea. Home to more than 5 million people,² the nation-state is relatively young—Turkmenistan declared its independence in 1991 and became a United Nations Member State in 1992.

For more than a decade, Turkmenistan has experienced strong economic growth, which has created fiscal space for social development, including efforts to improve the health and well-being of children. The Government of Turkmenistan has used this space as an opportunity—to enact socioeconomic reform, expand the provision of goods and services and improve living standards nationwide.

For the past 25 years, UNICEF has been a strategic partner of the Government of Turkmenistan, working closely together to support child rights and promote equity. Complementing national development priorities, UNICEF has provided technical assistance to improve legislation and policies; capacity building of institutions and public agencies; and support for families to better care for their children.

Under the Turkmenistan-UNICEF Country Programme for the period 2016–2020, UNICEF supports the Government of Turkmenistan to accelerate the universal realization of child rights by aligning legal frameworks, policies and practices for children with international standards. Central to this effort will be to protect the rights of young children and children with disabilities to survive and develop, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



COUNTRY PROGRAMME PROFILE

THE PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION ENCOMPASSES FOUR INTERCONNECTED PROGRAMME AREAS:



YOUNG CHILD SURVIVAL AND WELL-BEING



QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EARLY DEVELOPMENT



REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUITIES



PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILD RIGHTS

KEY STRATEGIES

- **Mainstream the best interests of the child** into national policies and practices
- **Facilitate a shift in social norms** and a change in attitudes, values and behaviours affecting the lives of children
- **Develop sector strategies** related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other human rights treaty obligations
- **Support the translation of policies into concrete actions** through the introduction of tailored, replicable, inclusive and Government-funded social services and programmes, particularly for vulnerable children and families
- **Share best practices on effective ways to close equity gaps** and achieve gender equality
- **Build partnerships** with social sectors, Parliament, civil society, development partners, academia, and the private sector around the children's equity agenda



2016 THE YEAR IN REVIEW



In 2016—the first year of the current Country Programme—the Government and UNICEF built on the investments made in the previous country programme cycle and achieved impressive results for children in Turkmenistan. This involved building core capacities for young child survival and well-being; strengthening policy for quality and inclusive learning; reducing bottlenecks to social inequity; and involving key stakeholders—including children—in consultations and partnerships for child rights.

To lay the groundwork for these achievements, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies supported the Government to integrate the 148 nationally adopted SDG targets and 188 indicators into national sector plans, programmes and strategies concerning children. UNICEF also contributed to designing an SDG measurement system for Turkmenistan and committed to a national custodianship role for selected indicators. The next steps will involve generating baselines at the national and disaggregated levels, discussing dual responsibility for reporting on indicators and seeking longer-term solutions to data reporting and disaggregation, including improving sectoral and inter-sectoral information management systems.

To promote **young child survival and well-being**, UNICEF supported the integration of relevant SDGs into national health planning and programming. Specific indicators included under-five mortality, infant mortality, neonatal mortality and stunting, all of which have been monitored through the MICS in recent years. In addition, the national mother and child health policy documents developed in 2016 focused on evidence-based interventions to improve equitable and inclusive access to quality antenatal, perinatal and neonatal care, as well as parental skill-building, thereby contributing to SDGs 2, 3 and 5.

The launch of the National Concept on Developmental Paediatrics and Early Intervention and Action Plan for 2016–2020 solidified a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing developmental difficulties. With UNICEF support, Turkmenistan also introduced the Guide for Monitoring Child Development at selected facilities by building the capacity of Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilitators on the Guide and ECD to identify developmental delays early.

UNICEF also made valuable contributions to strengthening the capacities of health professionals in neonatal care and newborn resuscitation. Efforts were made to strengthen the home visiting system by reviewing the curriculum of the State Medical University paediatrics department, developing ECD training modules for home visitors and training trainers among Medical University teaching fellows.



In addition, UNICEF advocacy contributed to the endorsement of the new Law on Promotion and Support to Breastfeeding, which ensures the breastfeeding rights of children and mothers in line with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To support implementation of the Law, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to develop a regulatory framework on infant and young child feeding practices.

UNICEF support in 2016 strengthened **quality and inclusive early learning in Turkmenistan**. The National ECD Strategy for 2017-2023, developed in 2016, aims to integrate ECD services into health, education and social protection programming, focusing on vulnerable children and families. Development and approval of the pre-primary curriculum and parental empowerment programme, which will be implemented nationwide in 2017, represent important milestones towards aligning the early learning system with international standards. The curriculum is based on the national pre-school education standards, applies

play as a tool for learning and incorporates child-friendly readiness instruments to monitor school readiness over time. The parental empowerment programme aims to strengthen the capacities of parents to deliver early learning opportunities as the first teachers for their children at home.

UNICEF support also aimed to address capacity gaps in the provision of quality and inclusive pre-school education. This included making family support services more coherent by integrating health, education and social protection services for families and young children, focusing on children with disabilities.

In line with General Comment 4 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, new family support services are being established that use multi-disciplinary teams of childcare professionals to help children with disabilities participate more actively in everyday life. The hope is that these efforts will also contribute to improving access of children with disabilities to mainstream education.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The policy document on quality education, which is based on international child-friendly standards and gained approval in Turkmenistan in 2016, will facilitate gender-sensitive, inclusive, safe, protective and child-centred standards and benchmarks across the education system. The document will also guide the inclusion of children with disabilities in child-centred and participatory learning environments.

In 2016, UNICEF supported the Government to implement the commitments made under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the World Initiative on School Safety by building capacities for DRR. The Disaster Risk Reduction Special Course and DRR training programme for teachers were developed and integrated into professional development courses offered by the National Institute of Education (in-service re-training of the teachers) and the Seydi State Pedagogical Institute (pre-service training of students).

To reduce social inequities, UNICEF examined existing bottlenecks in the quality of and access to child health care, early learning, inclusive education and the realization of children's rights. The 2015–2016 Turkmenistan MICS was completed towards this end and the report on the MICS findings was presented at the UNICEF 70th anniversary celebration. The findings have enhanced the evidence base for equity analysis and decision making and monitoring progress towards critical indicators for children and the SDGs.

Given that 2016 was the first year of the new programme cycle, UNICEF and the Government worked to generate important baseline data about the knowledge and practices of parents of young children on child rearing, as well as schoolchildren's awareness of child rights. Analysis of the findings will facilitate informed decision-making for future programming related to ECD and child rights.

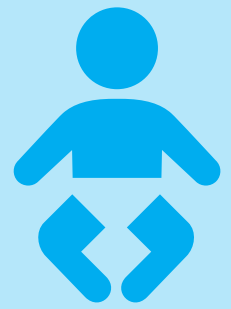
UNICEF and the Government also launched the UNICEF Regional Social Monitor Report to call for developing national social care and support services for the most vulnerable children and families in the country. The capacities of statistical personnel to collect, manage and analyse internationally comparable data using the MICS and the Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity Database³ were strengthened, preparing the Government to carry out SDG monitoring and reporting.

UNICEF involved key stakeholders, including children, in consultations and **partnerships for child rights** to increase the capacities of children as rights holders and government authorities as duty bearers to implement child rights monitoring. Children aged 11–16, including children with disabilities, gained knowledge and skills on child rights promotion and participation. Students of two major universities shared their aspirations for every child through the global Tiny Stories initiative. With UNICEF support, the Government also developed the Draft National Plan for Action for Children, which brings government agencies together for the realization of child rights in line with the latest Concluding Observations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.





YOUNG CHILD SURVIVAL AND WELL-BEING



PROGRAMME TARGET

BY THE END OF 2020, ALL CHILDREN, INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFICULTIES, HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES TO ENSURE CHILD SURVIVAL, HEALTH AND BETTER DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Health services for children are widely available in Turkmenistan. The country has also achieved universal salt iodization and seen stunting rates decline from 19% in 2007 to 11% in 2015.⁴ Child mortality is relatively high compared with other countries in Central Asia, however, it exceeds the SDG target of 25 deaths per 1,000 live births. Neonatal conditions such as pneumonia, asphyxia, preterm birth and sepsis remain the main causes of infant death.⁵ Given that countries that spend more public resources tend to achieve better health and education outcomes,⁶ the country would benefit from increased public investment in health and education of 5-10% of GDP, in line with international standards.

UNICEF works with the Government of Turkmenistan to increase equitable access to quality health care services, establish a system to identify and respond to risks of developmental delays and disabilities in children, and ensure a continuum of care for children and their families, particularly in rural areas. The

current programme is aligned with the SDGs related to child well-being and aims to support the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and other stakeholders to address critical gaps in child survival and development.

Addressing equity gaps in the quality of care is key to avoiding preventable child deaths. UNICEF is therefore strengthening management capacities and quality improvement mechanisms, focusing on perinatal/neonatal care services. This includes optimizing primary health care services, including home visitation and outreach programmes, to promote better parenting knowledge and skills.

As part of the child survival programme, UNICEF is also promoting exclusive breastfeeding and timely and age-appropriate complementary feeding practices, as well as micronutrient fortification and supplementation. The aim is to strengthen the capacities of health systems to deliver quality health services at the primary health care and community levels. In addition, UNICEF is promoting effective vaccine management to sustain high immunization rates and facilitate the introduction of new vaccines.

A key part of this effort is helping partners fill equity gaps in services, particularly in regards to children who are at risk of developmental delays. UNICEF is supporting the introduction of developmental paediatrics and early intervention services into the national health system, and linking these services to education and social protection services. This includes building national capacities for early identification, assessment, planning and multi-disciplinary cooperation.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016

In 2016, UNICEF focused on strengthening core government capacities for child health. With UNICEF support, the Government is implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan for 2015-2019 on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and launched the National Concept on Developmental Paediatrics and Early Intervention 2016-2020, which reinforces the multi-disciplinary approach to addressing developmental difficulties.

The above achievements have translated into important results for children. New intensive newborn care units, cutting-edge equipment and training provided by UNICEF and the Embassy of Israel have given health care providers the tools and knowledge they need to help babies born prematurely survive. ECD centres providing more holistic support for children with disabilities are giving these children the opportunity to realize their full potential and become active participants in society.

“With the right help, any child can be rehabilitated.”

**–Dr. Maya Saryyeva,
Paediatric Neurologist in
the ECD Department of
MCH Hospital.**

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **The new Law on Breastfeeding**, which ensures the rights of children and mothers to breastfeed in line with key recommendations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, was officially endorsed.
- **The National Concept on Developmental Paediatrics and Early Intervention and Action Plan** for 2016–2020 received government endorsement and was officially launched. The endorsement paved the way for introducing the Guide for Monitoring Child Development.
- **The standard protocols for treatment**—including safe pregnancy and delivery, neonatal care, young child survival, feeding and ECD—were updated and 115 frontline health workers were trained on the new protocols and guidelines.
- **The International Guide for Monitoring Child Development**—the first internationally developed method for monitoring child development—was formally introduced under the framework of cooperation with the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency. The Guide will support early identification of developmental delays, child development monitoring and the provision of early intervention services.
- **ECD training centres** were operationalized through a year-long series of training courses. This enabled staff from the first ECD Department of the Scientific-Clinical Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Centre and the ECD Centre of the Medical State University hospital to train health professionals in the timely identification of developmental delays.
- **A neonatal screening programme** was initiated by the Ministry of Health in four central MCH facilities, following UNICEF advocacy. The screening tests help to identify developmental, genetic and metabolic disorders in the newborn baby that can be treated if caught early.

“Before, developmental delays were looked at from a medical perspective only. Since receiving training from UNICEF, my views have changed. Today, we don’t just treat with medication, we treat with a holistic approach.” —Dr. Maya Saryyeva, Paediatric Neurologist in the ECD Department of MCH Hospital.

- **More than US\$11 million worth of immunization supplies** such as vaccines and cold chain and safe injection equipment was procured. Following UNICEF advocacy and technical assistance, the Ministry of Health introduced the human papillomavirus vaccine for children to prevent cervical cancer among women.
- **The new mobile application for digitizing and automating vaccine arrival reports**, which was designed by the UNICEF Supply Division to facilitate vaccine quality, was pilot tested. Once testing is complete, the tool will be used in all countries receiving vaccines from UNICEF.
- **An initial framework for the Fortification, Monitoring and Surveillance approach** to monitoring flour fortification programmes was developed. The framework will help stakeholders track the quality, population coverage and impact of flour fortification in the country.
- **A knowledge, attitude and practice study of caregivers** gathered key data on the capacity of parents to care for and develop their young children and generated valuable insight into child rearing in Turkmenistan and factors influencing children’s health, education and development.

A nurse shows Oguljennet, 35, how to breastfeed her newborn child at the Perinatal Centre at the new MCH Hospital in Ashgabat, which opened in August 2015. The Centre handles between 25 and 30 deliveries every day; 7,000 deliveries every year. Each mother delivers in one of 17 private delivery rooms.



Alemsoltan's life: A success story

Alemsoltan was born on 28 November 2016 after only 25 weeks of gestation. She weighed just 500 grams. After three months in one of the 12 state-of-the-art incubators at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in the MCH Hospital in Ashgabat, she now weighs 1.48 kilogrammes.

Alemsoltan's mother had miscarriages twice prior to her birth. She suffered from multiple health conditions, which led to early labour. The health staff who attended Alemsoltan's birth explain that just a few years ago, Alemsoltan would not have survived. Now, thanks to the latest technology and cutting-edge training, the hospital staff are not only able to save Alemsoltan and the other babies who weigh less than 1 kilogramme at birth, they can also help to give these children a chance for a healthy life.

"We fight every day to help babies survive, even the ones weighing 500 grams," said Dr. Naira Hakberdyeva, the neonatologist and reanimation doctor trained at the Turkmen State Medical Institute who oversaw Alemsoltan's care. "Before, babies weighing less than 1.1 kilogrammes were not considered 'liveable' babies. We thought they were too small to have a chance of survival. We didn't have the equipment, skills or knowledge we needed."

In 2016, with UNICEF support, Turkmenistan began working with neonatologists and resuscitation specialists from Israel, who have helped to strengthen staff capacities through comprehensive training and support. UNICEF has also equipped the new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with the latest incubators, ventilators and state-of-the-art technology. Today, all premature babies that come through the centre have a real chance of survival.

"We knew the theory before, but we never got a chance to practice it," said Dr. Hakberdyeva. "The new equipment helps more children survive and avoid complications with proper administration. Having international experts helped us utilize the new equipment to its best. I am so proud of what we are doing here."

At the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, little Alemsoltan is getting healthier every day. She can see lights and hear the sounds that waft into the Unit and she uses her own strength to drink her mother's breastmilk. Once she reaches 1.5 kilogrammes, she will be released to home. Her mother and father have been trained on how best to care for her and are awaiting her arrival eagerly. They say everything is ready for her at home and she will know nothing but love.





Promoting breastfeeding: A national tradition

Dr. Gulyaram Jorayeva has been encouraging women to breastfeed for the past 29 years. When she first began this work, cultural practices in regards to breastfeeding were very different in Turkmenistan. Twenty years ago, mother and newborn were separated immediately following delivery to allow the mother time to rest. Newborns were fed a special solution during their first day of life, and only brought to breastfeed after 24 hours.

Over the course of Dr. Gulyaram's career, the culture of breastfeeding has changed significantly. Today, newborns are put on their mother's breast immediately following delivery to give infants a healthy start in life and help mothers initiate milk production. Mothers also receive training, before and after delivery, on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for up to six months.

The changes in hospital policy began to take shape following independence. In 1993, three Turkmen experts travelled to the United States to learn about exclusive breastfeeding. Upon their return, the first mother and child unit was opened to keep mothers and newborns together in the hours following delivery. By 1998, 64 maternity hospitals had adopted similar breastfeeding promotion practices and as a result, were declared 'baby-friendly'.

Nowadays, breastfeeding is an accepted practice nationwide. Families, including elderly women, increasingly encourage young mothers to breastfeed. In 2009, a law was passed to protect breastfeeding and in 2016, the law was updated in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child recommendations and the International Code of Marketing of breastmilk substitutes. Since 2006, the rate of breastfeeding has increased from 11% to 59%.

"We feel the support of the state," Dr. Gulyaram said. "With the law on breastfeeding, and by working with UNICEF on the new infant and young child feeding regulations, we will be able to cover children up to three years. This is all so important for the health of our children."

"You can see the tears of a new mom when she holds her baby for the first time—tears of happiness," Dr. Gulyaram said. "It is so wonderful and gratifying to see this. Breastfeeding is not only good for the baby, it is also good for the mom."



Jahan, 23, breastfeeds her first born child at the postnatal ward in the MCH Hospital in Ashgabat. She would like to have four children in total.



The nurse demonstrates how to breastfeed a baby.

Ayjemal realizes that the ECD Centre has helped her daughter immeasurably. She hopes that Mengli will grow to walk and work like her other two children and will ultimately lead a happy and fulfilling life.



Mengli's Story: The value of holistic care and early intervention

Mengli, 5, suffers from cerebral palsy. Before her mother, Ajjemal, heard about the UNICEF-supported ECD Centre at the MCH Hospital, Mengli had only received treatment from medical doctors. When she first arrived at the Centre, she couldn't hold her head up, sit, stand or focus on anything. Only her mother could understand her.

Mengli began to make incredible progress after only a few months of regular visits to the ECD Centre, which provides in- and out-patient, family-centred, multi-disciplinary, early intervention services and functions as a training centre for future ECD specialists. Today Mengli can hold her head up, sit, recognize letters and answer questions. She smiles at jokes, laughs out loud and points out her snacks, one by one. When she speaks, people can understand her. For Ajjemal, the six-hour drive from her home in the countryside is worth it. She feels that the ECD Centre—which provides services free of charge—is giving Mengli a real chance at realizing her full potential.

"Only a multi-disciplinary approach can yield results like these," said Dr. Maya Saryyeva, Paediatric Neurologist at the ECD Centre. "Just a medical perspective cannot help a child develop his or her potential. Without physical and speech therapy, and required care, Mengli would not have improved."

Dr. Saryyeva emphasizes that the key is early intervention. "Ideally, we should start treating children at 2 months," she said. "The day is wasted if we lose the potential for child development. We help the older children as well, but progress is always better when we work with children who are just a few months old."





“Without family support, we cannot do anything,” said Dr. Saryeva, who has grown close with the family. “Maksat’s mom is really a role model for us all and shows us that when we all work hard, we can achieve a miracle.”

Maksat’s story: The power of parents

When Dr. Maya Saryeva thinks of Maksat, she is overwhelmed by the power of two things: early intervention and parental involvement.

When Maksat first came to her at 8 months, he couldn’t stand, move or turn. His parents were deeply concerned. They brought Maksat in for medical care right away but saw little improvement. It was only when Dr. Saryeva joined the ECD Centre and began implementing a holistic approach to his care that Maksat’s life began to change. In a short amount of time, he was turning right and left. Then he was sitting, then crawling, then walking with a walker. Now he walks on his own. His doctors credit his family with bringing Maksat in early and never giving up on the process.

Maksat’s mother says the entire family paved the way for her son’s improvement. The parents, grandparents, siblings and extended family welcomed him despite his challenges and never treated him differently from the other children. Everyone has high hopes and dreams for Maksat—his mother thinks he will become a doctor or a professional athlete, and his grandmother is sure he will become an astronaut.

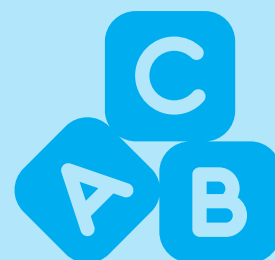
“When I realized he was different, I had this strong feeling that if we worked hard with him, he would be just fine,” mother said. “And then he sat. And now the fact that he crawls is unbelievable.”

Maksat’s mother knows she is a naturally optimistic person and has tried to share her experiences with other mothers at the ECD Centre to support them through similar issues. She encourages them to work with their children and to pursue the results they want for their child. She knows that progress is dependent on input, and has dedicated her life to giving Maksat every chance to succeed.





QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EARLY LEARNING



PROGRAMME TARGET

BY THE END OF 2020, YOUNG CHILDREN AGED 3-8, INCLUDING THE MOST DISADVANTAGED, BENEFIT FROM PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Primary school enrolment is high in Turkmenistan at 97%, and rates of retention and completion are equally high for both boys and girls.⁷ Still, achieving international standards of quality education remains a priority, as does advancing strong education policy, building the capacity of teachers, and integrating children with disabilities into regular education and learning environments.

UNICEF strongly advocates for the social inclusion of children with disabilities and increased access of families of children with disabilities to adequate and appropriate services and loving homes. A key component of this work is improving access to and quality of early learning for all children and extending child-friendly principles to pre-school and primary education. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are therefore working together to design standards for the inclusion of children with disabilities; child-centred and participatory learning environments; and relevant, play-based and age-appropriate teaching methods.

To support the implementation of the National ECD Policy, UNICEF is modelling innovative and replicable forms of quality and inclusive pre-school and pre-

primary education and learning. This includes updating pre-primary curricula, developing school readiness standards, establishing teacher qualification requirements, designing child-friendly guidelines for comprehensive assessments of early learning achievements and school readiness and strengthening the capacities of parents to ensure early learning opportunities for children at home. UNICEF is also enhancing the skills of educators to deliver inclusive education, and updating teacher training curricula with flexible teaching and learning methods adapted to different needs and learning styles.

As part of efforts to promote the inclusion of all children, including children with disabilities, in education in Turkmenistan, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are working together to support the establishment of new cross-sectoral services based on multi-disciplinary approaches that are central to enabling the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education. Efforts are also being made to further promote the generation of data on these children and advocate for their inclusion. Communication for social change is addressing segregation-based attitudes and stereotypes and promoting wider social inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF is also working to foster disaster preparedness and DRR in schools in Turkmenistan. Successful DRR programme interventions are being scaled up in schools, including pre-schools, focusing on safe and disaster-sensitive infrastructure, accessibility of schools and classrooms, and developing the capacities of management, teachers and parents by building life-saving knowledge and skills.

The increasing emphasis on reaching children with disabilities with multi-disciplinary support—including from paediatricians, educators, psychologists and physical therapists—is providing children with the opportunities they need to become more active participants in society.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016

In 2016, UNICEF provided governance and policy support for quality and inclusive learning in Turkmenistan. The draft National ECD Strategy for 2017–2023, developed in 2016, aims to strengthen the integration of ECD services into health, education and social protection programming. With the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment 4 on the right to inclusive education, the Government substantiated the country's efforts to provide inclusive education environments for children with disabilities. UNICEF also supported the Government to implement the commitments made under the Sendai Framework for DRR and the World Initiative on School Safety by building capacities for DRR.

As a result of these efforts, children with disabilities are gradually becoming integrated into traditional early learning programmes, better preparing them for future learning. Parents have been directly engaged in their children's early learning, which has allowed them to build their parenting skills and given them the knowledge they need to help their children succeed in school environments. The increasing emphasis on reaching children with disabilities with multi-disciplinary support—including from paediatricians, educators, psychologists and physical therapists—is providing children with the opportunities they need to become more active participants in society.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **The National ECD Action Framework for 2017–2023** was developed and incorporates priority policies in health, education and social protection and strengthens the cross-sectoral integration of ECD services with the focus on vulnerable children and families.
- **The quality pre-primary curriculum and parent empowerment programme** was developed and adopted for nationwide implementation.
- **New services for children with disabilities** of early age and their families will support their inclusion in mainstream education and society.
- **A policy on quality education based on international child-friendly standards** was adopted and will ensure gender-sensitive, inclusive, safe, protective and child-centred standards and benchmarks across the education system.
- **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment 4 on inclusive education** enables the Government to substantiate Turkmenistan's efforts to promote inclusive education and learning opportunities for children with disabilities.
- **The School-Based Disaster Risk Management methodology** was developed in line with best international practices and has been approved for implementation.
- **The Inter-Ministerial Technical Evaluation Group for School Safety** was established and members of the Group were trained to conduct school safety assessments that will ultimately be rolled out in 180 schools nationwide (10% of the total number of schools).
- **DRR was integrated into the newly introduced biology, ecology and basic life skills courses** in the State Pedagogical Institute for future school teachers of Grades 1–10.
- **A new partnership was established with Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland** to strengthen the capacity of education and health professionals to introduce disability-inclusive and child-centred DRR standards in pre-school institutions and rehabilitation centres.





Engaging parents in early learning

The children who attend classes with their parents at the Parental Centre in Sakar Etrap Kindergarten know what they want to do when they grow up. Mekan, 5, wants to be an artist; Azat, 5, wants to be a singer; Shirin, 5, wants to be a musician; Esen, 5, wants to teach reading and writing; and Gozel, 6, wants to teach children how to play.

The Centre was established by the Government with UNICEF's technical support in response to the low rates of kindergarten attendance nationwide. Forty-four per cent of children in the first year of primary school attended pre-school during the previous school year. Given that early education has been shown to help children do better in school over the long run, UNICEF supported the development of a curriculum based on play and child development to facilitate early learning for children about to begin Grade 1 and build the knowledge of parents. Once a week, the students and their parents attend classes at the Parental Centre located within the local kindergarten.

For Zulfiya Azimova, Deputy Head of the Education Department of Lebap region, the parental centres represent a powerful approach not only to developing parenting skills, but also to leveraging the inherent skills that mothers and fathers have for teaching their children. The aim is to build on these innate abilities and provide parents with the knowledge they need to equip their children to learn in school environments.

As the manager of the Parental Centre Programme, Zulfiya also makes home visits to assess the extent to which the home environment is conducive to early learning. She believes that family culture can be an excellent tool for early learning, and encourages families to draw on traditional practices such as cooking and weaving to teach their children math and motor skills.

“Parents have inherent skills,” said Zulfiya. “The focus of our work is to develop those instincts, while also giving them the didactic and interactive skills they need to get their children ready for school.”

“We can really see the difference between children that attended pre-school preparation and ones that did not,” said Tamara Yazyeva, Director of the pre-school. “The ones that don’t are less confident, less proficient language-wise.”



Over the past five years, the ECD Centre in Turkmenabat City has served 114 children with disabilities.



Fostering inclusion of children with disabilities: A success story

The UNICEF-supported ECD Centre in Turkmenabat City in Lepab Velayat opened in early 2012 within a traditional kindergarten to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities within the mainstream education system. The facility attends to 18 children with disabilities, including three children who also attend the kindergarten. By integrating the children early, they will have a better chance of developing to their full potential and participating in society as adults.

Three-year-old Abdullah, who suffers from cerebral palsy, has been attending the Centre for 10 months. He comes in three times per week for 40–60-minute sessions with the speech therapist, physical therapist and psychologist. After only a few sessions, Abdullah began to communicate, respond to his environment, grab objects and answer questions—all for the first time. Today, Abdullah is an energetic and happy little boy who loves music and his family's attention. He can walk with help, play nicely with others and describe what he wants to do next.

“I couldn't be happier,” said Leyla, Abdullah's mother. “They do their best here and we do our best at home.”

Together with the ECD Centre professionals, UNICEF aims to support children like Abdullah to integrate into the regular education system and become better prepared to manage their lives. As part of the programme, UNICEF supports teachers, parents and caregivers with the tools and information they need to ensure quality learning at school and at home. Over the past five years, the ECD Centre in Turkmenabat City has served 114 children with disabilities.





“Before, we used to provide care in a mechanical way: feeding, dressing children, etc. Thanks to the training that UNICEF provided, we learned how to listen and understand what children want. This has been an incredible, eye-opening experience. This training has made all of us so much better at our jobs. It is so satisfying when the child looks in your eyes—the exchange is magical. It is worth all of our hard work and effort. We can really see how much positive impact it has on all of the children we care for at the Centre.” —Ayperi Medieva, ECD Centre Director at the infant home, referring to UNICEF training.

Reaching students with disabilities with holistic support

Even after 40 years of providing speech therapy to children with disabilities, Zohre Tursunova finds her work deeply satisfying. By teaching a child who has difficulty hearing how to read lips and teaching their parents how to sign, she’s able to help parent and child communicate with each other for the first time.

Today, Zohre is pursuing her life’s work in a multi-disciplinary centre in Turkmenabat City, where children with disabilities receive speech therapy, psychological support, early learning and physical education. For Zohre, this represents a powerful breakthrough—for the first time, children with disabilities and their families receive support to facilitate their further inclusion in mainstream society.

UNICEF promotes the establishment of early intervention and support services for families of children with disabilities, across the network of rehabilitation centres. The aim is to cultivate these services as family support and resource centres designed to foster inclusiveness for children with disabilities.



Students with severe hearing disabilities attend class at the Teaching and Educational Centre for Children with Disabilities. The classroom is equipped with special hearing devices, headphones and LCD screens and serves 10 hearing impaired students.

For Rovshana, attending the ECD Centre in the infant home where she lives has been a life-changing experience. After only a few months at the ECD Centre—a colourful room filled with toys, books and cheerful decorations—Rovshana’s personality began to emerge. Today, she can show off her dress, respond to her caregiver’s caresses and instructions, laugh and interact. She can even walk with the help of a walker.



Rovshana smiles as her caregiver pats her back and talks to her gently. At the infant home ECD Centre, caregivers work closely with each child to foster attachment and familiarity, which have been shown to improve early child development.

Rovshana’s Story: Coming of age with the help of ECD specialists

Though Rovshana is nearly 4, she doesn’t appear older than 2. Suffering from cerebral palsy, she was abandoned by her parents and brought to the infant home, where she has lived ever since. Rovshana spent her first three years in a horizontal position, unable to move or react to the world around her.

Around the time of Rovshana’s arrival, the infant home established a new ECD Centre, with UNICEF training and technical support, to enable the development of children with disabilities. The Centre aims to reduce the negative effects of institutionalized care on young children and encourage family reunification using emerging approaches to supporting vulnerable families. Today, 41 children live at the home, including 24 children who were abandoned at birth because of their disability. All of the children live and sleep in the home.

Some families abandon children due to lack of knowledge of how to care for them, as well as the stigma of having a child with a disability. By conducting awareness raising to help parents get past these issues and the guilt they often feel, the Centre manages to get almost 60% of the children with families taken back into their homes and about 40% adopted.

According to international evidence, institutional care before age 3 is extremely detrimental to child development. In 2012, the Government of Turkmenistan joined the UNICEF regional call for action, ‘Ending the placement of children under 3 in institutions: Support nurturing families for all young children’, and has since worked to implement the country’s commitments to ensure that all children are raised in families.

As a follow up to this call for action, UNICEF supported the Government to commission a study about the situation of children under 3 in residential institutions. The study found that while most children exit the infant homes for adoption or to return to their own families, children with disabilities are over represented in the infant home population (36% compared with 1.5-5% in the general population). In line with the policy recommendations supported by UNICEF, the Government began to expand and change the functions of the infant homes to reflect a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of children with disabilities, beyond medical care and in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth.





Fostering preparedness and reducing risk in learning environments

The staff at school #29 in Turkmenabad have a lot to be proud of. Their school is officially 'child-friendly' after completing a pilot project and meeting all 12 child-friendly criteria. The student body is diverse, and includes children with disabilities.

With UNICEF support, the school has also introduced a DRR training. As a first step, the knowledge of students and teachers on emergency response was assessed, and school buildings were examined for their safety and ability to withstand shocks. Once a tailored programme was developed for the school, the children began participating in regular drills and sharing their newfound knowledge of reducing disaster risk with their family members at home.

For Tair Masharipov, a 16-year-old student, the training meant the difference between life and death when an electrical fire broke out in his home while he was alone with his little brother.

“When I saw the fire start, I remembered all I learned during this training. I remembered that when something electric burns, you should not put water, but soil, sand or a blanket. I did so and we laid on the floor because I knew we could die from inhaling too much smoke. I managed to reach my cell phone and called the fire department. They came within less than five minutes. I can say that this training saved my life, my brother and our flat.”

“My subject is the most important at school because keeping our children safe is essential. As I explain to my students, life skills are the most important topic. Math rules are not as important as my rules. My rules save lives.” –Ahmed Yazdanov, life skills teacher at school #29 in Turkmenabad





REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUITIES



PROGRAMME TARGET

BY THE END OF 2020, THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IS READY TO PROVIDE INCLUSIVE QUALITY COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT SERVICES.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Government of Turkmenistan has demonstrated its commitment to improving the living standards of the population. Social allowances have increased by 40-50% since 2010 and nearly 45% of all households received childcare allowances in 2012. There has been a notable increase in research and surveys on children, with the establishment of data collection systems that will allow for disaggregation and analysis of various areas of child rights, including disabilities.⁸

UNICEF works with the Government to advance the rights of children to live without violence, abuse and neglect and thrive in safe and nurturing family environments. With the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, UNICEF is using the latest research on gaps in social protection provision to strengthen family capacities for childcare and enhance access to essential services. UNICEF is also

addressing underlying bottlenecks to social protection by fostering social work expertise and incorporating child protection standards in health and education.

In response to policy gaps, UNICEF is supporting the development of regulations to guide the delivery of new services; amendments to existing laws on health and education; and new laws and policies on the rights of persons with disabilities. As part of this work, UNICEF is assessing the child protection system, including the roles and accountabilities of concerned public agencies in the realization and monitoring of child rights, and fostering dialogue about child and social protection systems for disadvantaged children and international practice in this regard.

To generate information on the bottlenecks to services for vulnerable children, UNICEF is enhancing the capacities of statistical, health, education and social protection agencies to monitor and report in a transparent manner on child rights and on the recommendations and concluding observations of relevant treaty bodies. Efforts are being made to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data and align with global standards on data access and dissemination.

“It was an excellent experience to participate in the MICS-5 and learn how to organize the logistics and methods,” said Gurbangozel Chariyeva. “The information that we collected is so important—it helped the Government see which areas we really needed to focus on. We are looking forward to the next one.”

GENERATING DATA FOR CHILDREN USING INNOVATIONS

In September 2015, Gurbangozel Chariyeva, Head of the Population Department in the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, and Eziz Gurbansahetov, Chief of the Agriculture Department in the State Statistics Division of Ahal velayat began field work to collect data for the Turkmenistan MICS-5. It was an enormous undertaking —“like delivering a baby and educating a child,” Gurbangozel said.

Before heading into the field to conduct interviews, Gurbangozel and her survey team travelled to Panama, Thailand and Turkey to attend UNICEF regional workshops on conducting the MICS. They learned a great deal—about the survey and its components, how to develop survey plans and budgets, and how to prepare the report—and were able to exchange ideas and discover solutions with colleagues from around the world.

Once trained, the field staff were organized into six teams—one team for each velayat and Ashgabat — to conduct the survey in all corners of the country. Each team consisted of a supervisor, four or five interviewers and a measurer for determining children’s weight and height. The teams covered 20 households in two days, with each interviewer taking on five households. Nationwide, more than 6,000 households were surveyed by 37 people.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **The 2015–2016 Turkmenistan MICS** was completed and the full report on its results was published in October 2016, contributing to the evidence base for equity analysis and decision making.
- **Data from the 2015–2016 Turkmenistan MICS findings report** was presented to decision makers and development partners at the UNICEF’s 70th anniversary celebrations.
- **The UNICEF Regional Social Monitor Report** was publicly launched, boosting interest among national partners and decision makers in regards to protecting and supporting Turkmenistan’s most vulnerable children.
- **The capacities of statistical personnel** to collect, manage and analyse internationally comparable data using the MICS and the Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity Database were strengthened, preparing the Government to carry out SDG monitoring and reporting.

The process was totally innovative, Gurbangozel said. It was the first MICS in the region conducted using tablets rather than paper, to improve ease and accuracy. If an interviewer made a mistake, the system would prevent it from being registered. Going paperless was also an environmentally friendly choice and saved time and money—when an interviewer entered the data, it was immediately received by the survey team at the Central Office of Statistics.

For Eziz, an added benefit was that the questions themselves raised the awareness of parents on good practices. During the interviews, parents considered questions such as: Do you know how to prevent pregnancies? What did your child weigh at birth? Who were your doctors? What do you know about danger signs and when to ask for help from health workers?

There were also some sensitive questions—such as the use of contraception—that respondents were reluctant to discuss. Thanks to the trainings, which involved practice scenarios and role play, the interviewers knew how to build trust, explain the rationale behind difficult questions and request the needed answers kindly and professionally.





PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILD RIGHTS



**PROGRAMME TARGET
BY THE END OF 2020,
PARTNERSHIPS ARE
STRENGTHENED WITH
UNITED NATIONS
AGENCIES, MULTILATERAL
ORGANIZATIONS AND
THE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR
GREATER INVESTMENT
IN THE REALIZATION OF
CHILD RIGHTS.**

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Government of Turkmenistan has continued to ratify human rights instruments and has made an effort to harmonize its legislation with international child rights standards. The country has also strengthened the enabling environment for children, enacting new laws on human trafficking, women's equality, education and youth and child rights, among others.

UNICEF is building on its well-established cooperation with the Government to forge stronger partnerships with line ministries, as well as multilateral, public and civil society actors, to support the promotion and realization of child rights in line with international agreements. Partnerships are being strengthened with academic and educational institutions for knowledge production and exchange, and the ministries are receiving technical and policy advice on child rights.

UNICEF also supports the Government to address major issues in the child rights agenda in Turkmenistan, focusing in particular on closing the equity gaps for children with disabilities. UNICEF is advocating for Turkmenistan to ratify the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2015. This will allow children to bring complaints about violations of their rights directly to the Committee if they have not found a solution, in line with international norms.

Turkmenistan has adopted the following child related codes, containing a section dedicated to children, increasing the country's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- Family Code
- Social Protection Code
- Penal Code
- Criminal Procedure Code
- Labour Code

“I was born here, I grew up here, I live here. I smell the air of Turkmenistan and it makes me happy. We have all we need in Turkmenistan: I have a salary, I have vacation, I have rest when I need. My children go to summer camp, can be educated and go to the hospital for free. Our voices are heard. We have all we need to be happy.” –Mother of Aysha, who participated in the UNICEF-supported child rights workshop.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016

In 2016, UNICEF facilitated learning seminars that equipped Members of Parliament and other government stakeholders to engage and consult children on monitoring their rights. A workshop on child rights promotion and monitoring was held for children aged 11–16 who gained skills related to participation in child rights discussion.

Students from the International University of Humanities and Development and the Institute of International Relations attended 3-4 UNICEF lecture series on the SDGs for children. University students also shared their aspirations for every child through active participation in the global Tiny Stories initiative.

In 2016, UNICEF also supported cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency and the Government of Israel to support the Ministry of Health to ensure every child's right to survival and well-being. The cooperation focuses on strengthening the capacities of health care professionals in neonatal care and early intervention. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding between UNICEF and UNESCO provided a framework of cooperation between the two agencies, to support the implementation and monitoring of SDG 4 on education in Turkmenistan.





“When we see countries with difficulties, we need to feel blessed that we are better off. But when we see countries that are more advanced, we need to strive to lift ourselves up to their level.” –Akmuhammet Yusubov, 23, one of two winners of the UNICEF Tiny Stories Initiative, referring to a Turkmen proverb.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Members of Mejlis (Parliament), the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights and Yenme**, an NGO working on disability issues, gained essential knowledge on child rights promotion and monitoring with the participation of children.
- Children aged 11–16, including children with disabilities, participated in a **nine-day workshop on child rights monitoring**, as well as the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The workshop enabled children from all parts of Turkmenistan to master participatory skills and express opinions about decisions that affect their lives.
- **Baseline data was collected on the perception of children about the realization of their rights to education, participation and social inclusion.**
- With UNICEF advocacy support, **critical child-related SDG indicators** were incorporated into the respective sectoral ministry plans.
- **The 2015 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Committee on the Rights of the Persons of Disabilities** are in the process of being addressed by the Government.
- Students from the International University of Humanities and Development and the Institute of International Relations attended **UNICEF lectures on the SDGs for children.**
- **The draft National Plan for Action for Children**—a comprehensive plan that brings together the Government’s obligations for the realization of child rights—was developed by the Government through the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights.
- In close partnership with the Government, **UNICEF celebrated its 70th anniversary.** The celebration provided an opportunity to highlight children’s issues, such as data for children, children with disabilities and child rights. The public at large was reached through increased media stories and articles and MICS 2016 results were made public, boosting interest among national partners and decision makers. University students shared their aspirations for every child through the global Tiny Stories initiative.
- UNICEF Turkmenistan actively participated in the **United Nations Human Rights, Youth and Gender Thematic Group** and supported the development and implementation of a three-year Joint United Nations Partnership Plan on Gender, with UNFPA and UN Women.



Cultivating young minds at the International University of Humanities and Development

The International University of Humanities and Development in Ashgabat, built in 2014, has all the facilities and equipment of a modern campus—LCD screens, digital libraries and a state-of-the-art gym complex. The University's 1,000 students are sharp and thoughtful, confident and outspoken.

With opportunities to participate in the Model United Nations programme and forums on child rights and child protection through the University, students are trained to see the world through the lens of sustainable development—both human and environmental. Many of the University's students dream of traveling so that they can come back with knowledge and experiences that will help them support the national development project.

"We are proud to be Turkmen, we have so much to learn from the world, but also to share", said Azim, a 19-year-old student. "We are a global people. We have wisdom and goodness to share."



Students make use of the state-of-the-art library and computer lab.



Student volunteers train to host international guests for the Fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, which will bring 35,000 visitors to Turkmenistan from 62 different countries this year.





MAYA ESEMYRADOVA

Maya, 19, is a first-year journalism student at the International University of Humanities and Development in Ashgabat with a passion for child rights. In 2016, she was one of the winners of the UNICEF Tiny Stories initiative, for which she wrote a story on the theme 'what I want for every child'.

“Many students expressed stories about their childhoods, what they want for children, what they want for the future,” she said. “I wrote about a little girl whose mom died before she could speak. The little girl wanted to find her mom and she could not say her name because she was too young. Adults, we can express ourselves. But children need help. Not only in Turkmenistan, but in the whole world.”

Maya participates in the University food donation initiative held four times a year, as well as the bake sales for the elderly, orphans and people with disabilities. She is proud of what her school does to support children in need, but she also looks beyond home and dreams of traveling so she can accomplish even more. She intends to use journalism to gather lessons for her own country, while sharing Turkmenistan's achievements with the rest of the world.



Tiny Stories Winners: What I want for every child

I saw a little girl, who did not yet talk, walking down to the group of women who were crying at her pregnant mother's funeral. She looked for her mom by staring into the crowd, trying to find her since she could not yet say the word 'mama'. But she couldn't find her mom, so she covered her face with her tiny hand and left the room in tears. That was the most grief I've ever felt in my life. There are many children in the world who lose their mother before they can even say the word 'mother'. I sincerely wish those kids are able to stay strong and achieve their goals by trying to feel as if their mother is close to them, watching over them while they grow. I want every child to witness beautiful moments of their beautiful life on time with their mother!

—Maya Esenmyradova

AKMUHAMMET YUSUBOV

Akmuhammet, a 23-year-old student of international relations and politics at the Institute of International Relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes in the potential of his country. His dearest wish is for the world to better understand his country and for more people to visit Turkmenistan—“to taste its food, breathe its air and experience its lifestyle—to understand it”.

“When I talk to foreigners, they don’t understand us,” Akmuhammet said. “They think that Turkmenistan doesn’t have good conditions for children to study, that the weather is very hot, that we are not industrial. But they have never visited Turkmenistan. I always tell people outside: come and talk to our people and see for yourself who we are.”



Tiny Stories Winners: Sustainable Development Goals

The global community, which now has the largest proportion of children in its population in its history—approximately 1.5 billion offspring—is handing a number of issues such as poverty, hunger, gender inequality, illiteracy, unemployment, ideologies with destructive consequences, drug trafficking, ecological problems and so on to the future generations, the torchbearers of human heritage and parents of the next billions. These issues and the greed and desire of today’s people to meet their own needs not only threaten human peace and stability to extinction but also scatter the dreams of children to have the life and prosperity that we are enjoying now. Consequently, I would like to suggest the following, which you may find beneficial in your actions to increase care for children and their living conditions.

1. I want adults to teach not only mathematics, physics and other subjects to the children but also, through modelling, to teach them to be good, the adjective that sums up all humanlike qualities in itself.
2. I want all governments to pay special attention to improving computer literacy; a knowledge which will be auspicious for tomorrow’s nation (children) to learn and exchange opinions in their e-world.
3. From the early years of their growth, we must teach our children tolerance and solidarity, understanding and respecting the cultures and values of other nations, the key characteristics to guarantee peace in the world.

If we really want to make all the children of the world happy, we should begin our first step by embracing the children, surrounding them with love and a smile.

—Akmuhammet Yusubov





Involving children in child rights advocacy

Aysha started taking pictures when she was only 9 years old. A sports lover, she initially focused her photography on sporting events such as gymnastics and judo. Now 13 and a self-described activist, Aysha has been published in local newspapers, works with a photography coach at school and includes student journalism among her hobbies. When she grows up, she hopes to become an artist or a teacher.

In July 2016, Aysha was one of 32 children aged 11–16 to participate in a UNICEF-organized child rights advocacy workshop. The workshop provided children, as well as government officials, with the tools to facilitate child participation, including how to communicate with children in a child-friendly manner and how to involve children constructively in consultations on matters that affect their lives.

For Aysha's mother, whose sister is a Member of Parliament, the workshop was an important opportunity for her daughter to learn about child rights, as well as gender equality, the importance of empowering women and the opportunities that exist for her in Turkmenistan. She hopes her daughter will study at the graduate level, work for child rights, and even become a Member of Parliament herself one day.

With UNICEF's technical support, the Government has developed a National Plan of Action on children's rights, which is under consideration for endorsement. Plans are underway to hold an inclusive session with the participation of children in Parliament in 2017.





EFFECTIVE USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO DELIVER RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Together with our partners and donors, UNICEF is making the most efficient use of funds to impact the lives of the children in greatest need and at greatest risk. Regardless of the sources or categories of income, UNICEF is committed to maximizing the impact of every dollar to improve children's lives and help them realize their rights.

UNICEF core (regular) resources make up 9% of the overall budget. Strong support from institutional donors and governments has allowed UNICEF to move the agenda for children forward. Delivering results for children from UNICEF core resources for 2016 amounts to US\$ 1.13 million including high quality technical assistance towards programme and policy support.

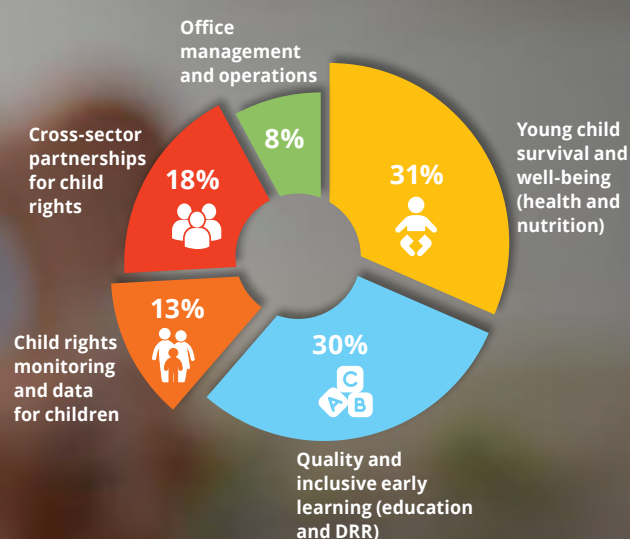
Essential supplies and services are key to realizing children's rights. On behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan, the total value of supplies and procurement services for vaccines and premix for flour fortification by UNICEF for 2016 stood at more than US\$ 11.7 million.

Building on previous supply efforts, UNICEF focused on generating greater value for money. The organization provided support and technical assistance to help governments build their supply chain and procurement capacity, and to move towards securing financial sustainability, accelerating supply availability, securing supplies at lower prices and generating significant savings for countries and donors.

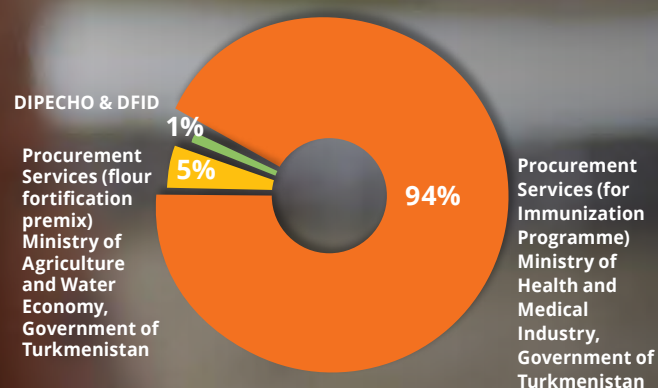
UNICEF would like to express its appreciation for the support extended by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Embassy of Israel and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA).

UNICEF also extends its gratitude to all of the partners who supported the organization's work in 2016. Your contributions made the progress described in this report possible. Together, we have come closer to achieving our shared goal of giving every child a fair chance.

FUNDS UTILIZATION BY PROGRAMME IN 2016



PROCUREMENT SERVICES AND OTHER RESOURCES



THE WAY FORWARD

IN 2017, UNICEF WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PARTNERS ON THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS:

To ensure that the progress towards achieving the SDGs is generating equitable and sustainable results for children, UNICEF will support efforts to strengthen the national statistical system to generate baseline data—including disaggregated data—for SDG indicators, and conduct more detailed analysis of available data. This includes initial preparations for conducting the 2019 MICS in Turkmenistan.

Towards achieving SDG-2, “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan will evaluate the National Nutrition Programme for 2013–2017 in terms of its focus on children and women. The evaluation will provide valuable insights into the development of the National Nutrition Programme for 2018–2022, as well as the integration of national SDG-2 targets and indicators into the Programme, particularly those concerning children and women.

UNICEF plans to introduce a package of highly effective, low-cost, life-saving technologies into maternal, newborn and child health care to improve the quality of services and support the achievement of SDG-3, “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. A detailed review of the causes of perinatal deaths, and support for neonatal care and screening will enable key interventions to further reduce neonatal mortality.

To advance the realization of child rights, UNICEF is facilitating a multi-sectoral approach to child protection and ECD, engaging health, education, social protection and finance sectors in the ECD Action Framework and the Social Services Concept. This will focus on strengthening existing services for the most vulnerable children and families. Key stakeholders will be further sensitized and mobilized with the launch of the global ‘Early Moments Matter’ campaign, drawing attention to the first 1,000 days of life.



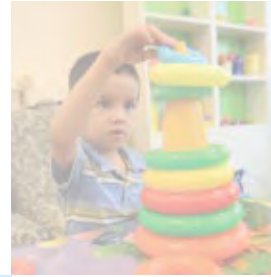
UNICEF will continue to support the establishment of an inter-sectoral model of early intervention services to allow families and childcare practitioners to monitor children's development from the start and enable them to reach their full potential. In this regard, UNICEF and the Ministries of labour, social protection and education will continue efforts to establish a social work profession in Turkmenistan.

Following the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with UNICEF support, the Government has formulated a draft National Plan of Action for Children. The Plan is expected to gain approval in 2017 and a clear mechanism will be established to oversee its implementation across all relevant ministries.

Transitioning from DRR to climate change adaptation in schools will help increase understanding of the overall climate, environment and energy impacts on children and strengthen children's resilience to the effects of climate change. These dimensions will be incorporated into the school curriculum.

UNICEF will continue to support the promotion of child rights and advocacy for the participation of children in decisions that affect their lives. In this regard, partnerships with Mejlis and the newly established Ombudsperson's Office will play a pivotal role. The Ombudsperson's Office will serve an oversight function in reviewing the implementation of the latest concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.



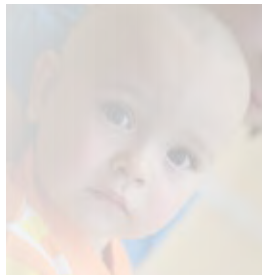


ENDNOTES

- ¹ Mortality estimates are from the 2015 report of the Inter-agency Group on Mortality Indicators; data on children in residential care, number of children with disabilities receiving disability benefits and education expenditure are from the TransMonEE database; all other data are from the 2015-2016 Turkmenistan MICS.
- ² The World Bank, 2015.
- ³ This database captures a vast range of data relevant to social and economic issues relevant to the situation and well-being of children, young people and women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- ⁴ 2006 and 2015-2016 Turkmenistan MICS.
- ⁵ 'Countdown to 2015: Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival report' (Turkmenistan, 2014).
- ⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators (2014).
- ⁷ United Nations Turkmenistan, Data assessment for the Millennium Development Goals Report (2014).
- ⁸ United Nations Turkmenistan, Data assessment for the Millennium Development Goals Report (2014).

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