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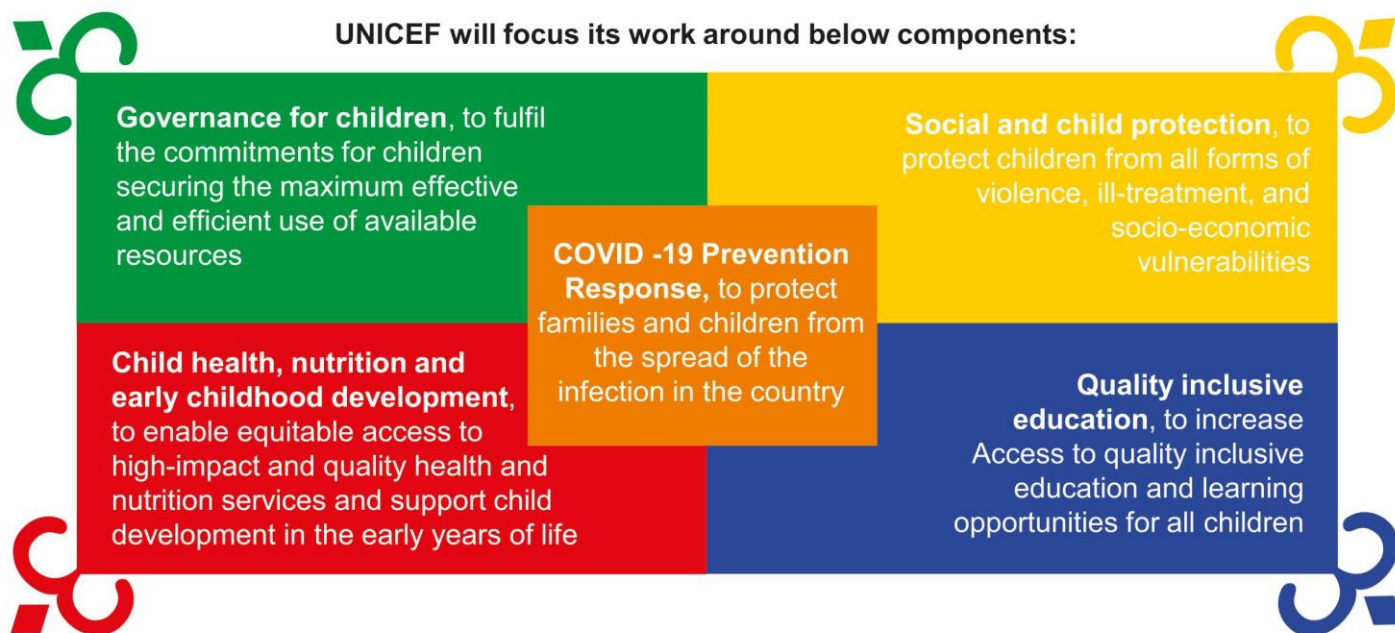


United Nations Children's Fund and Government of Turkmenistan
COUNTRY PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION
2021-2025

In the next five years, UNICEF Turkmenistan will support the Government of Turkmenistan in meeting its commitment to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** as pledged in Turkmenistan's **National Plan of Action for Realization of the Rights of the Child (NPAC)**. The UNICEF Country Programme 2021 – 2025 will respond to all three strategic priorities of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)**.

While building on the results of the previous country programmes, UNICEF's work in the future reflects the expanded scope of cooperation with the government of Turkmenistan. UNICEF will be partnering with more institutions to ensure equitable access to high-impact and quality health, nutrition and early childhood development services; to protect children from all forms of violence, ill-treatment and socio-economic vulnerabilities; as well as to increase access to quality inclusive education and learning opportunities for Turkmenistan's children and youth.

UNICEF will focus its work around below components:



Also, UNICEF will continue to provide procurement services to support the national immunization and flour fortification programmes, and will continuously adapt them to the country's needs, including in the case of emergencies.

Throughout UNICEF's work, particular emphasis will be put on mainstreaming of



Gender



Youth participation



Disability



Evidence-based advocacy and communication

UNICEF continuously adjusts its advocacy and partnership strategies to effectively support our work and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with civil society and the private sector.



QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BACKGROUND:

Transitioning to 12-year compulsory education system allowed Turkmenistan to make decisive steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers need additional skills and knowledge on child and adolescent development and on interactive methodologies which take into account learning needs of all girls and boys, including those with disabilities. Curricula and teaching methods need to be further improved, including enhanced digital learning opportunities, to support the development of necessary skills to prepare children for demands of the modern society and economy. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction topics are gradually being introduced into the school curricula. Although 99.6 per cent of young women are literate, significantly fewer girls than boys continue their education into universities.

Half of children of pre-primary school age participate in organized learning. In addition, there are Saturday parent schools to cover children who do not attend. For further development of teaching techniques, additional human and financial resources are required. An area of priority is to lift the literacy-numeracy ECD indicator of children aged 3-4 years from the current 20 percent on-track to reach the good level of other ECD benchmarks in physical and psycho-social growth that are close to 95 percent nationally. For 90 percent of young children 2 to 4 years of age, an adult is regularly engaged in four or more activities promoting early stimulation and responsive care. While fathers' engagement average nationally is 13 percent, the indicator is less than 5 percent in three velayats.

Social inclusion of children with developmental delays remains a challenge. Many of about 4,000 children with disabilities in institutions could be assisted to stay with their families and attend regular schools. There is a need to address the stigmatization of disability, especially concerning girls, and to replace the "medical" model with the "social" one. Introduction of new disciplines such as early communication, physical and occupational therapy, psycho-social support, trans-disciplinary service, under the national ECD Strategy for 2020-2025 aims to ensure comprehensive service provision for children with disabilities and their families towards their social inclusion. Also, the development of a social work profession in Turkmenistan, which has been launched through the SDG Joint Programme will support the deinstitutionalization agenda through the development of community based social services which aim to support families caring for children with disabilities.

UNICEF will support the Government of Turkmenistan to achieve the overall result that by 2025, all boys and girls in Turkmenistan, especially those with disabilities, equitably enjoy quality inclusive education and learning opportunities that develop their competencies and foster their well-being.

UNICEF's work with partners will focus on two main areas of intervention to contribute to achieving this result:

UNICEF will increase policy advice and technical support to the Ministry of Education in rolling out a universal one-year pre-primary preparation programme with domestic financing.



- Strengthening pre- and in-service training of childcare professionals
- Implementing 1-year half-day pre-primary curriculum in line with Turkmenistan SDG 4.2 commitment
- Strengthening quality assurance and monitoring of early learning and pre-primary education services
- Supporting children with developmental delays towards their inclusion into mainstream kindergartens
- Supporting cross-sectoral inter-ministerial collaboration for implementation of the national ECD Strategy

UNICEF will provide support in raising the quality of learning at primary and secondary levels, starting with the revision and upgrading of curricula in line with international standards and norms, and introduction of more interactive, child-centred teaching practices that support the development of both foundational and transferable life skills and competencies.



- Providing capacity-building support for design and application of reliable learning-assessment systems
- Supporting further development of education management information system based on international standards and national priorities
- Enhancing opportunities for learning through support for distance and blended learning platforms
- Supporting introduction of competency-based teaching methods in schools
- Supporting development of a concept for inclusive education and promotion of inclusive education policy
- Integrating of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into the school curricula, with the active participation of children and communities and prototyping 'Green School' concept

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SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION

BACKGROUND:

The social protection system in Turkmenistan consists of an extensive set of social policies and programmes (both cash and non-cash) that covers most citizens. Social protection schemes include universal birth grants, universal cash benefits for children under 3 years of age, and benefits for orphaned children and children with disabilities. It is important to identify ways to further strengthen the social protection system to ensure its effectiveness in times of the global pandemic and related economic crisis. In addition, it is essential to complement the existing cash-based assistance with inclusive community based social services and to reinforce collaboration among all sectors. The introduction and development of social work as a new professional field is therefore key to making this transition.

Child protection, and specifically justice for children, have been explicitly made a priority in the new country programme of cooperation for the period 2021-2025, thereby also supporting the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of Child Rights for 2018-2022 which prioritizes effective measures to prevent abuse, discrimination and violence against children. Significant progress was made in the area of developing a child-rights based approach to handling children in conflict with the law which was reflected in the 2018 assessment of the Programme on the Development of the Juvenile Justice System for 2012–2016. As a result of this assessment, it has been recommended to further develop community-based services for diversion, rehabilitation, and reintegration as well as the expansion of the child-friendly justice concept to include child victims and witnesses of crime. The capacities of Commission on Minors and Guardianship and Trusteeship Bodies will be strengthened to cater to the broader child protection needs at national and subnational level, and additional partnerships will be explored to promote non-residential alternative care for children left without family environment.

UNICEF will support the Government of Turkmenistan to achieve the overall result that by 2025 children of Turkmenistan, particularly girls and boys in vulnerable families, residential care institutions and in contact with the law, are increasingly protected from all forms of violence, ill-treatment and socio-economic vulnerabilities, benefiting from quality social and child protection services.

UNICEF's work with partners will focus on two main areas of intervention to contribute to achieving this result:

UNICEF will support the further development and expansion of social work and the establishment of linkages with the broader social-protection system, continuing the efforts started through the SDG Fund Joint Programme on Strengthening Community-based Social Services for 2020–2022.



- Advocating for the inclusion of the new social work cadre into the government system and budget and providing technical support to enable this process
- Integrating the social work profession in the higher education system and ensure further development and professional growth of the social service workforce
- Analysing the existing social protection instruments and supporting the development of a roadmap for social protection reform to strengthen its effectiveness in alleviating vulnerabilities of children and their families
- Nurturing cross-sectoral collaboration between the social protection, health and education authorities, at both the national and subnational levels, to support integrated social support services for children and their families
- Ensuring consistent multidisciplinary support to all children, transitioning to the “social” model of disability and reducing children’s placement into residential care institutions
- Strengthening emergency preparedness of social protection system to ensure its shock-responsiveness

UNICEF will support government partners in strengthening prevention and response mechanisms for addressing violence against children, as well as procedures and services for children in contact with the law.



- Providing support for the review and analysis of legislation related to children in contact with the law, and developing evidence-based recommendations to align it with international standards
- Supporting the development of training programs for justice and social work professionals in accordance with modern approaches and procedures
- Promoting alternative measures to detention such as diversion and restorative justice with a view to progressively ceasing deprivation of liberty of children in conflict with the law
- Establishing mechanisms and procedures to ensure child-friendly investigations along with setting up child-friendly interview rooms for the cases of child victims and witnesses of crime at the pre-trial stage
- Strengthening the roles of the Commission on Minors and Guardianship and Trusteeship bodies to reduce the referrals to residential care institutions and improve community-based support services
- Developing and strengthening behaviour change strategies to promote positive parenting and non-violent disciplining via multisectoral service providers and communication channels

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CHILD HEALTH, NUTRITION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND:

In Turkmenistan, health services for children are widely available. Almost all deliveries take place in maternity facilities. The immunization programme — fully financed by the Government and supported by UNICEF procurement — covers 95 per cent of young children and is in full compliance with World Health Organization recommendations. While significantly reduced since independence, under-five and neonatal mortality is still in place, with main causes being perinatal conditions, congenital malformations, and respiratory infections. To reduce the mortality rates to the levels of the middle-income countries, it is necessary to build knowledge and skills of the medical staff, improve the quality of maternal and childcare in health facilities, as well as educate the parents to properly take care of their children. The systems for human-resources capacity development and health budgeting need to evolve, with additional focus on primary health care.

While exclusive breastfeeding is widely practiced, malnutrition continues to represent a public health challenge. Turkmenistan is fully financing fortification of premium and first grade flour with UNICEF procurement support. It is planned to assess impact of the fortification programme on the prevalence of anemia, which was high among women and children (2012, UNICEF). Although declining, stunting and overweight are still present among children.

The establishment of the universal early childhood development (ECD) services is underway in both health and education sectors but requires increased investments to go to scale. The newly adopted National Strategy on Early Childhood Development for 2020–2025 emphasizes the need for human resources capacity development across all sectors, cross-sectoral coordination, data and monitoring systems, and targeted support to the most vulnerable children, families and communities.

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UNICEF will support the Government of Turkmenistan to achieve the overall result that by 2025, every new-born, child, adolescent and woman of reproductive age in Turkmenistan, especially those most vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable access to high-impact and quality health, nutrition and Early Childhood Development services.

UNICEF's work with partners will focus on three main areas of intervention to contribute to achieving this result:

Child health: UNICEF will work with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry to strengthen its capabilities, normative base and tools to improve quality of services for newborns, young children and mothers, particularly in disadvantaged communities.



- Supporting Government efforts in strengthening healthcare system, in particular mother and child health
- Building skills, knowledge and practices of managers and health care providers in maternity and primary health care facilities to enable adequate treatment and prevention of newborn and childhood illnesses
- Supporting preventive measures, including immunization and infection prevention and control, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV
- Providing technical expertise in revising and costing the free-of-charge basic benefit package to reduce the burden of health expenditures on families with children

Child nutrition: UNICEF will support the implementation of the National Nutrition Programme for 2020–2025 and strengthen intersectoral coordination, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms to improve nutrition status of children.



- Addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women
- Strengthening the system for promotion and monitoring of infant and young child feeding
- Training health-care professionals to provide quality counselling on nutrition and promote healthy nutrition and hygiene practices among population
- Revising the flour fortification formula and advice on introducing new supplementation schemes
- Building on the role of Turkmenistan as the secretariat for the Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform and facilitating the exchange of ideas and information with other countries and documentation of the good practices of Turkmenistan
- Supporting the generation and analysis of nutrition-related data to improve nutritional status of children

Early childhood development: UNICEF will support the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry in establishment of a system to ensure that every child fulfills his/her potential within healthcare system with particular focus on primary healthcare.



- Strengthening home-visiting services as an important platform to improve early childhood development, child health and counselling
- Scaling up of early identification of delays and disabilities among all young children using up-to-date instruments, with clear referral mechanisms established for children with developmental delays in early years
- Offering the families gender-sensitive information empowering them for the best care for young children



GOVERNANCE FOR CHILDREN

BACKGROUND:

While progress has been made over the years, statistics and the generation of evidence for informed policymaking and development programming still requires further strengthening in Turkmenistan. The culture of systematic use of data and effective monitoring mechanisms in the process of decision-making needs to be developed. As digitalization is a national priority, both sector-specific monitoring systems and new technologies in education and health could be introduced. In addition, further strengthening of the public-finance management systems is required to establish a firm link between national resources and equitable and sustained outcomes for children. The 2018-2022 National Plan of Action on Realization of Child Rights calls for the practical implementation of adopted legal and policy provisions while maximizing the use of available resources for children and increasing the supply of and access to disaggregated data, especially those related to Sustainable Development Goals.



UNICEF will support the Government of Turkmenistan to achieve the overall result that by 2025, Turkmenistan makes a considerable progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international commitments for children, with the maximum, effective and efficient use of available resources

UNICEF's work with partners will focus on three main areas of intervention to contribute to achieving this result:

UNICEF will provide policy advice to line ministries in introducing a system of strategic planning, budgeting, and financing based on results to be achieved.



- Supporting further development of social sector as part of implementation of Sustainable Development Goals
- Building skills and knowledge of national specialists in costing and analysing impacts of investment choices in state budgeting processes
- Improving the efficient management of domestic finances for sustainable results for children, women and families

UNICEF will support further improvement of legal and normative acts following the 'best interests of the child' principle in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



- Supporting the Government to join the CRC Optional Protocol on a communications procedure which allows children to file complaints, appeals and petitions in situations where their rights have been violated.
- Strengthening the national, velayat and etrap (district) coordination mechanisms for effective implementation and monitoring of the national policies concerning child rights.
- Establishing sustainable institutional capacities in child rights protection, monitoring and awareness.
- Advocating for the meaningful participation of civil society, children and young people in making decisions and monitoring policies affecting their lives

UNICEF will continue capacity development of the national statistical system in the collection, analysis, and communication of accurate and timely data.



- Strengthening the national statistical system in the collection, analysis and communication of accurate and timely data, such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)
- Contributing to the implementation of the national strategy on digitalization of economy through the improvement of sectoral management information systems
- Building knowledge and skills in using disaggregated data for policy planning and investments to address socioeconomic vulnerabilities
- Expanding cooperation with the Government in evaluating major development policies which have an impact on children's lives



COVID-19 PREVENTION / RESPONSE

BACKGROUND:

The global COVID-19 pandemic has affected children's survival, health, well-being and education. Although there are no officially recorded cases of COVID-19 in Turkmenistan at the time of publishing this document, the socio-economic crisis caused by the necessary measures to protect the population and prevent the spread of infection has taken a toll on many families especially the most vulnerable. In Turkmenistan, UNICEF has worked with Government partners and UN sister agencies to implement the two national plans addressing the impact of the pandemic, the Country Preparedness and Response Plan and the Socio-Economic Response Plan developed to ensure that the needs of children and their families are addressed during these unprecedented times.

In the framework of these plans, UNICEF, as a lead UN agency in Risk Communication and Community Engagement, will expand its work with the State Committee for Television, Radio Broadcasting and Cinematography in delivering prevention messages including TV spots and animations to children and their families through national media and UNICEF channels. Capacity building of mass media representatives will continue to equip them with knowledge and skills to accurately report on the pandemic risks and on the most effective prevention measures. Procurement support of UNICEF to the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry will ensure uninterrupted supply of vaccines for all children, as well as strengthening the capacity of hospitals with essential medical and hygiene supplies. UNICEF's ongoing assistance to Ministry of Education in introduction of digital and distance education, as well as providing healthy lifestyle education to all school children will ensure the quality and resilience of education system in the country. The support will also include cooperation with Ministry of Labor and Social Protection on developing the community-based social services and addressing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families and their children.

UNICEF will support the Government of Turkmenistan in implementation of essential interventions targeting children and their families with dissemination of risk communication messages, equipping schools and health facilities with essential hygiene supplies to prevent and control the spread of the infection in the country.

UNICEF's work with partners will focus on two main areas of intervention to contribute to achieving this result:

UNICEF is implementing risk communication and community engagement initiatives to promote dissemination of reliable information, bringing relevant guidance to parents, caregivers and educators, and partnering with front-line responders to ensure they have the information and resources they need to keep children healthy and learning.



- Supporting Turkmenistan's media in reporting reliable information during the ongoing COVID-19 prevention measures and vaccination deployment in the country, as well as sharing best practices on messaging from the regional experiences
- Reaching parents, youth and children with risk communication messages and lifesaving information on hygiene and infection prevention through national media and UNICEF digital communication channels
- Organizing awareness raising activities among children on promoting the importance of hand hygiene and healthy behaviours and disseminating informative hygiene posters in public institutions and schools

UNICEF is providing information, guidance, expertise and procurement services to protect and equip children and families, healthcare workers, teachers and front-line responders with knowledge and skills, tools, as well as vaccines and vaccine-related equipment and hygiene supplies.



- Supporting the Government in introduction of digital and distance education to strengthen quality and preparedness of education system
- Assisting Ministry of Education implement safe school protocols and informing school children and service providers of institutions about COVID-19 measures
- Providing the Government with procurement services of vaccines and vaccine related equipment to ensure the continuation of routine immunization to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases among children.
- Procuring and delivering essential medical equipment and hygiene supplies to health and education facilities based on the prioritized needs
- Working with the Government in developing community-based social services to address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families and their children, including provision of case management and psychosocial counselling

E-MAC



On World Children's Day, 2021 kids took over the UNICEF Office and approved the priorities stated in this Country Programme Document.

Main partners:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mejlis of Milli Gengesh
- Ministry of Health and Medical Industry
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
- Ministry of Finance of Economy
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
- Ministry of Defense and Inter-ministerial Commission on Emergency Preparedness
- Ministry of Adalat
- Ministry of Sports and Youth Policy
- Institute of State, Law and Democracy
- Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
- General Prosecutor's Office
- Supreme Court
- State Committee for Television, Radio, Broadcasting and Cinematography
- National Red Crescent Society
- Office of Ombudsperson
- State Statistics Committee
- Civil Service Academy
- Women's Union
- Union of Economists
- Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
- Local Administrations
- Scientific and Clinical Center for Mother and Child Health
- State Sanitary Epidemiological Inspection
- Inter-sectoral Committee on Nutrition
- Regional Health Departments
- State Medical University
- Medical colleges
- Youth Organization named after Makhtumkuli
- Civil Society Organizations
- Public Associations
- United Nations Agencies



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