

The United Nations in Turkmenistan

A Strategic Partnership



TURKMENISTAN



Introduction

Turkmenistan has made great strides since its independence in 1991. In recent years, the economy has grown in double digits. Social changes have created new opportunities for the people of Turkmenistan, including women, adolescents and children. All citizens of Turkmenistan now enjoy greater prosperity than ever before.



The United Nations has witnessed this progress first hand as the Government of Turkmenistan's strategic partner of choice. Over the past 20 years, the United Nations has developed a strong relationship with the Government, built on trust and respect. We see this moment as an opportunity to take that relationship to a higher level and work together to create an even better future for the people of Turkmenistan.

The achievements made by this nation and its partners over the past five years have paved the way to that future. Under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2010–2015, national capacities to protect and promote human rights and gender equality have grown stronger. Investments in education, health, social protection and the wellbeing of vulnerable populations have enhanced human development. Interventions targeting the energy and environmental sectors have increased the country's resilience to climate change. The continuing emphasis on peace and security is helping to address illegal trafficking, potential conflicts and other cross-border threats.

As United Nations Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan since 2012, I am pleased to have witnessed a nation building itself. I am honoured to have seen the construction of hospitals, schools, sports centres, roads, bridges and railways, all of which are part of a greater framework for enhancing human development. The United Nations family is proud to support the Government and civil society in their tireless efforts to make Turkmenistan a great nation.

Under the new Partnership Framework for Development (PFD) 2016–2020, the United Nations and the Government will continue to work together advancing national development in line with the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together, we will further strengthen human capital in Turkmenistan; improve social service systems and key institutions; diversify the economy for more sustainable growth; accelerate rural development; and support energy efficiency and natural resource management, to enable Turkmenistan to become an important player in the international arena.



This book showcases the great strides, investments and efforts that Turkmenistan has made for its people, economy and environment – investments aimed at building a strong, safe and sustainable future for the Turkmen people. Through images and stories, we hope to illustrate the experiences, achievements and aspirations of all Turkmen citizens. This book reflects our confidence that Turkmenistan and the United Nations family will continue to realize great achievements together to benefit the country and the generations to come.

Jacinta Barrins,
United Nations Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan
Ashgabat, October 2015

The achievements that Turkmenistan and its partners have made over the past five years have paved the way to that future.







Turkmenistan in brief

Located in Central Asia, and once an important trading hub on the Silk Road, Turkmenistan has been at the crossroads of civilizations for centuries.



Today, the nation shares borders with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Iran and Uzbekistan, as well as Azerbaijan and Russia through the Caspian Sea.

Despite its rich history, Turkmenistan is a relatively young state. The country declared independence in October 1991 and became a United Nations Member State in March 1992. In December 1995, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the status of permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, which has become the guiding principle of national and foreign policy.

Turkmenistan extends over 491,200 km², 80 per cent of which is desert.¹ Its land is richly endowed with natural resources, including oil and gas. In a region prone to environmental adversity, Turkmenistan is particularly vulnerable to a number of natural disasters, including earthquakes, drought and desertification.² The fragile natural environment limits sources of potable water and increases vulnerability to climate change.

Development context

Turkmenistan was ranked as an upper middle-income country in 2012.³ That year, exports grew by an estimated 45 per cent⁴ and GDP growth continued its double-digit trend at 10.3 per cent.⁵

The country has also made notable progress in health and education in recent years, increasing access to free education and raising average life expectancy. Over the past decade, the Government has undertaken a broad socioeconomic reform agenda with the objective of increasing the living standards of the population to the level of developed countries.

In the coming years, Turkmenistan is poised to tap its enormous human potential through the important projects of institution building and economic diversification. The Government is enabling its state institutions to more effectively reach the entire population, including vulnerable groups, and to reduce existing geographic and social disparities, such as those related to rural location, gender, age and disability. At the same time, Turkmenistan has continued to increase its compliance with international human rights obligations and bring its national legislation in line with international standards.



The United Nations in Turkmenistan

The United Nations agencies, funds and programmes began their work in Turkmenistan shortly after the country's accession to the United Nations in March 1992. In 2007, the Government of Turkmenistan invited the United Nations to collaborate on the implementation of its social reform agenda, initiating a new chapter of cooperation.



United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2010-2015

Following a comprehensive, consultative and dynamic process to set strategic priorities, the UNDAF 2010-2015 was designed to support the Government's reform agenda and improve on the previous UNDAF 2005-2009. Guided by national priorities and the Millennium Declaration, the UNDAF 2010-2015 provides an operational framework for the United Nations' collective development activities in Turkmenistan.

The UNDAF 2010-2015 focused on four broad areas that build on national priorities and encompass the shared values of the United Nations: (1) strengthening democratization and the rule of law; (2) strengthening human development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); (3) improving sustainable development and inclusive growth; and (4) promoting peace and security.

Turkmenistan-United Nations Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020

In 2015, the United Nations and the Government of Turkmenistan jointly finalized a new five-year strategic cooperation document, "Turkmenistan-United Nations Partnership Framework for Development for 2016-2020."

The process of preparing the PFD involved extensive consultation with technical representatives of Government ministries, departments and agencies, as well as civil society representatives. This level of collaboration signifies a move away from a dynamic based on donor-recipient relations and towards a partnership based on Turkmenistan's aspirations for continued growth and sustainable development.

The PFD focuses on five strategic areas: (1) quality data and progress monitoring; (2) quality inclusive social services; (3) environmental sustainability and energy efficiency; (4) employment, economic diversification and trade; and (5) governance and the rule of law.

Highlight UNDAF 2010-2015 Priority areas and outcomes

1 Strengthening democratization and the rule of law



UNDAF outcome 1:
By 2015, rights and freedoms in Turkmenistan are respected and guaranteed in accordance with international human rights standards as well as principles of democracy and the rule of law



2 Strengthening human development to achieve the MDGs



UNDAF outcome 2:
By 2015, human resources developed to achieve sustained socioeconomic development



3 Improving sustainable development and inclusive growth



UNDAF outcome 3:
By 2015, the system of environmentally sustainable economic management expands people's opportunities to participate in social and economic development, especially in rural areas



4 Promoting peace and security



UNDAF outcome 4:
By 2015, peace and security in Turkmenistan, both on the national level, as well as on the level of regional cooperation, are ensured in accordance with international standards



“As the United Nations, we are uniquely positioned to help the Government align with international procedures, technologies and standards to enhance efficiency and ensure that development is inclusive of all.” Jacinta Barrins, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan

Highlight PFD 2016-2020

Priority areas and outcomes

1 Quality data and progress monitoring



PFD outcome 1:
Quality data, aligned with international standards, are available to policy makers, legislators, and the interested public to monitor the major goals of National Programmes, the post-2015 SDGs, and PFD, and to formulate new national strategies and programmes



2 Quality, inclusive social services



PFD outcome 2:
Pre-school, primary and secondary education services are of higher quality, in line with international standards, and with priority given to inclusive education

PFD outcome 3:
The social protection system is ready to provide inclusive quality community-based support services

PFD outcome 4:
The people of Turkmenistan, especially vulnerable groups, enjoy better coverage of quality health care services focusing on women and child health, nutrition, NCDs, TB and Multiple Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR TB), early detection and prevention



3 Environmental sustainability and energy efficiency



PFD outcome 5:
The national policy, legislative and institutional frameworks are aligned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to promote sustainable practices on energy efficiency, the use of renewables, urban development, and waste management

PFD outcome 6:
The national policy, legislative and institutional frameworks are responsive to climate change issues by promoting climate resilience, adaptation, climate risk management and disaster risk reduction measures at sector and community level



4 Employment, economic diversification and trade



PFD outcome 7:
Strategies and simplified regulations are in place to promote inclusive employment through sustainable economic diversification



5 Governance and rule of law



PFD outcome 8:
State institutions implement and monitor laws, national programmes, and strategies in a participatory manner and in line with the country's human rights commitments
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The United Nations in Turkmenistan

Joint achievements



Promoting data revolution

The United Nations has been supporting the Government of Turkmenistan to improve the reliability and completeness of its data and to introduce modern methods of collecting, processing, storing, analysing and disseminating data, in line with international practice. This process is ongoing under the Government's leadership. Key examples include:

- Extensive data on non-communicable diseases released and reported at the 2013 WHO Regional Ministerial Conference in Ashgabat
- Household Census conducted in 2012, the first in 17 years
- Surveys conducted on contraceptive affordability, especially for vulnerable women, and the health behaviour of school-aged children, targeting adolescents and youth
- Evidence gathered from surveys and studies on health, education and social protection services for children to inform policy decisions
- Institutional review of the National State Statistics Commission completed
- Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Round 5 carried out in line with international standards

Contributing to defining the new Sustainable Development Goals

In 2013, the President issued an official decree that Turkmenistan will conduct consultations with members of the Turkmen public on defining the SDGs.

The consultations were an enormous success. Overall, the views of more than 1,800 people - including schoolchildren, parents of children under 7, adolescents and youth, women, people with disabilities, parliamentarians, farmers, entrepreneurs, social service and health care providers and civil servants - were collected, analysed and presented in the national report. The report also served as the basis for designing the PFD 2016-2020.

A second round of consultations explored the national capacities and institutions needed to implement the SDGs, as well as the incorporation of the SDGs into existing and future national programmes. Dialogues were held in nine leading national ministries split into four target institutions, each with a particular role to play in ensuring the implementation of the SDGs.



Integrating human rights and gender equality into national development

With strong UN support, particular progress has been made towards the implementation of international obligations under United Nations human rights conventions. The country has also considerably improved its reporting to various human rights mechanisms and the Government has accepted most of the recommendations from the human rights treaty bodies.

United Nations Day for the Sustainable Development Goals

To mark the 2014 UN Day, the United Nations engaged in a series of joint activities related to the proposed SDGs. The celebrations increased the awareness of more than 50 government officials (including deputy ministers from a number of key ministries) and members of the diplomatic community, as well as more than 1,000 students, on the global process adopted to define the proposed SDGs. During a student debate event, more than 80 students from four universities discussed the topic “the SDGs are relevant to Turkmenistan”. The winning university received the United Nations debate cup.



Strengthening human rights reporting in Turkmenistan^{6 7}

International Covenant on Civil and Political rights – state party's report issued 5 August 2015.

UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – state party's report issued 24 July 2015.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – state party's report issued 9 October 2013.

CRC Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict – state party's report issued 26 January 2012.

CRC Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography – state party's report issued 26 January 2012.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – state party's report issued 5 December 2011.

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) – state party's report issued 20 January 2011.

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – state party's report issued 13 January 2011.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) – state party's report issued 3 March 2009.





TÜRKMENISTANYŇ ADALAT KOŞGHI

Priority area 1

Strengthening democratization and the rule of law

As the economy has continued to grow in Turkmenistan, so has the motivation to invest in democratic governance, youth development, gender equality and human rights and solidify the development gains already made. In addition to the ongoing work to strengthen its human rights record, Turkmenistan is reinforcing its human rights commitments, more firmly establishing its democratic institutions and further developing its civil society institutions to give greater voice to the most vulnerable.

1 Strengthening democratization and the rule of law

2 Strengthening human development to achieve the MDGs

3 Improving sustainable development and inclusive growth

4 Promoting peace and security

UNDAF outcome 1:

By 2015, rights and freedoms in Turkmenistan are respected and guaranteed in accordance with international human rights standards as well as principles of democracy and the rule of law

National priorities:

Promoting democratic principles of governance and ensuring supremacy of law

Relevant MDGs:

- MDG-1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- MDG-2: Achieve universal primary education
- MDG-3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- MDG-4: Reduce child mortality
- MDG-5: Improve maternal health
- MDG-6: Combat HIV, malaria and other diseases
- MDG-7: Ensure environmental sustainability



We want to be a modern country. Our country is developing so fast: our buildings, infrastructures, we are very proud to be Turkmen. We are a very open and hardworking people.”

Youth member of the Y-PEER Youth Centre in Ashgabat



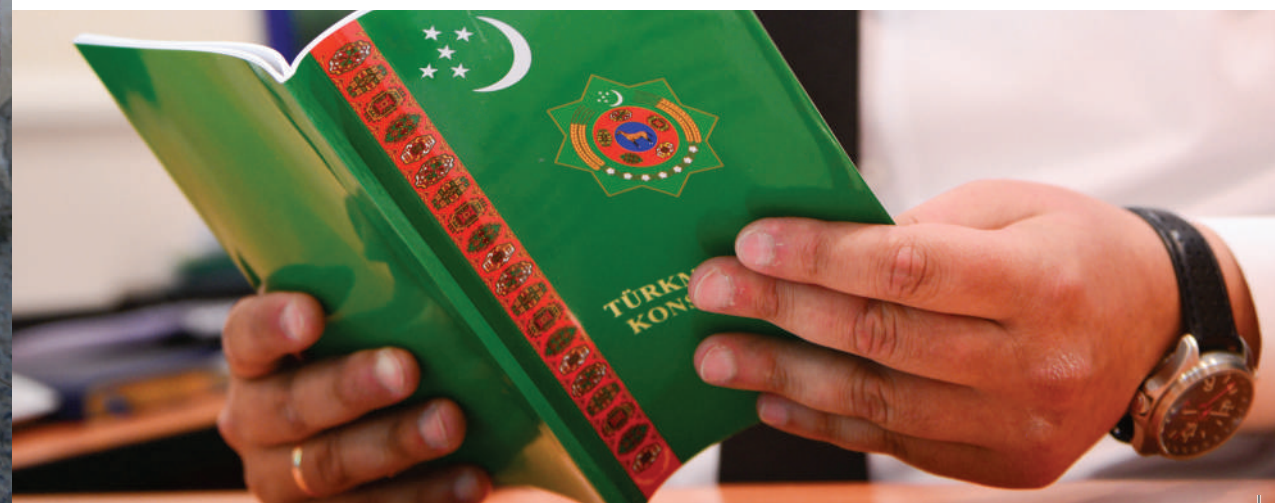


○ The United Nations in action

The United Nations is working closely with the Government of Turkmenistan and partners to strengthen national capacities to protect and promote human rights and gender equality, facilitate more equitable governance and the rule of law, and increase civil society participation in upholding those rights.

Developing capacities to protect and promote rights and freedoms

The United Nations is working to strengthen the capacities of government institutions, including the judiciary, and civil society. This includes supporting the Government to integrate human rights principles into national legislation and draft new laws and legal acts, in line with international standards. The United Nations is also supporting timely treaty body reporting, equity and women's empowerment, juvenile justice, the integration of human rights into educational curricula, and the role of the media in raising awareness of key issues.



Supporting the Government to more effectively employ non-violent conflict mitigation mechanisms to promote peace and stability in the region

The United Nations is sensitizing national and local authorities on the use of early warning and conflict mitigation mechanisms, including immediate attention to regional challenges such as water, energy and transnational crime. Support is also strengthening regional cooperation in preventive diplomacy.

Empowering victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants in Central Asia

As part of efforts to prevent human trafficking, protect victims of trafficking and build partner capacities in these areas, IOM has undertaken a three-year regional project using human rights and gender and environmentally sensitive interventions. One of these is the IOM hotline, which opened in 2009 with the support of the UK Embassy, Turkey and the Russian Federation. The NGO Ynam runs the hotline in Ashgabat.

When the hotline first went live, Ynam, which means 'trust', received about 40 calls per day in response to advertisements in Turkmen and Russian that appeared in the local newspaper. For some callers, the hotline has served as a resource for asking questions about working abroad and checking the legitimacy of opportunities. Ynam has also assisted the family members of people working abroad who are concerned that their loved ones have become victims of trafficking.

In 2014, Ynam received nearly 6,000 calls. Today the hotline is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, with three phone operators (a manager, a lawyer and an accountant) available for support. Ynam refers potential human trafficking cases to IOM.





The United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

In 2007, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The Centre aims to identify and address existing and potential threats to stability and to strengthen cooperative security partnerships between the governments of Central Asia. The Centre plays a key role in preventive diplomacy efforts in Central Asia and in developing common initiatives to address regional challenges to peace and security.

The current programme of action for the UNRCCA for the 2015-2017 period focuses on the following four priority areas:

1. Transnational threats and challenges
2. Management of common natural resources
3. Domestic factors affecting regional stability
4. Building national/regional conflict prevention strategies



Integrating principles of good governance and rule of law into national policies

The United Nations is supporting national, regional and local levels of government to formulate institutional frameworks, improve legislation and enhance technical capacities to effectively deliver public services. The Government is developing the expertise to reform and improve the public sector, and the judicial branch is gaining the skills to strengthen and increase access to the justice system for marginalized populations. The international community has noted the progress being made in the reduction of statelessness and addressing refugee issues, as well as juvenile justice.

The Government of Turkmenistan and UNHCR: Working together to reduce statelessness

Over the past decade, the Government of Turkmenistan and UNHCR have cooperated closely in the effort to reduce statelessness within the country. Key achievements include:

- Refugee Registration Campaign, 2004-2005: UNHCR and the Government of Turkmenistan conducted a joint registration exercise to identify and register all prima facie refugees who settled in Turkmenistan a decade earlier.
- Country-wide registration of persons with undetermined nationality, 2011: UNHCR, the State Migration Service and other relevant government agencies registered some 8,000 individuals with undetermined nationalities.
- Accession to the Stateless Conventions, 2011-2012: With UNHCR support, Turkmenistan became the first country in Central Asia to accede to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- International Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World, 2012: In close cooperation with UNHCR and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Government of Turkmenistan organized the first international conference that brought so many member states from the OIC together in one place. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration calling for more active and close cooperation to solve refugee and statelessness issues.
- Granting citizenship, 2011-2015: Between 2011 and 2015, the Turkmen President granted citizenship to more than 5,000 stateless persons, with UNHCR support.

ELENA'S STORY

Gaining citizenship in Turkmenistan

In 1992, Elena's mother left Russia for Turkmenistan. She gave birth to her daughter Elena on Turkmen soil later that same year. In the turmoil of the transition, Elena's mother lost her documents and could not prove that she was in the country during the declaration of independence. Without documents, neither Elena nor her mother could establish citizenship. Both mother and child were stateless.

Working through the NGO Keik Okara, UNHCR is supporting the Government of Turkmenistan to decrease the number of undocumented persons and prevent statelessness in Turkmenistan. Keik Okara conducts dedicated advocacy to ensure legal services, financial assistance and protection for stateless persons, many of whom, like Elena, have been living in Turkmenistan for more than 20 years. In the first half of 2015 alone, the NGO has helped to process 153 applications and has provided medical, social and financial assistance to many more.

Thanks to Keik Okara, Elena, her mother and her infant son have now received their stateless documentation and will be able to apply for their Turkmen citizenship. Between 2011 and 2015, more than 5,000 stateless persons have been granted Turkmen citizenship as a direct result of UNHCR support.





Investing in the potential of young people

UNFPA is supporting the Government of Turkmenistan to prioritize and invest in young people, including adolescents. With UNFPA support, in 2013, the Government adopted and enacted the State Youth Policy, which aims to advance the rights and opportunities of young citizens in all areas of youth development: education, entrepreneurship, family planning, health and wellbeing, civic engagement and the media.

The Government affirmed this commitment by introducing a number of state-funded programmes, including: inclusive social services for vulnerable youth in difficult situations, scholarship programmes for talented students, youth policy grants and programmes, and a unique policy development and coordination body under the President with a designated representative for youth issues.

Strengthening the legislative environment for children

UNICEF is working closely with the Government of Turkmenistan to build national capacity to protect and promote child rights and improve access to quality child services.

UNICEF advocacy efforts led the Government to adopt the Law on the Guarantees and the Rights of the Child in 2014 and develop the National Action Plan for Children, which is currently pending approval. With UNICEF support, the Government also prepared its second, third and fourth reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the first report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UNICEF is also supporting the Government to implement the recommendations of these two committees.

With UNICEF support, Turkmenistan has also enacted new laws that contribute to an enabling environment for children related to human trafficking, gender equality, education and youth. The Government has adopted several codes governing child protection, including the Family Code and a new version of the Social Protection Code, which brought the age of marriage in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Labour Code have been updated to align with recommendations made by treaty bodies. The 2012 National Juvenile Justice Programme provides for more child-friendly processes.



Mainstreaming gender into laws and systems

With the support of UNFPA, the Government developed the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality in Turkmenistan 2015-2020, which requires a comprehensive review of current legislation to bring it in line with international treaties that Turkmenistan is a signatory to, including CEDAW. The Plan also calls for an analysis of Turkmen legislation to identify the gender-related impacts of laws adopted in recent years.

As part of this support, UNFPA also built the capacity of the Academy of Civil Service to include gender topics in the courses provided to mid-level decision makers. Some 60 Academy students attended the course and gained basic knowledge of gender in public administration. A cutting edge gender e-course was also developed and made available to Academy students.

In addition, UNFPA has supported hundreds of statisticians from the State Statistics Committee to advance the use of contemporary methods and technologies to collect, process and analyse gender-segregated data. Gender-informed and reliable data are key to effectively mainstreaming gender into laws, systems and national action plans.

Strengthening human development



Priority area 2

Strengthening human development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

With its bold economic and social reform agenda, the Government of Turkmenistan has pledged to make tangible improvements in people's lives, particularly for its most vulnerable citizens. The country is investing in education and health services to increase wellbeing, as well as national productivity and competitiveness in the global marketplace. This includes strengthening the quality of and access to primary health care and early learning, accelerating progress towards the nutrition-related MDGs and continuing to reform health and education policies and procedures.

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UNDAF outcome 2:

By 2015, human resources developed to achieve sustained socioeconomic development

National priorities:

- Free education and a set of free state-guaranteed health services for all;
- Sustainable natural growth; Decreased mortality, especially infant mortality;
- Increased life expectancy;
- Social protection for citizens

Relevant MDGs:

- MDG-2: Achieve universal primary education
- MDG-4: Reduce child mortality
- MDG-5: Improve maternal health
- MDG-6: Combat HIV, malaria and other diseases





○ The United Nations in action



The United Nations is supporting the Government to revise and approve the standard scope and content of primary health care services. This involves developing the capacities of primary health care institutions to deliver services, including for maternal and child health, tuberculosis control, sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS.

Ensuring that more people, particularly women and children in rural areas, receive quality primary health care services

The United Nations is supporting the Government to revise and approve the standard scope and content of primary health care services. This involves developing the capacities of primary health care institutions to deliver services, including for maternal and child health, tuberculosis control, sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS.



Strengthening human development

Tuberculosis control project

With funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNDP and the Government are working together to reduce the burden of tuberculosis in Turkmenistan and scale up the management of drug resistant strains. Already tuberculosis rates are decreasing every year.

A key achievement has been reaching people in remote areas with drug-resistance testing and the correct treatment. Today, diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis is done within two hours in all regions in the country. Treatment of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is provided not only in hospitals, but also in outpatient settings. All MDR-TB patients and their families also receive comprehensive psychosocial support

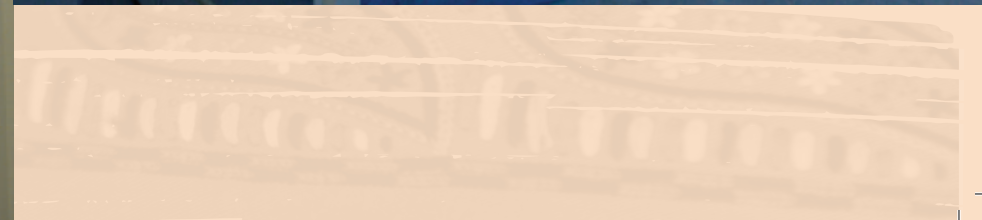
In addition, between 2010 and 2014, more than 3,000 health workers were trained in quality diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis and nearly 500 community leaders were trained in the distribution of tuberculosis information and fighting tuberculosis-related stigma.

This work complements the work of the Government's National Tuberculosis Programme, which plans to further scale up prevention and treatment measures.

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework

Turkmenistan was among the first four countries in the WHO European Region to benefit from the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) framework, a WHO-supported partnership between industry, civil society and governments aimed at improving pandemic preparedness and access to antiviral medicines and vaccines.

In Turkmenistan, PIP project activities have included training 45 clinicians on clinical management of patients with severe forms of influenza infection and training 10 working group members on developing operational outbreak investigation and response guidelines. In addition, study tours have been conducted to influenza centres and laboratories in Russia and technical assistance missions have been carried out to support the Government with influenza surveillance and response.



AYGUL'S STORY

Making family planning a priority in Turkmenistan⁸

Aygul, 23, nearly lost her life when she developed complications during labour due to a heart condition. Fortunately, she was rushed from her home in rural Turkmenistan to Ashgabat, the capital city, just in time. Under the care of a cardiologist, Aygul successfully gave birth to a baby girl.

"I've had heart problems since I was a teenager," Aygul explained. "When I got married, I didn't realize it could become a threat."

Following her close call, Aygul began receiving reproductive health supplies, which will enable her to prevent another pregnancy until she has received treatment for her condition and fully recovered.

Like many other countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Turkmenistan is stepping up efforts to help at-risk women access reproductive health supplies to promote family planning practices, acknowledging that when women are empowered to choose the number, spacing and timing of their children, they face fewer complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and their children are healthier.

In 2014, Turkmenistan announced that it would fully cover the cost of modern reproductive health supplies in 2017. The initiative, extensively advocated for by UNFPA, shows growing national financial ownership and political will around voluntary family planning. These developments will help doctors to identify the most at-risk women and direct them to local reproductive health centres like the one that saved Aygul's life.

With the integrated standards of health care, the national capacity in women's reproductive health and family planning services was strengthened by UNFPA through training of more than 2,500 family doctors and obstetricians, and ensured around 340 of maternal deaths and 63,580 of unsafe abortions averted in this five year period.



Focusing on adolescents, the Y-PEER Youth Center in Ashgabat primary goal is to provide peer education that promotes a healthy reproductive lifestyle. Nearly 3,400 youth have adopted the healthy lifestyle encouraged through the peer education offered at the Centre.



ARSLAN'S STORY

Taking a holistic approach to children with disabilities

Arslan, 4, was hit by a car last year and paralyzed from the top down. He cannot stand alone anymore: he needs a leg prosthesis and uses a walker. At the time of the accident, there were no facilities in Turkmenistan specifically tailored to children with disabilities. Arslan had to go to adult hospitals to seek treatment.

In early 2015, UNICEF supported the Government of Turkmenistan to establish the Early Intervention Centre at the Mother and Child Healthcare Centre in Ashgabat. (Currently Training and Research Centre of the State Medical University, Ashgabat). The Centre welcomes children like Arslan with disabilities and developmental delays. Before, physical or mental disabilities were handled only from a medical perspective in Turkmenistan. Now, the new Centre and others like it take a more holistic approach to disabilities and rehabilitation. Each child is individually assessed and receives a personalized programme.

Fully immersed in a rehabilitation programme that is half physical therapy and half cognitive development, Arslan's mobility is already improving. He wants to come to the Centre every day. His mother, a doctor herself, is impressed with the services her son is enjoying and the pace of his progress. "It is an amazing place where Arslan can see all his doctors, we no longer need to run from a hospital to the other to see different doctors for his treatments," she said. "I can already see a big difference."

Arslan's parents wish he could stay longer, but the facility is small and crowded and other children are in need of care. The Government and UNICEF hope to replicate this initiative in other hospitals around the country to give more children like Arslan a chance to walk again, and have fun during the rehabilitation process.

Arslan's father Fashad encourages his son to use the colourful child-sized treadmill at the Early Intervention Centre.



Creating equal opportunities for quality education at all levels

The United Nations is emphasizing quality education and rearing for all school-aged children and their families, particularly in rural areas and for vulnerable groups. Key approaches include supporting the Government to develop and implement an education strategic plan to strengthen professional skills and develop standards and procedures for including disadvantaged children in the education system.

Promoting early childhood development⁹

UNICEF has been providing high-calibre technical expertise to review and strengthen children's access to and the quality of integrated and inclusive early childhood development services, including early interventions, early learning and developmental paediatrics.

With technical support from UNICEF, the Government has developed the National Programme on Early Childhood Development and School Readiness 2011-2015, which aims to increase school readiness among girls and boys, strengthen parents' knowledge and skills and develop a comprehensive monitoring system. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education to develop a pre-primary education programme for parenting centres for school readiness and positive parenting.

As part of this work, UNICEF supported the Government of Turkmenistan to open new early childhood development centres in Ashgabat City and Turkmenabat City in 2012. The centres are inclusive, serving all children in need, including children with disabilities. Parents learn about early childhood development and acquire essential skills, and children without access to formal preschool education or with developmental difficulties receive inclusive services. These forms of community-based family support services will continue to be scaled up throughout the country.



Arlsan, 4, plays with special education specialist and speech therapist Zara Suleymanova at the Yenme Public Association in Ashgabat, a UNICEF-supported NGO – the only centre of its kind in Turkmenistan – offering social support services for children with disabilities. The Government has pledged to provide a bigger space to enable Yenme to expand their programmes to more families in need.

Integrating vulnerable populations into comprehensive socioeconomic national and local policymaking

The United Nations is supporting national authorities to strengthen legislative and institutional frameworks for social protection for people with disabilities. Local executive authorities, self-governing bodies and communities are enhancing the delivery of social services to vulnerable groups through capacity development and exposure to international best practices.

Social inclusion of people with disabilities

Over fifty women with disabilities participated in a special UNDP-supported 20-day course to promote social inclusion and greater engagement of people with disabilities in policy-making. The training was designed to strengthen the leadership capacities of women with visual and hearing impairments from the Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan.

UNDP is working closely with the Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan to support their full participation in society. In addition to trainings, the work also involves bringing national legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, promoting employment opportunities and increasing public awareness.

So far, 140 women with hearing and visual impairments and 22 women leaders with visual impairments have gained knowledge on human rights and legal issues. Another 14 persons with disabilities located in rural areas have gained employment.

The 20-day course, which was organized by UNDP with funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund, enabled the women leaders to forge new relationships with other leaders, professionals and researchers, as well as with the other training participants.





“We came away with so many good things from the course,” said 37-year old Leyla, one of the project beneficiaries. “Above all, I think we now have the motivation and skills we need to play a much more active role in disability organizations.”





Priority area 3

Improving sustainable development and inclusive growth

With its thriving energy import industry and large cotton and wheat production, economic growth has raised the standards of living for the Turkmen people. To support the sustainability of this growth, and maintain those gains for all citizens, the country is investing in the capacity and legal basis of its private sector, and ensuring the development of small and medium-scale enterprises. This includes investing in entrepreneurial skills, particularly for young people, so the workforce can meet market demands all over the country; and effectively addressing key environmental issues, such as water availability, overexploitation of natural resources, and greenhouse gas emissions.

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2 Strengthening human development to achieve the MDGs

3 Improving sustainable development and inclusive growth

4 Promoting peace and security

UNDAF outcome 3:

By 2015, the system of environmentally sustainable economic management expands people's opportunities to participate in social and economic development, especially in rural areas

National priorities:

- A fast-growing, powerful State
- Socioeconomic development of world standards
- High living standards of the population

Relevant MDGs:

- MDG-1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- MDG-3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- MDG-7: Ensure environmental sustainability



We are very lucky to have all this work done together with UNDP and partners, because our land is no longer degraded and we have more pastoral land for cattle breeding. Fixing of the sand improved the microclimate in the area. We now have more houses in the villages and bigger settlements. People can have their families in the same place and not scattered around Karakum.”

Head of the Farm II of the Union of Farmers of Darvaza Region



○ The United Nations in action

Developing policies for inclusive growth and equality for women and men

The United Nations is supporting the Government to formulate and apply pro-poor macroeconomic policies, public financing strategies and national programmes to promote inclusive growth and employment, and increase economic, gender equality and social protection. National stakeholders are being supported to more effectively participate in global and regional agreements on trade, intellectual property and investment.

Taking action to promote gender equality in Turkmenistan¹⁰

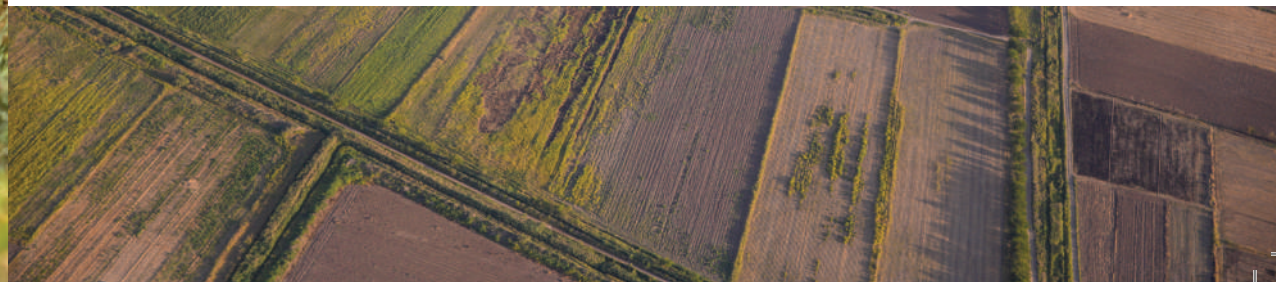
Despite their active participation in the nation's political and economic progress, Turkmen women are primarily seen as mothers, responsible for childcare and housekeeping.

A significant move towards closing the gap between law and reality was made with the Government's adoption of the first National Action Plan on Gender Equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020. UNFPA supported the Plan with extensive technical assistance and advocacy, including by organizing seminars, workshops and study tours to expose local officials to international best practices.

"The National Action Plan on Gender equality will help define more concrete and clear direction for work on gender issues in Turkmenistan," said Shemshat Atajanova, head of the Department of Human Rights, National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan.

"Implementation of the goals and objectives of the National Action Plan will make positive changes in women's enjoyment of their rights and will help the state fulfil its international obligations to ensure equal rights between men and women."

The Action Plan includes steps to create more gender-responsive legislation, raise awareness among women of their rights, assess the effectiveness of current mechanisms for gender equality, and transform and eliminate gender stereotypes, among other objectives.



Enabling environmentally sustainable use of natural resources

The United Nations is working to strengthen the capacity of national authorities to mainstream environmental issues into national priorities. Local communities are participating in introducing advanced, environmentally sustainable resource management practices. Education sector institutions are improving and implementing environmental education programmes in line with international standards.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

UNDP is helping Turkmenistan to fulfil its obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. This includes supporting the preparation of a new Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The Plan was based on two studies: “Nature and economics: Outcomes of economic evaluation of ecosystems in Turkmenistan” and “Guide on Ecosystem service, evaluation methods and adaptation in Turkmenistan.” By assigning economic values to the country’s ecosystem services (such as water resources, pastures and forestry management), these studies have helped put a price tag on nature.



Integrating climate change adaptation and preparedness into development

The United Nations is supporting the Government to formulate and implement a climate change strategy for the main economic sectors. Support is also enabling Turkmenistan to access carbon financing opportunities, establish a forecasting system and strengthen capacities for sustainable land and forest resource management.



The National Economic Program of Action on Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change

UNDP supported the development of the National Economic Program of Action on Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change (2016-2020), an inter-ministerial plan for implementing the Climate Change Strategy adopted in 2012. The Program includes steps for mitigating climate change by moving to a low carbon economy and adapting to climate change and increasing resilience to climate by more effectively managing water resources and protecting the environment.



Addressing climate change-related risks to farming

In response to climate change-induced water scarcity risks to local farming systems, UNDP is supporting the Government to strengthen water management practices at national and local levels. These efforts have led to the development of a package of modifications to the water code and new financial incentives for water efficiency. Already now this work had an impact on the activities of farmers on the ground:

- To improve soil moisture levels, more than 4,000 agri-pastoralists in the Nohur mountainous region have developed and implemented water harvesting and saving techniques such as slope terracing, small rainwater collection dams, contour and stone bunds, planting pits, tillage and mulching.
- More than 8,000 farmers have implemented community-based well and watering point management measures, including sand fixation and introduction of drought resistant traditional grain varieties in the Karakum desert region.
- More than 20,000 farmers in the Sakarchaga area are benefitting from improved irrigation services through the introduction of canal level, localized management practices.
- At least 40 per cent of farmers and pastoralists nationwide have benefitted from stronger mandates and the improved institutional functions of local associations that are making local water services more resilient to increasing water stress.



Promoting energy efficiency

Many of the old Soviet style buildings in the residential areas in and around Ashgabat do not meet energy efficiency requirements. With the support of UNDP, the Government has worked to revise out-dated building codes and construct new modern buildings with energy efficient technologies, such as low emission windows, heat meters and added insulation. The aim is to lower greenhouse gas emissions by improving energy management and reducing energy consumption in the residential sector. An analysis showed that there is great potential of energy saving using basic measures (such as insulating roofs, walls and windows and change cooling and heating systems) in current buildings.



Promoting peace and security



Priority area 4

Promoting peace and security

Although the countries of Central Asia, including Turkmenistan, have made great strides in developing independent national identities with strong models for statehood and growth, the region faces an array of new threats to peace, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, organized crime and environmental pressures that can supersede borders. Building national capacities in management of natural resources, regulating labour migration and managing risks associated with natural disaster, as well as strengthening economic integration among countries in the region can all impact longer-term peace building.

1 Strengthening democratization and the rule of law

2 Strengthening human development to achieve the MDGs

3 Improving sustainable development and inclusive growth

4 Promoting peace and security

UNDAF outcome 4:

By 2015, peace and security in Turkmenistan, both on the national level, as well as on the level of regional cooperation, are ensured in accordance with international standards

National priorities:

- Combating of illicit drug trafficking and organized crime strengthened
- Border management improved
- More effective preparedness and response to natural and manmade disasters

Relevant MDGs:

- MDG-1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- MDG-3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- MDG-6: Combat HIV, malaria and other diseases
- MDG-7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- MDG-8: Develop a global partnership for development



The United Nations is strengthening government capacity to implement transparent and gender-sensitive legislation to combat drugs, organized crime and human trafficking.





○ The United Nations in action

More effectively combatting illicit drug trafficking and organized crime

The United Nations is strengthening government capacity to implement transparent and gender-sensitive legislation to combat drugs, organized crime and human trafficking. Law enforcement personnel are becoming more efficient and accountable in the provision of security services. Improved data collection systems are enabling more effective law enforcement strategic planning. The United Nations is also raising awareness of the harmful effects of drugs, particularly among youth.

Improving the response to human trafficking issues

In 2014, IOM and the Government of Turkmenistan worked together to develop the Turkmenistan Strategy and National Action Plan on Combatting Human Trafficking, drawing on IOM's emphases on prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership in countering the human trafficking.

A 16-member working group comprised of representatives of state ministries, law enforcement agencies and NGOs drafted the document, which establishes a comprehensive framework for addressing human trafficking. The framework sets pragmatic objectives covering all aspects of the problem, including measures on prevention, social assistance, protection of victims and witnesses, investigation and prosecution and international cooperation.



Developing capacities for border and trade control

All goods and merchandise arriving to Ashgabat go through the International Customs Terminal. UNODC has worked hand in hand with national authorities to equip and train personnel of the terminal with state of the art technologies for screening goods and detecting suspicious items, and building the capacity and knowledge of customs officers.

As part of these efforts, a four day workshop, “Control on transit shipment at national, regional and international level” was held in Ashgabat in March 2015 with officers from the State Customs Service of Turkmenistan and officers of the State Service of Turkmenistan to Protect Security of a Healthy Society. The workshop aimed to build the capacities of national specialists on the issues of strategic and dual use of goods and enhance understanding of best practices related to export, import, transit control measures, including prevention, investigation, detection, information sharing and gathering, and risk profiling techniques.



Increasing efficiency, transparency, accountability, equity and gender-sensitivity of border management institutions

The United Nations has supported national border management to reflect international standards of knowledge, coordination, cooperation and technical capacity, including state-of-the-art technological upgrades. Support is strengthening cooperation and improving procedures with neighbouring countries with regard to legal cross-border trade. In particular, non-refoulement and refugee admission procedures at the border are being supported in line with international standards.



Strengthening capacities for integrated border management

The primary focus of the European Union and UNDP-funded Border Management in Central Asia Programme is to strengthen the capacities of the State Border Guard Service, State Migration Service, Customs and the State Service on Protecting the Security of a Healthy Society in different areas of border management. Topics included profiling, dog handling, narcotic drugs detection, epidemiological services, human trafficking, integrated border management and intelligence gathering. Altogether more than 250 representatives were trained, and law enforcement practitioners had the opportunity for greater interaction.



Resilient children, safe communities¹¹

Kamila, 16, is well aware of the risks of flooding in the Lebap region where she lives, as well as the steps to take to prepare for future emergencies. She and her classmates have acquired life-saving skills at their school in Turkmenabat, which was selected as a pilot school for the disaster risk reduction initiative introduced in 2013. Run by the Government, UNICEF and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the project aims to raise awareness of disaster risk among schoolchildren and build resilience to emergencies.

“When there is a flood, we should not panic and act very fast to save our lives and the lives of our families,” Kamila told UNICEF. “We need to run to the highest

point in the city and carry a bag with water, documents and some basic items.” She recommends Castle Amul, not only a historical site, but also the highest point in the city.

The Government of Turkmenistan has certified Kamila’s school as child-friendly, a designation, which includes adherence to specific disaster risk reduction indicators meant to ensure a safe and protective environment for students. Moving forward, UNICEF and ECHO will mainstream disaster risk reduction into the national education system and develop a school safety assessment tool to ensure compliance with disaster risk reduction indicators.

Developing capacities to practice more effective planning, response to and mitigation of the consequences of disasters

The United Nations is supporting the implementation of a national framework and a regional coordination mechanism to address the consequences of natural and manmade disasters. Local communities are being empowered with enhanced awareness and capacity to sustainably manage natural and other resources and mitigate and adapt to the impact of natural and manmade disasters. The United Nations is also supporting government authorities to adopt and implement preparedness plans and agreements.

Protecting the health and wellbeing of women and girls during emergencies

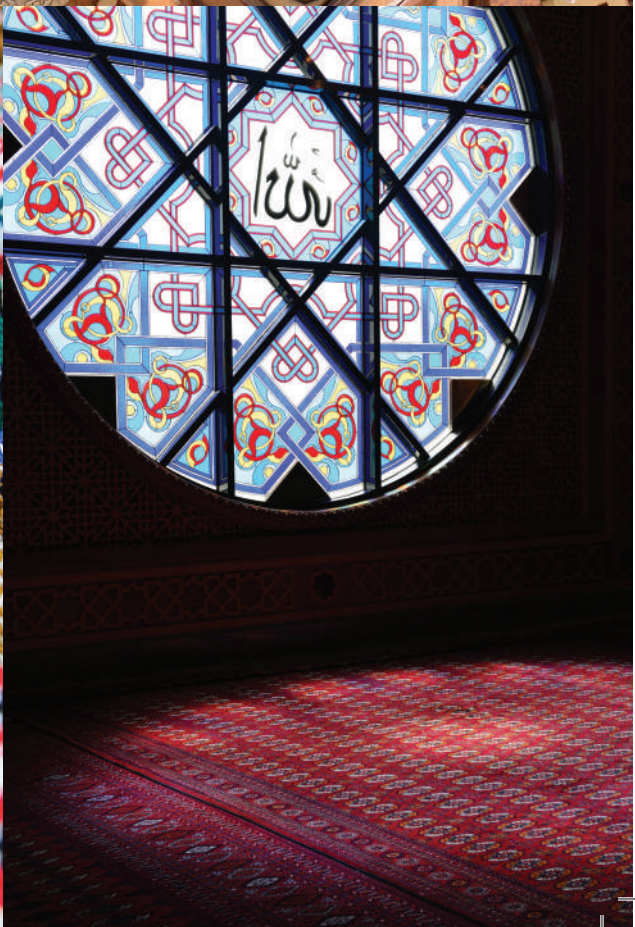
With dedicated advocacy and support from UNFPA, and thanks to close partnership with the Government, civil society and international organizations, the Government endorsed the National Action Plan on the Minimum Initial Reproductive Health Service Package (MISP) in 2014. This key framework addresses the risks of complications during pregnancy and delivery, sexual and gender-based violence, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections including HIV, with the goal of reducing mortality, morbidity and disability among populations affected by crisis, particularly women and girls. Already, 74 national specialists have been trained on MISP in disaster prone zones. As capacity increases on MISP, so will national readiness to provide timely and comprehensive reproductive health care and social protection services in emergency situations.¹²





Endnotes

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