

### *press release*

**Situation Analysis on children and adolescents in Uzbekistan launched**

*…. analysis show huge equity gains made in areas of health and education and impressive statutory successes in child protection*

**TASHKENT, 8 October 2024** – Today, UNICEF and The Commissioner of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Children’s Rights have launched the Situation Analysis (SitAn) of Children and Adolescents in Uzbekistan. The analysis shows an impressive expansion and access to social services, with near universal coverage in education and health, improvement in policies and laws in the best interests of children, but the report also highlights key areas to accelerate results for children and adolescents.

"This Analysis focuses on the situation of children and adolescents of Uzbekistan from the perspective of critical human rights principles such as equality, non-discrimination, equity, with particular attention to equitable opportunities and outcomes for all children,” said Surayo Rakhmonova, Commissioner of the Oliy Majlis for Children's Rights. “Undoubtedly, it can serve as a valuable tool for policy development and programme design aimed at improving the well-being of children and adolescents in Uzbekistan."

Uzbekistan has made significant progress in providing access to universal health coverage (UHC) to its population, reflected by marked improvements in primary health care access and quality delivery. The introduction of a state health insurance program under the Uzbekistan 2030 strategy further underscores this commitment, targeting early death causes and aiming to increase life expectancy. However, gaps remain. Despite high reported vaccination coverage, approximately 9,000 zero-dose children still exist. Further, the is stigma and limited access to prevention services pose challenges, with only 31% of children and adolescents living with HIV on antiretroviral therapy.

The country has impressive primary school enrolment rates standing at 99 per cent in 2021-2022. Preschool enrolment increased from less than 30 per cent in 2017 to over 73 per cent in 2024, with nearly 2 million children benefiting from early education programmes during the 2022-2023 period. Meanwhile, digital learning and ICT access increased with 94 per cent of schools having internet access. However, quality of education, particularly in terms of foundational skills and competencies, remains a concern. Further, much work is needed around inclusive education.

Uzbekistan has made significant strides in enhancing its institutional reforms and legal framework for child protection. For instance, the ‘Law on protecting children from all forms of violence’ was approved by the Senate of Oliy Majlis and currently is pending the signature of the President. In the framework of childcare reform, Uzbekistan closed 23 childcare institutions in the past two years, transitioning 2,448 children to family and community-based care. Notwithstanding huge strides made, children with disabilities are still overrepresented in residential care, with 79 per cent of all children in residential care having a disability and much work needs to be done on Family support and reintegration services.

Uzbekistan demonstrated global leadership by facilitating the repatriation and reintegration of women and children associated with foreign fighters. As a result of Mehr campaigns, more than 500 women and children returned to Uzbekistan.

Achievements in social protection, include the establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection, which will advance a coherent social protection agenda in Uzbekistan. However, the limited fiscal space constrains the expansion of programmes on social protection. For instance, the number of children receiving child benefits were cut in the first quarter of 2024.

“The recommendations of the SitAn are vital for evidence-based decision making in key sectors working with children and will be instrumental in informing our next programme cycle between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF, in line with the National Strategy 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals,” said Regina Castillo, UNICEF Representative in Uzbekistan. “UNICEF remains committed to supporting the Government of Uzbekistan in its progressive realization of children’s rights, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children and adolescents,” she added.

The SitAn was developed with the engagement of key stakeholders, including representatives of line ministries and NGOs as well as people and children with disabilities. Findings of this report confirm substantial progress made by Uzbekistan over the last five years and identifies areas where improvements are needed. The last SitAn was done in Uzbekistan in 2019-2020.

**Note for editors:**

Full report is available on the UNICEF Uzbekistan website www.unicef.uz.

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