

EDUCATION

1. What steps has the Government taken in promoting education for all young people?

Today, access to the qualitative education is reducing in Tajikistan. The reason is a lack of state and local budget, weak governance and decline of physical infrastructure, shortage of teachers and their low salary, obsolete teaching plans, poverty and malnutrition, and absence of parents and society participation. On preliminary calculations, by 2015 already overloaded educational sector is going to accept more 50 % of student. So, there is a treat that the level of education and level of literacy will rapidly reduce.

Tajikistan is a member of Dakar Conference on Education. The country has adopted 5 educational programmes.

Remarkable strength of the Government and donors is in assisting of rehabilitation of education system. Conceptual documents, action plans and legislation for determining goals, budget and requirements for the reformation of education system are developing. The documents are the following: Law on Education 1993, National plan of Development of Education Sector for 2003-2010, National Report on Education for all – 2000, National concept of Education of the republic of Tajikistan – 2002 and Poverty Reduction Strategy paper, that consists of 43 concrete recommendations for education sector. However, the budget for education is very small and has only 2.6% from GGP.

According to the Law on Education, Article 4, the education shall be accessible for everybody, but the state funded educational system has suffered from severe decline in available resources and years of social and economic dislocation. Although school attendance is in theory compulsory for nine years, in practice many children have to work to alleviate family hardship. Many schoolteachers also supplement their meager salaries by working in agricultural fields, raising animals or selling goods at local bazaars. Tajikistan is now facing a situation where the younger generation is less skilled than the older that were brought up under Soviet State.

Public expenditure for one student was reduced from 48.5 USD in 1993 to 19.5 USD in 1998, means in 2.5 times. In poor families, due to absence of warm clothes children are not able to attend the school.

According to the official data during the civil war 60 000 people were killed, mostly peaceful population, among them 60 000 (UNICEF estimations) children left orphans. During the last two years, more than 10 boarding (orphanages) opened, but the institutions are not sufficient.

Another problem for Tajikistan is the “Illiterate generation” in the zones affected by the civil war. One generation of children didn’t have access to the school and have to catch up missed time/study programme. So, in order to solve the problem, the Government established “Evening schools” for the above-mentioned category of children. The majority of students at the evening schools were boys, whereas one generation of girls left uneducated.

In Tajikistan there are conservative regions, where girls are not allowed to go to school, so the Government has implemented a campaign on attracting girls to the schools. Committee of women is to establish in the villages and districts.

In order to motivate the student to get education the Government extends Presidential stipend for talented students. Today, 1000 students receive the stipend.

The problems in receiving proper education are the following:

1. Quality of education
 2. Technical provision of the school
 3. Education coverage (girls education)
 4. Socio-Economic Situation of the country
- 2. Has the National school curriculum been reformed? If so, what have been the major changes? What have been the successes and constraints?**

The changes in education curriculum are the following:

- On the National Level the priority of education provision has changed, if before Russian and Soviet history was the priority, nowadays the education concentrates more on Tajikistan's history.
- Secondly, by the presidential edict all schools were supposed to be computerized. But, due to financial hardship, the
 - Financial support didn't accompany the edict
 - Teaching staff was not trained
 - Electric supply doesn't cover all regions, especially during wintertime, hence the computerization was not effective so far.
- New subjects were introduced to the school curriculum such as:
 - Ecology/Environment
 - Ethics of Family life
 - Healthy lifestyle
 - Human rights (with the assistance of OSCE and IFES)

The main constrain is financial aspect. The textbooks for the said subjects were developed but were not published. The teachers were not trained accordingly. The level of teaching is very low.

One basic problem why children don't want to get further education is the absence of motivation. Higher education is not very much required to have a good livelihood.

3. Does the National School Curriculum promote gender equality? Does it embrace a multi – cultural/multi-ethnic society?

Gender Equality - The government has accepted all recommendations of the world community. The textbooks are getting gender expertise. There is a working group on gender under the Ministry of Education. Teachers participated at the gender training and conduct courses on Gender and Culture. In 1998, the Government attempted to address the deteriorating situation of women in Tajikistan adopting a National Plan of Action to Improve the Situation of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period of 1998-2005. It is also developed a State Programme entitled Main Direction of State policies for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women in Tajikistan for 2001 to 2010. The programme takes education as a priority and recommends quotas for women entering higher education, grants stipend and financial assistance to girls, created learning centers for young women and discusses gender issues in the mass media.

However, fewer girls than boys attend school on average in Tajikistan. Girls often stay at home caring for their siblings and performing household and agricultural tasks. Poverty increasing costs of education, decreasing prestige of education and the re-emergence of traditional gender roles have been cited for non-attendance of schools.

Problems:

- Number of directors- women remarkably decreased
- After 9th grade the number of girls is reduced by 40%
- High Education is not the priority for children
- Migration is the best way to earn money, rather than furthering the education

Ethnic, national society - Tajikistan is a multinational country. Basic nationalities are Tajiks (68, 8%), Uzbeks (24,9), Russian (3%), others (3.3%). The Secondary education is provided for everyone on 5 languages - Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, Kyrgyz and Turkmen. The basic problem for the minority schools is textbooks. There is an agreement between Russian Federation and Kyrgystan for provision of textbooks, whereas due to change of alphabet in Uzbekistan, the books cannot be used. This creates major problem for Uzbek schools.

4. In what ways has your government made a commitment to life-long education? What about distance education?

Since the collapse of Soviet Union, the Government doesn't have enough resources to provide life – long education. Currently, the sphere is not functioning at its full capacity. Mostly, international donors and organizations conduct vocational trainings, courses and seminars for the citizens of Tajikistan.

The distance education is a new formulation for the republic. Although the Government accepts it, on the national level the distance education is not functioning. The country is not properly computerized, so the establishment of distance education is complicated, upsides with other accompanying reasons.

In the republic only one Russian-Tajik Humanitarian University is specializing on distance education in conjunction with Russian Ministry of Education.

IREX (programmes of USAID) conduct courses on distance learning.

5. Is non-formal education promoted by the government? Is it recognized by employers?

Non – formal Education is not very much developed in Tajikistan, but there is a separate department at the Ministry of Education. There are several centers of non-formal education, but not as much developed as it was during the Soviet era.

More attention paid to non-formal education from the INGO/NGO sides. There are seminars and debates on:

- a) Law education/Human rights education
- b) AIDS/HIV
- c) Gender, Tolerance
- d) Healthy lifestyle
- e) Ecology

6. Is education at all levels equally accessible for young people independently of their economic status?

For primary and secondary education, as it was mentioned at the beginning, the education is accessible for everybody and it is free. But nowadays, due to economic constraint, children from poor family forced to work instead of going to school. Almost all schools are free, except for some private schools.

Higher education is also partially free, so ideally children despite their economic status can receive the education. But in reality it is difficult to enter university without payment. Nowadays, the corruption is prevailing.

7. Have NGO/Youth organizations been active in promoting education for youth? What about youth –to –youth (peer education) programmes?

Peer education is vital element in youth programmes, but this approach is not yet fully recognized by governmental agencies and NGOs. There are examples of young people being involved in a participatory capacity as volunteers, working with NGOs and government. There are youth organizations working on HIV/AIDS, the volunteers providing information to school students and young people who do not attend school. The reproductive health youth committee is about to open a new office to distribute information and provide young people with access to Internet. The direct participation of young people in the development and implementation of policy and programmes related to them is defined in Clause 2 of the state Youth Policy Law. This law stipulates that youth participation should be made through public youth unions. However, the socio-political activities of these unions are currently low in Tajikistan. Generally, young people are not involved in designing, management and monitoring of services provided for them.

According to the available data, there are 140 youth organizations are registered at the Ministry of Justice, but in fact they hardly understand the objective they shall pursue. Most of the organizations are less sustainable and have to rely only on donors.

UNCEF have conducted programme for Youth training and 20 youth received training in order to have peer to peer education, but the second step is not very much developed, because children are not motivated.

8. In what ways has the government targeted particular groups (e.g. indigenous groups, migrants, refugees, street children, poor children, youth with disabilities) in education efforts?

Vital problem for today's Tajikistan is a problem of street children, number of who is increased in the aftermath of civil war. According to the available data, everyday 5 000 children go to the street for earning, frequently they are sent by parents. For the last time, approximately 70 % of drug takers are youth below 25 years old.

25 % of children are classified as currently working (either paid or unpaid domestic work).

Children refugees is also one of the vital problem, children are in need of support and care, they face psychological reintegration and adjustment to new conditions of living, as well as alleviation of their backwardness in studies. For bringing them into normal life, NGO with the Governmental support try to establish proper conditions for them. So, it is planned to establish

hotlines, train required psychologists and teachers, doctors. Currently, various programmes are under the consideration.

Youth with Disabilities - During Soviet era the Government put lots of efforts for improvement of living conditions of disable youth. Currently, psychological - medical – pedagogical committee is responsible for finding people with disabilities, but the commissions are not very much effective due to insufficient financing.

Ministry of Education runs 52 residential schools for orphaned children, children from single –parent families and children without familial care and children from poor families. In 2002 these schools hosted 9 036 children including 2487 girls (27,5%).

According to the available data approximately 160 000 disable children of pre-schooling age are in the list to be assisted, but only 4.6 % receives medical assistance and rehabilitation. In Tajikistan there are special schools and colleges for disable children and youth, but due to brain drain, lack of personnel and poor technical conditions, the schools are in devastating conditions. Hence, the life of children and youth with disabilities is getting poor and poor year by year. Some children due to inappropriate condition of specialized schools are forced to go to normal schools where the adequate medical support is not provided. Some children have to remain at home, and remain isolated from the society.

National education entities set the appropriate quotas for the acceptance of disabled and orphaned children to secondary special and higher educational institutions in accordance with the individual rehabilitation programme on a non-competitive basis (clause 34 of Disabled Social Security Law of Tajikistan). The law provides for children with disabilities to enroll on secondary specialized and higher educational institutions without entrance exams. Despite this, in the 2001/2002 academic year only 15 disabled children enrolled in secondary school, 13 of them were girls. 9 disabled young people one of them a girl, enrolled in higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Labour and Social protection established quotas for organizations to employ people with disabilities. In 2001, a quota of 722 was set, although only 100 individuals with disabilities secured jobs.

It is important to mention, that currently, International NGOs, Donors and Local NGOs are playing important role in helping to find a solution to solve the problem and provide assistance to the children refugees, handicapped, street children and poor.

9. What are the factors that hinder young people from going to or remaining in school?

Widespread poverty is the main reason why the children are out of schools. Some parents force the children to go and earn instead of going to school. In rural areas, children should work on the field due to absence of machinery and proper equipment. Another factor is a lack of motivation. Education is not a priority for children. Most popular is migration to Russia, where youth could get good salary, without studying. The quality of education as it was mentioned above and lack of supporting materials, like books, computers etc. Poverty is also a determining factor in young women becoming sex workers to find their studies or support their families.

YOUTH AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

1. Does legislation exist that prohibits the use of child / youth soldiers?

According to the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan people who didn't reach 18 is prohibited to go to army. Also, if the family has only one son the son is exempted from army.

Youth, entered for higher education are exempted from army till they complete the education.

2. Are there government programmes that seek to prevent the root causes of conflict? What about NGO programmes? Are young people involved in planning, implementation and evaluation of such programmes?

Youth is not very much involved in planning, implementation and evaluation of the programmes.

Ideally, the regulation on participation of Youth in preparation of draft legal instruments of republican importance has been issued in December 1997. The supervising body is a Youth Center, but in reality, the activity of youth unions is at the low level. At the community level, youth participation in the development and implementation of prevention, information, and advisory programmes is currently being formulated. Youth participation in large cities takes place at a community level through peer education programmes. For instance, Adolescent Volunteer Clubs were established at the end of 2000. Reproductive Health clubs were established with the support of UNFPA. The objectives of clubs are trainings in the areas of reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, substance use prevention, distribution of information and advice provision on peer education.

The NGO's are also very much participate and active in education of Youth in various spheres.

3. Are there government programmes focused on the demobilization and reintegration of child/youth soldiers? Are services available for youth, including HIV prevention, sexual exploitation prevention, and special protection measures for girls, and protection for orphans and children separated from their families?

National laws

HIV / AIDS is acknowledged as a problem of political level. The state has adopted the State Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention in 1993 that stipulated social protection, treatment, access to education and employment and pensions. Non-discrimination and family support is also mentioned in the law. First programme on HIV was approved in 1995. A strategic plan of the National response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic for the period of 2002-2004 was elaborated. The Youth Committee has collaborated with the government in the development of the HIV/AIDS programme and conducted educational seminars and trained volunteers in peer education.

Sexual exploitation - The criminalisation of prostitution (clause 238 of Criminal Code of Tajikistan), the organization or maintenance of brothel, procuring women or trading in prostitution (clause 239 of Criminal code) are defined as criminal activities.

Illicit drugs – Tajikistan is located in the region where opium poppies are grown and is on the illegal drug trade route, with drug being traded across the border with Afghanistan.

Clause 201 of the Criminal Code defines procurement, storage and transport of illicit drugs as illegal.

Although there are new laws and regulations, but the rights of children are not very much protected. For example Juvenile Justice, pervasive poverty and the high rate of unemployment put young people at risk of coming into conflict with the law through their involvement in petty crimes. Tajikistan is a key route for cross border trafficking of narcotics, adolescents are reportedly involved, many of them becoming addicts. The juvenile justice system is weak and adolescents are given the same treatment as adults when they commit crimes. There is no separate juvenile court. Existing juvenile justice legislation and practice are not in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and international standards. There are no programmes for physical and psychological recovery, no programmes for social reintegration of juveniles who have come into conflict with the law. (UN, 2002).

4. Are their policies and programmes that focus on long-term investment in education, psychological support, vocational training, and other types of support for families and communities?

Taking into consideration that Tajikistan is a new country, and requires huge investments; there are many programmes to be implemented in the sphere of education. Mostly, the programmes are supported and financed by international donors.

5. Are young people's rights and concerns taken into consideration in all phases of peacemaking and peace building? How are young people and youth organizations involved in such activities?

The Children's Rights Committee of Tajikistan (CRCT) under the Government of Tajikistan coordinates all activities on rights and child protection (in accordance with UN recommendations and legislation of RT). The CRCT is an executive body and has a public child's rights watch, as well as specialized expert and working groups who are designing a strategy on children's rights.

After the civil war young people and youth organizations in conjunction with international NGOs approach the topic of peace building more seriously. They conduct seminars, debates, and trainings in peace-making activity and prevention of war. There are a lot of reading materials and manuals.