

## Uzbekistan

### Update on the context and situation of children

The country's political environment remains stable, apart from the protests against the proposed constitutional amendments in July 2022 in the Region of Karakalpakstan (RoK). The initial draft amendments included changes related to eliminating its sovereign status. The President visited the regional capital Nukus right after the protests and stated that the changes associated with the status of the RoK would be excluded from the draft.

At the international level, Uzbekistan continued to pursue a robust diplomatic agenda despite the potentially destabilizing effects of the ongoing Afghanistan crisis, the war in Ukraine and the escalation of the conflict between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Regarding Afghanistan, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) has strategically positioned and proactively promoted the importance of providing support to Afghanistan to address immediate and humanitarian needs. It has invited the international community to utilize its infrastructure in Termez (a city bordering Afghanistan) as a humanitarian logistical hub. In September 2022, Termez Cargo Center (TCC) was granted the status of International Humanitarian Hub, which is actively used by UN entities and its member states.

Despite shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, Uzbekistan's economy has shown resilience. International financial organizations raised their original growth projection for 2022 from 3.5 to 5.5 per cent. Inflation hit above 12 per cent in the second half of the year, with the key inflationary factor being the increase in food prices. According to UNICEF regional analysis of the impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on the situation of children, in the case of Uzbekistan, an additional 179,128 individuals, including 89,000 children, are projected to fall into poverty.

The GoU adopted its five-year Development Strategy for 2022-2026 in January 2022. The strategy's overarching goal is to achieve upper-middle-income status by 2030 and to reduce poverty by half by 2026. One of the target goals is a 1.6 increase in the gross domestic product per capita and the per capita income to reach US\$4,000 by 2030. Prominently reflected in the strategy are actions towards enhancing justice and the rule of law, developing inclusive social policy and human capital development, increasing vocational education and access to high-quality pre-school coverage, and protecting the environment.

Uzbekistan is undergoing a widespread and structural transformation that has touched all aspects of society. In December 2022, the President announced a public administration reform that reduced the number of state institutions from 61 to 28. It still needs to be determined which entities will be assigned as the national authority for child protection and which will be responsible for social protection. The role and responsibility of the national gender machinery is unlikely to change much and will remain focusing on localized actions. The President further announced substantial reforms in the health and education sectors and declared 2023 as the Year of Quality Education.

Uzbekistan has demonstrated increased commitment to addressing children and families' vulnerability to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses. The number of vulnerable families receiving cash benefits has increased by 75 per cent, from 1.2 million in 2021 to 2.1 million in 2022. This includes a total of 4.6 million children, more than 55,500 caregivers of children with disabilities and more than 2,400 women working in the private sector who now receive partial maternity benefits. In commemorating World Children's Day, the GoU signed the Declaration on Children, Youth and

On 16 August 2022, an agreement was signed between Switzerland and Uzbekistan on the restitution of funds to be returned to the people of Uzbekistan through an UN-managed trust fund - the Uzbekistan 2030 Vision Fund. The Fund is designed to support principled, transparent, and effective asset restitution via programmes accelerating Uzbekistan's national reform agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The first resource allocation strategy will prioritize two third of a total of US\$131 million in committed funds against two strategic priorities directly related to UNICEF's mandate, i.e., perinatal care and public education.

Uzbekistan's fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was considered by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child at its 91st session, and concluding observations were issued in October 2022. The Committee urges the GoU to take urgent measures in the following areas: respect for the views of the child, violence against children, children deprived of a family environment, children with disabilities, and health and education services with a particular emphasis on gender gaps. In response, the GoU has developed a national plan of action to implement the recommendations of the Committee.

In 2022, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has considered the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan. In its concluding observations, the Committee, among others, raises concerns about the high incidence of gender-based violence in Uzbekistan and urges the GoU to enhance women and girls' access to justice and victim support services and protection and to address persistent gender stereotypes.

The sixth round Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) was carried out in 2021-2022 by the State Committee on Statistics, with support from UNICEF and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The previous MICS was conducted 15 years ago, presenting an essential gap in reliable data on children and women in the country. According to the Survey, Uzbekistan has progressed well in the areas of child survival, early learning and education, however, more effort is required to consolidate these gains and invest in other areas that are still lagging, such as infant feeding practices, the protection of children from all forms of violence, and adolescent mental health.

In December 2022, the death of 20 children was reported after Dok-1 Max cough syrup consumption. The casualties were caused by a toxic substance called ethylene glycol. The announcement comes after MoH investigated reports of children showing acute renal failure in several regional hospitals. These tragic events have once again revealed concerns about the uncontrolled use of medicines and self-treatment among the population.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2022, guided by Uzbekistan's national development plans and sectoral priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UNICEF Country Programme 2021-2025, UNICEF continued supporting and seizing opportunities created by reforms initiated by the GoU, with a strong focus on addressing exclusion and inequalities.

UNICEF contributed to the implementation of the UNHCR-led Afghanistan Situation Refugee Response Plan for 2022 with critical interventions in the areas of health, education, child protection, water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), and social protection, benefiting both host communities and Afghan nationals in Uzbekistan, especially in the most southern region, Surkhandarya, which shares a direct border with Afghanistan. Assistance was made possible with the support from the European

Union (EU), the Governments of Japan, Romania and the United States, and UNICEF global humanitarian thematic funds.

## **Goal area 1. Every Child Survives and Thrives**

UNICEF continued to support the GoU to ensure every child survives and thrives through strengthening health systems. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in improving the quality of newborn and maternal healthcare services in targeted perinatal centres that served 383,000 newborns. Specifically, UNICEF supported the national scale-up of national service quality standards by enhancing the capacity of 70 perinatal centres' staff in implementing perinatal death audits (PDA). As a result, 28 of 217 maternities (13 per cent) fully implemented PDA.

In support of efforts to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis (MTCT), UNICEF supported the GoU in implementing activities reflected in the approved eMTCT roadmap, resulting in 900,000 women receiving comprehensive MTCT preventive services.

3.9 million children under-five and 844,152 (96.8 per cent) children under one were reached thanks to UNICEF-supported National Immunisation Programme through procuring vaccines and cold chain improvements. UNICEF improved the infrastructure of 21 cold stores, provided technical support in demand generation and vaccination monitoring for the Measles and Rubella Vaccine campaign, and developed a Vaccine Logistics Management Information System. As a result, 96.8 per cent of children under one received three doses of DPT and 98.9 per cent of the measles vaccine. Through UNICEF support, 72.5 million COVID-19 vaccines, including 201,600 paediatric doses, were delivered, with 52.1 per cent of the general population fully vaccinated.

A total of 131,938 girls aged 10-17 (100 per cent) in the RoK, one of the regions with the worst nutrition outcomes, were reached by UNICEF with iron and folic acid supplementation. UNICEF's deworming programme in the RoK reduced the prevalence of helminth infections from 12.6 per cent to 1.7 per cent in one year.

Six million students (50 per cent girls) enhanced their knowledge and skills on road safety, maintaining physical and mental health, life skills, prevention, and reduction of risky behaviours through the integration of the Health Literacy into the school curriculum. In cooperation with the Ministry of Public Education (MoPE), UNICEF supported the MoH in the introduction of the HPV vaccine among multi-cohort age groups of girls by focusing on teacher training and demand generation and community engagement. As a result, MoH vaccinated 94.4 per cent of girls 12-14 years (n=806,376) with two doses of the HPV vaccine.

More than 75,000 parents use the "Bebbo" mobile application to improve their knowledge and skills on parenting. The application helps UNICEF to promote gender equality by encouraging responsive male involvement in child health and development.

## **Goal area 2. Every Child Learns**

UNICEF continuously supported the national education reform agenda, leveraging new strategic partnerships and investments, acting as the partner of choice in the education sector following the appointment as Coordinating Agency of the Local Education Group. Key results have been achieved in foundational learning and education quality across pre-primary and basic education levels, in line with the commitments of the Transforming Education Summit. With UNICEF support, the GoU launched the development of a National Compact, which is expected to identify national education priorities for 2023-2026 and increase coordination efforts and education financing from the Government and Development Partners.

In early childhood education, pre-school enrollment rates (3-6 years old) increased 7 per cent in the academic year of 2022 compared to 2021, while enrollment of 6-year-olds in one-year pre-primary education reached 83.7 per cent in September 2022. Attendance gaps remain based on gender, rural and income disparities, as shown in MICS data. Responding to this, UNICEF focused on increasing the quality of pre-school education through the revision of pre-school curriculum, further modelling alternative multi-age and language playgroups, focusing on marginalized children. Ten new alternative centers benefiting 400 children were modelled in school premises and community centres, demonstrating benefits to entire communities. Building on this successful practice, UNICEF leveraged financing for early childhood education (ECE) with a new partnership of an additional US\$70 million between the Islamic Development Bank and the Ministry of Pre-School Education, to scale up the established alternative models in most disadvantaged areas.

In basic education, UNICEF continued supporting the MoPE in the development of a competency-based, gender-responsive and inclusive curriculum. More than two million students have benefited from the new textbooks in Math, Mother Language, and Science introduced in grades 1-3 and 6, while over 60,000 teachers (almost 10 per cent of all teachers) were trained on the new curriculum. The national education system benefited from the UNICEF review and upgrading of the new competency-based teacher professional standards that included gender competence were operationalized at the national level through face-to-face and online training programmes. In partnership with Innocenti and UNICEF Regional Office, new inclusive education resources for caregivers of children with disabilities were finalized and disseminated.

Supporting innovation and digital learning, the real-time monitoring of internet connectivity was further expanded, enabling the GoU to track the quality and speed of the internet across all 10,132 schools. An innovative public-private partnership model was launched, enabling schools to redistribute high-speed internet to households, businesses and other institutions around school catchment areas. It is estimated that each dollar invested will generate three dollars for the education sector. Additionally, more than 8,500 users are benefiting from the first-ever teacher training platform, “Bolalik Akademiyasi”, for early childhood education, launched based on the national curriculum and Early Learning and Development Standards. Its digital content will further support the in-service teachers’ training system in pre-school education.

### **Goal area 3. Every Child is Protected from Violence and Exploitation**

UNICEF continued to provide strategic guidance and support to the GoU in advancing childcare and protection reform. As a result, 6,983 children (44 per cent girls, 88 per cent children living with HIV, and 59 per cent children with disabilities) benefited directly and one million indirectly from UNICEF support and 2,800 professionals from child protection training.

A milestone in childcare reform has been the finalization of a strategy and roadmap on the deinstitutionalization of the childcare system for 2023-2030, aiming to reduce the number of children in institutional care by 80 per cent (from currently approx. 32,000 to less than 6,500) by 2030. Children with disabilities are at the centre of the reform as they constitute 75 per cent of children in institutional care. Eighteen video clips were produced with national experts raising awareness of the importance of children growing up in loving and caring family environments, expected to reach a wide audience of families, and health, education, and child protection professionals. Government efforts resulted in the closure of all four children’s towns, thirteen out of sixteen children’s orphanages (‘mehribonliks’) and two out of eleven baby homes.

UNICEF policy advocacy contributed to the issuance of Presidential Resolution #300 on enhancing the system of social services and assistance to families in need of social protection and the subsequent roll-out of social work case management in 200 communities in Surkhandarya region. Another milestone has been the finalization of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Child Protection, including

in Emergencies. These SOPs are the first-ever guiding document describing guiding principles, procedures, roles and responsibilities in the prevention of and response to violence, abuse and exploitation against girls and boys, aiming to ensure quality, consistency, and coordination in services.

A key step forward in advancing children's access to justice has been the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, which initiated the development of a strategy and programme of action on enhancing children's access to justice. The strategy is expected to lay the grounds for a more specialized child justice system and the introduction of non-judicial measures for children who have committed offences. In addition, 329 (53 per cent girls) local and Afghan children residing in Tashkent city and Tashkent and Surkhandarya regions received child-friendly legal aid.

UNICEF policy dialogue and advocacy contributed to adopting a four-year Government National Action Plan supporting women and children repatriated from conflict zones for 2022-2025. A total of 192 returned children and 59 returned women received continued reintegration assistance, provided by UNICEF under the leadership of the State Committee for Family and Women's Affairs, and in partnership with UN Women, the 'Tashkhis' Centre under the MoPE, the Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children and Barqaror Hayot NGO. Reintegration assistance included case management, psychosocial support and legal assistance.

#### **Goal area 4. Every Child Lives in a Safe and Clean Environment**

Uzbekistan became the first post-Soviet country to formally acknowledge the global leadership and calls of children and young people for urgent and immediate climate action, as well as their critical role as agents of change by signing the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action.

UNICEF supported the GoU to ensure every child has access to clean water and sanitation, particularly focusing on the Aral Sea region. UNICEF conducted a WASH Facility Improvement Assessment in all 28 primary healthcare facilities and district hospitals in three districts of the RoK. The assessment informed interventions that led to 130,000 people, including 33,336 children and 10,000 healthcare workers, having access to improved basic water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in 20 healthcare facilities. UNICEF installed solar water heaters, lights, water treatment systems, medical waste management equipment, and three-step septic tanks in three district hospitals. UNICEF trained 400 healthcare workers from three target districts to enhance their knowledge of WASH in healthcare delivery.

UNICEF promoted gender equality by addressing menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). UNICEF enhanced the capacity of 1,076 schoolteachers and 832 parents on WASH and nutrition practices, as well as conducted WASH and MHH health education sessions for 15 per cent of children, including 2,509 girls, from all 82 (100 per cent) schools in three target districts.

#### **Goal area 5. Every Child Has an Equitable Chance in Life**

UNICEF continued to work with the GoU and partners to ensure that sufficient attention is given to child poverty and youth skills development, including in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

In 2022, the number of families receiving cash assistance increased by 75 per cent from 1.2 million in 2021 to 2.1 million (benefiting 4.5 million children) thanks to continued UNICEF advocacy and support that contributed to further improvements of the child and family benefits system. It is expected that further investments into the Single Registry (Management Information System) for Social Protection, including introducing modules on social services, emergency cash transfers, and maternity benefits, will facilitate growth in the number of beneficiaries. With these adjustments, it is now

possible to receive and process applications electronically, linked to an online case management and referral system for integrated social services at the community level, and to cover more families. In April 2022, the GoU introduced monthly cash transfers of UZS500,000 (approx. US\$50) for caregivers of children with disabilities, benefiting 55,541 caregivers, with a total investment of UZS172.1 billion (approx. US\$15.6 million). In September 2022, the Ministry of Finance launched partial compensation for women working in the private sector through support with maternity benefits, benefiting 2,418 women, with a total investment of UZS4.8 million (approx. US\$440,000).

In partnership with the Centre for Economic Research and Reforms and UNDP, UNICEF supported nationwide consultations and a survey of 1,500 households to define a national measurement of multidimensional poverty in Uzbekistan. This data will be used to carry out a larger household survey and collect information on the state of families and children.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Finance collaborated in improving child-sensitive public spending in social sectors. Fifty-five staff of the ministries of finance, health, pre-school and public education were introduced to the Public Finance for Children Framework, tools and methods that included gender-responsive budgeting.

To facilitate a successful school-to-work transition for young people, UNICEF, in partnership with the MoPE and the Ministry of Employment, institutionalized life, employability and financial skills into formal (school) and non-formal (training and re-training centres) education systems for adolescents and youth. In total, 702 girls, including 70 girls with disabilities, were equipped with social, digital, coding, engineering, and data analysis skills thanks to UNICEF successfully introduced skills-building programmes: the inclusive digital skills programme, Skills4Girls, and the nanosatellite building programme, UniSat. The programmes encouraged girls to continue their education and career in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

UNICEF successfully engaged the most vulnerable youth (half of them girls) in the social entrepreneurship programme UPSHIFT, including rural youth, youth not in education, employment and training (NEET), youth with disabilities and those in contact with the law. A team from Uzbekistan became the finalist in the global Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge.

Through the Youth and Child-Friendly Local Governance Initiative, UNICEF succeeded in increasing the comprehension and capacity of local governments to engage youth meaningfully into the planning of youth-targeted actions. Effective platforms for youth participation were established in six pilot cities.

Jointly with the EU, UNICEF established the Central Asian Youth Partners Group to engage youth from Central Asia in the co-creation, consultation and promotion of youth programmes with the focus on gender equality, climate action, digital connectivity and skills for school-to-work transition.

## **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**

UNICEF implemented gender transformative programmes within all Goal Areas, focused on enhancing girls' leadership and skills, shifting harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and equipping networks of young people and communities with positive gender norms. Education, health, social protection and child protection systems have been strengthened in the areas of adolescent girls' nutrition, HPV vaccination, advancing girls' education and skills, including in STEM, promoting accessible and dignified MHH services, and advocating for gender-responsive social and child protection systems.

With UNICEF support, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy was endorsed by the 25 UN Country Team members to support the GoU in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (CRPD). The strategy prioritizes the key pre-conditions for CRPD implementation in Uzbekistan in order to promote a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. Within a UN Joint Programme, 60 organizations of persons with disabilities, 25 parents of children with disabilities and 15 representatives of self-initiative parents' groups enhanced their capacities to advance the implementation of the CRPD. Due to UNICEF advocacy, the GoU has committed to enhancing inclusive service delivery and disability support services, prioritizing family environment over institutionalization, early identification and early intervention services for children 0-3 years of age.

## UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF continued to be a key member of the UN Country Team in Uzbekistan. UNICEF assumed more responsibilities in leading the UN Result and Thematic Groups to streamline joint workplans and facilitate the development of UN initiatives to be funded by the Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund to accelerate the national reform agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

UNICEF established a strategic partnership for better education results by leveraging its new role as the Coordinating Agency of the Local Education Group. Within the framework of the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF has been appointed to lead the development of a National Compact for Education. This represents an innovative planning process with the participation of all relevant national education institutions, together with development partners, to ensure a joint vision with a clear understanding of gaps and opportunities for reform investments while supporting synergy among new projects, and increased effectiveness and efficiency in the sector.

UNICEF worked in close partnership with other UN agencies such as OHCHR, UNDP, UNDRR, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, and WHO, to achieve key results for children and women in Uzbekistan. Joint programmes focused on gender equality; enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities; improving the health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and wellbeing of adolescents and harnessing the talents of youth during and after COVID-19 in the RoK; piloting of an innovative healthcare waste management programme; establishing an Integrated National Financing Framework in Uzbekistan to improve child-sensitive social sector budgeting; SDG financing; enhancing the rights of adolescents living with HIV; and advocating for the safety and resilience of children.

The EU remained a key partner of UNICEF, with continued funding to support Uzbekistan and three other Central Asian countries in providing child and human rights-based, age and gender-sensitive technical assistance to support families of returnees from primarily Syria and Iraq. Additionally, the EU provided crucial financial support to enhance resilience in Surkhandarya region by expanding access to inclusive multi-lingual education, social services, legal aid and youth skills development for Afghan nationals and host communities. Jointly with the EU and the European Training Foundation, UNICEF organized the regional dialogue “Young Voices of Central Asia” which resulted in the establishment of the Central Asian Youth Partners Group, expected to facilitate long-term youth engagement and exchange.

The partnership with USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, IFRC, and the National Red Crescent Society enabled important emergency preparedness and response actions by introducing community-based and child-centred approaches and delivering humanitarian aid to affected populations during small-scale emergencies.

UNICEF successfully expanded its partnership with the private sector, with 2.4 million people reached with advocacy messages through retail partner Korzinka, while mobile provider Ucell advertised the ‘Internet of Good Things’, allowing people to access the content for free, reaching seven million people. The partnership with Tashkent city's subway reached over 14 million passengers with messages on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, targeting adolescents and youth.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

### **Emerging opportunities and innovations:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Uzbekistan's health system, particularly its immunization system, showed great resilience and agility, e.g., minimal backsliding in routine immunization. On the other



hand, some weaknesses were revealed by the crisis, including substandard temperature monitoring and vaccine management practices, a nonexistent electronic immunization registry linked to the civil registry, and obsolete medical waste management infrastructure. UNICEF leveraged resources for the COVID-19 response to address those bottlenecks and strengthen the immunization system by deploying remote temperature monitoring systems in all national and sub-national vaccine warehouses, developing and rolling out a vaccine logistics management and information system, creating an electronic immunization registry and an electronic knowledge hub for healthcare workers; strengthening the medical waste management infrastructure; and revising relevant national policies and guidelines.

Poorly managed healthcare waste remains an issue in Uzbekistan. The findings of UNICEF supported the first waste management assessment showed the need to improve policy and practices to eliminate indirect and direct risk factors to human health and the environment. A waste management strategy, action plan, and urban and rural waste management models and standards were designed with UNICEF support. As a model, UNICEF procured hospital healthcare waste sterilization equipment for six pilot district hospitals and consumables for one year of operation. Additionally, UNICEF constructed 22 climate-friendly healthcare waste management buildings and aligned healthcare waste management policies and operating procedures with international standards and best practices. As a result, the country has a tested framework for medical waste management for scale-up.

### **Lessons learned:**

There is high-level political commitment to child protection, as evidenced by the recent commitment to expedite the deinstitutionalization of the childcare system and the exemplary commitment to repatriate and reintegrate children from armed conflict zones, however, less consistent commitment to child protection systems strengthening (CPSS). The absence of a single ministry or agency where child and family welfare is situated, and the constant restructuring of relevant ministries and institutions, complicates things further. In this context, it remains crucial to continue advocating for CPSS at the national level and to extend support in advancing legal and policy frameworks and strengthening national governance and coordination structures.

The UNICEF-managed evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on Social Protection reconfirmed a requirement for a clear intervention logic of how supported efforts can deliver outputs with transformative potential and a realistic resource strategy. Another lesson highlighted that the achievement of longer-term strategic objectives is based on cooperation with the Government and a commitment to adopt an appropriate set of policies, legislative and institutional reforms sequenced in a way to incrementally build the national capacity over a longer-term horizon. The lessons learnt from the evaluation were discussed by UNICEF and national partners and addressed in management response actions, including a proposal for funding.

Even though there is no single institution responsible for overall social protection issues, the availability of an Integrated Management Information System (the Single Registry) allowed for the expansion of cash assistance and services to a wider population. As UNICEF is the GoU's key partner for strengthening the Single Registry, the system has a strong focus on children and women. UNICEF decided to use this comparative advantage to also incorporate shock responsive and emergency modules, as well as needs-based assessment for case management, into the Single Registry. Furthermore, the needs-based assessment will also be applicable to assess the needs of those affected by different shocks and will allow the Government to develop tailored responses.

Detrimental gender norms remain a key barrier to the full realization of girls' potential, their engagement in skills-building programmes and realization of entrepreneurship solutions. UNICEF needs to undertake a gender norms analysis and support the design and implementation of an evidence-based social behaviour change campaign.

Girls and women with disabilities face double discrimination and are also more likely to be excluded. Focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment is an important step to accelerate achieving the SDGs. This can be done by ending discrimination against women and improving their labour force participation. As part of the Skills4Girls programme, gender and disability inclusion sessions were conducted with role models for girls' leadership and empowerment to raise awareness of harmful gender norms, the importance of STEM and disability-inclusive communication. The programme has demonstrated at the policy level the importance of investments into inclusive learning platforms for persons with disabilities to empower them and expand their educational and employment prospects, which requires procurement of assistive technology and awareness raising to combat stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities.

Noting that Uzbekistan is observing increased impacts of natural and climate-related disasters in 2022, the Country Office was able to enhance disaster preparedness through emergency supply prepositioning, investing in developing relevant tools and mechanisms for child-centered and gender-responsive interventions. Moreover, it has managed to effectively respond to floods in Jizzakh region, which was possible thanks to the availability of the contingency partnership agreement with the Red Crescent Society.