

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

# Children with Special Education Needs

*in*

Kazakhstan,  
Kyrgyzstan,  
and Tajikistan



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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# Overview

After the disruption and poverty which followed the end of the Soviet Union, the countries of Central Asia have begun to make great strides both economically and socially. However, educational exclusion of disabled children is widespread, not only from mainstream schooling but also from quality education, and often from any education at all. There is still much progress to be made in the field of quality inclusive education for children with special needs due to disability, learning difficulty or disadvantage, as well as in terms of promoting social integration and decreasing stigma associated with disability.

Educational segregation tends to compound the wider social exclusion suffered by people with special needs in Central Asia as well as denying a basic human right. This exclusion stems from the perception that people with special needs are an embarrassment or a burden, with little or no potential to become self sufficient, to learn or to work. Consequently, investment in and expectations of children with special needs are low, leading to a cycle of poverty and exclusion which affects at least 10 percent of the population<sup>1</sup>.

This exclusion begins early in life, with diagnosis frequently slow and rarely made from outside the medical ‘defectology’ approach. This approach focuses on the child’s physical or mental limitations and seeks ways to rehabilitate or neutralize them. While providing some support in cases where early intervention services are available, the defectology approach generally means physical, social and educational exclusion, as the child’s potential is seen as fixed and solely in terms of limitations. Diagnosis in these terms means expectations are low and children are considered to be a poor investment in terms of time and money.

In contrast the modern social adaptation approach recognizes the capacities and potential of each person and seeks to adapt the environment so that their potential can be fully realized. Adopting such a definition

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1 See OECD report opening chapter *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan 2009*.

permits a perception of disability and learning difficulty as organic characteristics, similar to race or gender, that would be an unacceptable reason for discrimination or exclusion. Such an approach would allow many more children with special education needs to take an active and independent role in society, shifting the focus from what they cannot achieve in their current context in order to consider how that context could be adapted to support their maximum development and achievement.

It is clear that at the government and individual level there is much to be done, in both theoretical and practical terms, to advance the equality and inclusion of children with special education needs. However, the legislative and policy situation demonstrates a much greater shift in thinking. In Kazakhstan new curricula and plans for in-service training have been instituted, while in Tajikistan the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007–9 provides for inclusive education; in Kyrgyzstan a comprehensive definition of inclusive education is in place and education itself is a government priority. Unfortunately, such legal and policy commitments tend to be fragmented, difficult to manage effectively and efficiently, and inconsistent within and between countries. In addition, serious funding and spending issues lead to limited, inconsistent or absent implementation of such policies and laws.

The fragmented policy situation stems from the perception of children with special education needs not as a productive investment but as a burden to be shared, and is exacerbated by the multiple agencies which handle the diagnosis, treatment, and care of children with special needs. In Central Asia only Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, thus enshrining the full rights of disabled people into law in a manner which is consistent and recognized across the country. OSI strongly believes that a full ratification and legal and practical implementation of this Convention is the most effective way to end such fragmentation. However, despite positive steps at the legislative and policy levels, real change has been slow in coming to the approximately 680,000 children with special education needs in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan<sup>2</sup>.

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2 This estimate was obtained by calculating 2.5 percent of the WHO population figures for these three countries. We are unable to provide a more precise figure due to the availability of comparable state statistics. However, in Central Asia there could be a higher than average percentage of children with disability or learning difficulty because of poor nutrition and stunting, which are associated with impaired cognitive development, and conflict (civil war in Tajikistan, mines in border and other areas, etc) which can cause disability due to injury. (WHO population figures from [www.who.int/whosis/en](http://www.who.int/whosis/en), accessed on 19/08/09).

It is important to recognize the wider causes and impacts of such discrimination and marginalization. Poverty and exclusion are often the context for increased levels of disability due to poor nutrition and access to services, particularly those for pregnant women and newborns. A family with a child with special needs is frequently subject to discrimination from outside the home, while the mother and child may be ostracized and even abused within the family because they are seen as a source of shame. Under these circumstances access to care is even more limited, thus compounding a cycle of poverty and exclusion which these countries can ill afford to maintain, and which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all five countries have signed, specifically refutes.

Clearly, moving from legal rights to real, reliable social and educational inclusion is a difficult task. However, there is reason for optimism. While legislation is fragmented and stigma and exclusion is still widespread, some shifts in thinking and expectations are beginning to occur. To promote a better understanding of the potential of children with special education needs, OSI's Education Support Program (ESP) has commissioned research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to analyze existing services and policies for providing education to children with special education needs through the lens of disability, learning difficulty, and disadvantage.

At the same time, ESP has sponsored several projects, four in Kazakhstan, four in Kyrgyzstan, and four in Tajikistan. These projects seek to address the exclusion and misunderstanding surrounding children with special education needs as well as often-inappropriate classification or treatment and the widespread lack of materials, methodologies, equipment, and support for inclusive education. These projects have demonstrated positive and consistent results largely due to the high standards of planning, execution, enthusiasm, and determination among staff, supporters, and the children themselves.

The projects have been selected on the basis of their replicability and potential for scaling up across and within the three countries. Although the projects differ in their approach, they share the same objectives: better training for specialists and teachers, better and more inclusive education for children, support for parents, and better public awareness and understanding of the issues and potential solutions.





# A Summary of Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

*Reviews of  
National Policies for Education:  
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and  
Tajikistan 2009*

# Kazakhstan



## Law and Policy

Kazakhstan has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and legislation is in place which provides a framework for educating people with disabilities, but local and national legislation are not always consistent and the national-level body accountable for children's rights is relatively weak. There is a lack of financing to implement the new policies that have been developed, particularly at a local level.

## Education Policy and Quality of Education

Funding for education has increased and plans are in place for new curricula and for improving in-service training and pre-school education. Services are provided by a range of ministries and coordination and communication between them is poor. Content for teacher training for children with special needs exists but requires review, and professionals and specialists are often inadequately trained.

## Service Provision

More institutions, largely for prevention and rehabilitation, are becoming available, but buildings are often inaccessible, and there are shortages of qualified teachers across the education sector. Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Commissions (PMPC) are slow to diagnose and are heavily informed by the defectology approach. An active non-governmental sector runs programs for children and their families, but the legal status of these NGOs remains unclear, making long-term planning and dissemination of ideas difficult.

## Social Inclusion

Many children with special needs remain at home with their families and may receive no education at all. Public attitudes remain extremely negative and discrimination frequently leads to social and economic exclusion both for the child and his or her family. Female relatives in particular may suffer from reduced marriage prospects.

Kyrgyzstan



## Law and Policy

Every citizen has the right to education and general basic education is mandatory; a comprehensive definition of inclusive education is part of policy discussions but has yet to be implemented. Legal provision for children with special needs requires that they are provided with education at all levels according to their ability and where possible taught in mainstream schools.

## Education Policy and Quality of Education

Home schooling is an option but its quality and availability are hampered by lack of funds and poor training of specialists. Lack of teacher training and funding coupled with a rigid curriculum make implementation of legal provisions for education of children with special education needs difficult. Nonetheless the approach to providing education services for children with special education needs includes both specialized institutions and mainstream schooling with appropriate support.

## Service Provision

Decision-making is shared between the regional and national level. Services are provided by multiple agencies and are still heavily informed by the defectology approach. The prominence of this approach perpetuates the exclusion of people with special needs and the perception that such people have problems to overcome rather than potential to fulfill.

## Social Inclusion

Many children with special needs remain at home with their families and may receive no education at all. Public attitudes remain extremely negative and discrimination frequently leads to social and economic exclusion both for the child and his or her family. Children with special needs who graduate from specialized boarding schools are sometimes housed in institutions for the elderly, as there is nowhere else for them to go.

# Tajikistan



## Law and Policy

The concept of inclusive education is part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007-9 but there is no specific law that makes reference to children with special needs as a group which should be incorporated into this strategy. The legal framework is unclear as to the allocation of responsibility for financing and quality. At the local level there is often insufficient funding to carry out the responsibilities described in the strategy. Although funding in education is increasing, a disproportionate amount is spent on higher education.

## Education Policy and Quality of Education

The Ministry of Education established a working group in 2009 to develop a concept of inclusive education for the National Education Strategy. However, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection also supports a network of boarding schools for children with special needs, meaning that the Ministry of Education does not have an overview of all educational facilities. Financing responsibilities lie between national and local authorities but there is not enough money at the local level to finance the activities required by law. The Ministry of Education provides a disproportionate level of funding for higher education and the education budget is supplemented by donor assistance.

## Service Provision

Training, materials and infrastructure are limited and this lack of resources extends across the education system including those services for children with special needs. Institutionalization is the most common approach to care, and home-schooling and special classes/schools the most common form of education, but quality and supply are inadequate. Diagnosis is often slow and the defectology approach shapes service provision.

## Social Inclusion

Many children with special needs remain at home with their families and may receive no education at all. Public attitudes remain extremely negative and discrimination frequently leads to social and economic exclusion both for the child and his or her family: female siblings in particular may suffer from reduced marriage prospects. The low social status of individuals with special needs hampers attention to special needs education.



*Home schooling for a young girl  
with special education needs  
in Tajikistan*



# Key Recommendations

## Law and Policy

- Consistency should be reinforced, both in the language used and between administrative levels, in order to clarify the duties of government and the rights of citizens. To promote consistency, oversight of special needs education should reside with the Ministry of Education, even if services are provided by other ministries.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be signed and ratified in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to signal acceptance of the changes this convention requires.
- Focus should move away from 'rehabilitation of limitations' towards a recognition and facilitation of potential to achieve. Adopting the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health would support this as well as improve prospects for mainstream education of all children.
- Implementation of education that includes all children in mainstream settings should be part of a planned policy transition that makes use of the resources and expertise in the system of specialized schools.

## **Education Policy and Quality of Education**

- Education strategies should clearly state policies and intentions for the needs of children with special needs: this information should be available in one document to allow consistency in programming and clarity of budget allocations.
- Access should be improved by adopting and adhering to construction guidelines that make buildings and transportation fully accessible. Simple aids such as glasses and wheelchairs would improve access for a large number of children.
- The quality of education provided in institutions should be improved, particularly since the number of children in institutions increased in all three countries between 1990 and 2002. Providing professional development for those currently working as special educators (defectologists) would also be helpful.
- Where children with special needs attend mainstream classes both the teacher and other children should be prepared and assistance should be given to ensure that the child is not seen as a burden to the school.
- Teaching should be re-professionalized and training in special needs given as part of teacher education; a specific career track for special educational needs specialists should be created.

## **Service Provision**

- Data collection should be standardized and terminology and definitions must be consistent to allow for an adequate measurement of need and planning for service provision.
- Legislation around civil society should facilitate the operation of NGO programs, particularly in remote areas and specialized services.

- To provide more consistent and coordinated services throughout childhood there should be improved coordination and expansion of early childhood education and care, particularly ages 0–5, pre-natal care and parent education. Changes in the operation and composition of the Psychological Medical Pedagogical Commissions should be continued, and the time required for diagnosis and service referrals should be decreased to avoid loss of educational time.
- Local authorities need support to put their new mandates into practice and should be held accountable for the decisions they make in doing so, particularly in budgets. Where these are not already in place, joint civil society/local government committees should work to ensure the quality and funding of programs.

## Social Inclusion

- The disability community should be empowered to speak for itself and to define the responses to the needs of its members. Governments should lead by example, hiring competent individuals with special needs and supporting the engagement of civil society.
- Professional educators and administrators should be trained in order to improve their understanding and acceptance and to increase their willingness to manage and work in inclusive establishments.
- Accurate information should be provided in the form of public education campaigns about the cause and nature of conditions which lead to a need for special education. This should be widely implemented over the long term and through multiple channels, using peer-to-peer approaches and parent involvement to ensure full understanding that people with special needs can function at many levels.



# Community-based Programs for Children with Special Needs and their Families



# Kazakhstan

## **Kenes Social Fund for People with Disabilities: Public Association Center of Social Adaptation and Labor Rehabilitation (Almaty)**

### *Supporting Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Organizations and Families*

The Kenes Center provides two types of service for 86 children with severe intellectual disabilities and their parents: free consultation for parents of children aged 0-3 years, and a day care center for children with special needs older than 3 years of age. Providing a consultation and support service for parents of children with special needs and training them in education and teaching methods also empowers parents to seek better diagnosis and support for their children

In addition to supporting the parents of children with special needs, this project also aims to improve the quality of education for children with special needs through targeted seminars for teachers and specialists. The Kenes Center has provided three 3-day seminars in three cities of Kazakhstan to 60 educators, covering

teaching methodologies and techniques as well as providing general information about specific disabilities. This service is extremely rare in Kazakhstan, since there is no university that provides specific training on this subject. The training offered by the Kenes center aims to compensate for this lack of service by improving the understanding of specialists working with children with special needs

Eventually Kenes would like to develop a network of institutions delivering comprehensive services for children with special needs and their families. This project offers the opportunity to scale up Kenes' work with children both in other parts of Kazakhstan and across the entire Central Asian region.

## **Center for Social Adaptation and Labor Rehabilitation—SATR Center (Almaty)**

### *I'm Among You: Including Children with Autism in the Community*

The SATR Center's "I'm Among You" project aims to prepare teachers, parents, and children with infantile autism for mainstream school so these children can have access to quality inclusive education.

The project provides training sessions on appropriate methodologies for teachers and specialists working with children with autism, and seminars so that local and international experts from Russia and elsewhere share their experiences and best practices. The project also introduces parents and families to methods of working with autistic children in inclusive education settings, thus promoting a wider understanding and acceptance of autism and the issues around it.

As a result of this work, 15 children involved were successfully included into mainstream education, and plans have been made to extend and broaden services including a resource center and specific early years training for both teachers and parents. One of the strengths of the project is its systematic approach to the needs and challenges of the target group and the potential of the model to be extended through existing teacher training institutes and school networks. The project offers the possibility of scaling up both in Kazakhstan and in the Central Asian region, as well as demonstrating previous experience of work with autistic children and their families.

## **Shapagat: Public Foundation Rehabilitation Center for Children with Disabilities (Kyzylorda)**

### *Master Class: Professional Training for Children with Disabilities*

Shapagat is the only organization in the Kyzylorda region that provides education for children with special education needs. It offers classes for children with special needs on a weekly boarder basis with children returning home at weekends. Shapagat trains children in professional skills such as carpentry, sewing, and cooking, in addition to a general education curriculum to give the children greater potential for self-sufficiency in the future and facilitating their successful inclusion into society.

These professional skills classes are held for 45 minutes each day, all year to prevent children forgetting the skills taught during summer break. The timetable was developed in partnership with specialists, teachers, and families in order to ensure that services support children with special education needs as effectively as possible. Shared development of the timetable also means that families and teachers have had access to information about appropriate and effective teaching methods for individual children with special needs participating in Shapagat's programs, thus increasing understanding within these target groups. This shared development is a significant innovation because it recognizes the role of parents as a child's first teachers, with important insights into their educational needs and abilities.

Work produced by the children in Shapagat's classes was shown at a regional exhibition dedicated to the anniversary of the capital of Kazakhstan and to people with disabilities, demonstrating the socially, economically, and artistically valuable contributions that people with special needs can make. Based on the success of this project there are plans to sign contracts to produce work for local administrative bodies as well as to open additional workshops for larger numbers of children. Work is also in progress to set up a computer class which would enable children to train to the status of "computer operator" which would greatly increase their chances of finding employment.

The Shapagat project's sustainability is bolstered by the willingness of a local business partner to cover most expenses, and its practical approach to project implementation could make it suitable for replication across the region.



## **Alpamys: Association of Parents of Children and Children with Physical and Mental Disabilities (Taldykorgan)**

### *Establishing a Model of an Education Institution Based on the Principles of Inclusive Education*

Alpamys is developing a project that will create a model education institution within a mainstream general education school built upon the principles of inclusive education. A key part of this process is the collection, communication, and dissemination of up-to-date and useful information for all stakeholders including parents, students, and teachers.

The project began with a comprehensive review of the needs and strengths of the 6 children with delays in motor development and cerebral palsy participating in the program and the creation of a team to work with these students. Alpamys provided a three-day training course (Psychological Tolerance of People with Disabilities) for teachers and parents to prepare them for the project. During this course participants attempted daily activities while replicating the limitations of various disabilities, thus prompting them to discover new ways of interacting with children with special needs and achieving common goals. This activity stimulated responses to the issue of teaching children with special education needs as well as working to change participants' attitudes. As a result, six children with special education needs are now attending classes in mainstream general education schools.

The project has demonstrated that wholesale change in the culture of an institution (in this case a school) is possible, and that training and information can be provided for parents, staff, and students to facilitate the entry of children with special education needs into mainstream schools. Setting up a model school, significant coverage of target groups, previous experience of work in inclusive education and the availability of additional resources for implementation of this project strongly indicate that this project shows real potential for sustainability and scaling up.



# Kyrgyzstan

## Public Association Bayastan (Naryn)

### *Promoting the Experience of Inclusive Education*

The Public Association Bayastan organizes events and disseminates information and resources that promote the inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream secondary school. The aim is to increase the number of children with special needs who receive good quality basic education in three districts of the Naryn region, and to make communities more familiar with and accepting of inclusive education.

In 2008–2009, Bayastan hosted eight two-day seminars, and a further four were held for teachers and kindergarten teachers in rural areas. Seminars on *Inclusive Education, Inclusive Education: Methods of Instruction, and Special Vulnerable Groups of Children* drew 155 participants. Three roundtable sessions were also held in three different locations, with a total of 67 participants, including employees of the Regional Department of Education. Feedback from these sessions has been extremely positive and participants have carried out follow-up work such as presenting the information to colleagues, discussions with parents, collection of data regarding children with special educational needs, their parents, and factors influencing their school attendance.

Bayastan has also worked with Psychological Medical Pedagogical Commissions (PMPC) in the region, giving them resources and materials, informing teachers, nurseries and schools about the PMPCs, and putting the groups in contact with each other. As a result of this work four children with special needs were able to start mainstream school. In addition, Bayastan developed the textbook *Children with Special Needs: Understanding and Meeting their Needs* for use by teachers and participants in seminars.

The project's large geographical area and extensive target group contribute to its potential for widespread training and promotion of good practices. The project has the potential to contribute significantly to the professional training and development of teachers both in specialized and mainstream schools. The project's focus on promoting inclusion practices (rather than inclusion per se) means that the specialist skills and knowledge of specialized schools and their staff and students are not lost.

## **Children's Rehabilitation Center Umut-Nadezhda (Bishkek)**

### *I Would Like To Study At School, Too*

This project aims to provide quality education for children who are considered to be “unteachable.” For almost 20 years, Umut Nadezhda has been the only resource for preparing and training “unteachable” special needs students, who still do not have access to any other forms of education in Kyrgyzstan. As no training is provided by the state, this project focuses on the training and development of professionals and volunteers who work with children with special needs.

The Umut Nadezhda project addresses the key issue of lack of training by running a year-long, three-module practical teacher training course. Subjects include: therapeutic pedagogy, Waldorf pedagogy, different forms of pedagogical therapy, and focused discussions of specific children. After preparatory work, trainees begin supervised activities with children in small groups. The project is currently training its second intake of teachers. Last year one group of children created a performance for selected guests that was favorably reviewed in the local paper, raising local awareness and understanding of the abilities of children with special education needs. In a similar vein, the president of the Kyrgyz Republic has given a bus to the association, which was presented to the center by the Mayor of Bishkek.

The project has strong potential for institutionalization in the teacher training system due to the center's extensive experience with inclusive education and its focus on systematic and sustained training for specialists. The project can also be scaled up within Central Asia and would provide a stable cross-regional teacher training and development model for special education teachers throughout the region.

## **Master Club Filin Ltd. (Shopokov)**

### *Youth Against Violence at School*

The Master Club Filin Ltd project works to reduce levels of conflict and gang violence among young people in Shopokov by developing and providing free time activities, facilitating increased communication and understanding among young people, and enabling them to choose goals for themselves and pursue them. The project is based on a needs assessment of local at-risk youth conducted in December/January 2007–8 by youth activists, local government representatives, and alumni from other youth initiatives. The assessment indicated that the majority of respondents (65 percent) wanted to spend their free time on fitness activities.

The project's developers responded to these results by establishing a fitness center in the cellar of a company in the town. The renovated space now acts as a community resource where qualified professionals give fitness classes to young people, many of them orphans or from families that can be considered as needy or in crisis. Demand for the center's services has been strong and the project is planning to renovate a second space for a break-dancing group that will give demonstration performances during Shopokov's "City Day" in November.

The Master Club project has been effective in supporting children from high risk groups by including them in defining and creating resources to meet their leisure time activity interests. This process has built self-confidence among these young people, strengthened their ability to articulate their needs and interests, and increased their inclusion and interaction with the community. Such collaboration encourages communication, presents an alternative and constructive use of time spent out of school, and helps to break the cycle of violence that hinders their successful attendance at school. Building the confidence of these

young people and enabling them to present their needs gives them a more powerful voice, paving the way to their wider inclusion in society.

## Rehabilitation Center Obereg (Bishkek)

### *By the Best Road*

This project seeks to promote the independence and work prospects of children with special needs by providing them with new or better professional skills. With OSI funding the center was able to expand its activities and to provide instruction in woodworking, music, art and sewing. The money also funded the creation of a resource center with materials for parents, teachers, and social workers in order to disseminate more up-to-date information and promote better understanding of special needs education and educational practice. The resource center also provides a place for professionals, parents, and volunteers to meet, exchange experiences, and improve their understanding of special needs issues.

Students in the woodworking and sewing classes have produced furniture and bedclothes for use within the center as well as products for sale to the general public. Revenue from these sales benefits Obereg, improving its sustainability and changing the image of these students as unproductive and a burden. Students have also participated in public performances and events such as the city's New Year's celebration and its "Farewell to Winter" event, which was attended by project sponsors, NGO representatives, government officials, and the press. The students' success in these performances led to their participation in the Spring Festival with children from mainstream schools.

The project is built around feedback from the target group and responds to and reflects their needs. The work by special needs students in this project has increased their role in public life and their inclusion in previously mainstream-only festivities. Students are also receiving training in practical skills that will allow them to support themselves and take an active role in society. The materials in the project's resource center reinforce the students' work and public activity by informing relevant stakeholders and supporters about the potential of children with special needs and about best practices for providing services to them and their families. The project has a clear implementation mechanism and has already located a partner, further demonstrating its efficiency, sustainability, and potential for replication.



# Tajikistan

## **Association of Parents of Handicapped Children (Dushanbe)**

### *First Steps to School*

This two-year project, started in 2007, works to develop the learning skills of children with physical disabilities so they can gain access to mainstream education. The project has three main directions: improving the quality of education at institutions for children with special needs, providing consultations to parents of children with special needs on their legal rights as well as strategies for supporting their children's education, and helping children with special needs develop musical and other artistic skills.

Working with specialists from the Dushanbe Psychological Medical Pedagogical Commission, project staff examined 10 children in selected institutions, identified their individual needs and capacities, and developed an Individual Educational Plan for each child. The main focus of the project has been helping institutions develop and implement sessions between special needs students and speech therapists, speech pathologists, and psychologists three times a week. These sessions occur in tandem with discussions between specialists and parents about their child's medical history, reinforcing the role of the parent as a valuable source of information and understanding about their child's needs and abilities.

The Association also provides programs for parents and extracurricular programs for children. Parents receive advice on legal and social protection issues and, over the course of nine workshops and various consultations, are informed about the role of education for children with special educational needs, the rights of children and their parents, bringing up children with special needs, and preparing them for work. There are also evening meetings where informative films are screened and best practice and experience is exchanged with other relevant NGOs. Children with special needs involved in the project also perform at morning assemblies to celebrate various holidays.

The project has added value because it gives high priority to working with parents and encouraging their involvement in their children's education. Another project priority has been to conduct targeted outreach to relevant organizations and the wider public to improve awareness and understanding of the needs and abilities of children with physical disabilities. In 2008, ten children from the project were successfully enrolled in the first grade at local comprehensive schools. This success, and First Steps to School's emphasis on teaching children and working with their parents, make the project a strong model for replication

## **Education Reform Support Center 'Pulse' (Dushanbe)**

### *Monitoring of Educational Needs of Children with Visual Impairments*

Founded by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Tajikistan and supported by the Foundation's General Education Program since 2004. Pulse implements projects that study, monitor, and analyze the education system in order to identify problems and propose solutions.

Pulse's project focusing on children with visual impairments aims to identify the needs of this group and develop strategies to increase their access to quality education. The project first performed a comprehensive analysis of existing legislation regarding social protection and assistance for children with visual impairments and analyzed how these services are financed. The project then assessed the current situation on the ground by conducting a survey of medical specialists, psychologists, and staff members at local institutions for children with visual impairments.

Based on these results, the project developed a plan to give children with visual impairments access to mainstream education by providing institutions with tools and activities such as Braille boards, computer courses for the visually impaired, and training for instructors and teachers.

## **Committee of Parents and Children of Kindergarten 151 (Dushanbe)**

### *Life Together*

This project successfully prepared eight children with hearing impairments for entry into mainstream kindergarten. This was done by providing developmental and educational services, including teaching the children to communicate verbally as well as with written, tactile, and physical communication, and procuring hearing aids for each child. The project also focuses on building the capacities of relevant specialists and raising public awareness of the difficulties and potential of children with hearing impairments.

As the hearing impaired children began attending kindergarten classes, the project held regular meetings with parents, children, kindergarten staff members, and officials from the Department of Education to ensure a full understanding of the activities and to address any concerns. Five specialists who work with children in summer camps also took part in a six-day capacity-building course for the teachers in the kindergarten.

The project has raised public awareness of the difficulties that children with hearing impairments face by creating radio programs about the project that were broadcast on two local radio stations. The project also had a profile of one of the children featured in the national newspaper, Digest Press. The project regularly publishes educational leaflets, and has developed a documentary film in partnership with a local children's TV channel.

By facilitating the integration of children with hearing impairments into a mainstream kindergarten, the project has ensured their early access to mainstream education and has contributed to a better understanding and awareness of the issues among teachers, specialists, parents, and children without special needs. The project's use of media has been particularly strong and effective and could provide a valuable model for replication across the region.



## **Public Organization “Center for the Development of Democracy” (Khujand)**

### *Country of Deaf People*

This project aims to provide improved educational opportunities for children with hearing impairments by providing training for the staff of Kostakoz Boarding School for the Deaf in Bobojon Gafurov district. The center has translated specialized teacher training materials and manuals into Tajik in order to provide support for teachers who do not speak Russian. This also helps to promote greater integration of the school’s children into a society that increasingly communicates exclusively in Tajik.

During the past year, the boarding school has purchased textbooks for primary grades, a computer program for development of children’s listening and speaking abilities, and furniture for use in painting and wood carving circles. This project also includes regional cooperation with the SATR Center in Kazakhstan and the St. Petersburg Institute of Special Pedagogy and Psychology. With the help of these organizations 40 teachers and staff attended a five-day capacity-building course on classroom management, development of individual education programs, provision of corrective developmental aid, and sign language. This support has been essential to improving the quality of education in the school, as previously only two teachers had any specialized training for working with hearing impaired children. An information campaign led by the project has resulted in donations of hearing aids, furniture, and learning materials from the regional education department.

The project is valuable for its provision of relevant material and teacher training and encouragement of communication among teachers of children with special education needs across the region. Such communication develops a broader understanding of teaching methods for children with special education needs and contributes to raising standards of teaching in the institutions where such teachers work. Since numbers of children taught in institutions have increased over the last ten years in all three countries, providing relevant and appropriate training and materials for such teachers is a practical and efficient response to the situation, and may provide a valuable model for replication.

## Population characteristics

(2007 Statistics published by the State Statistical Committee in 2009)

The information in this table is presented as an update to Table 1.3 in the OECD's report *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan 2009*.

TAJIKISTAN						
		Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
<b>Total</b>		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Area</b>	Urban	26.3%	25.8%	26.8%		
	Rural	73.7%	74.2%	73.2%		
<b>Area</b>	Dushanbe	9.4%	9.1%	9.6%		
	Other cities	16.9%	16.6%	17.2%		
	Rural	73.7%	74.2%	73.2%		
<b>Region</b>	Dushanbe	9.4%	9.1%	9.6%	35.6%	
	Sughd	29.7%	28.9%	30.4%	28.9%	29.9%
	Khatlon	35.7%	36.3%	35.0%	23.5%	40.0%
	Districts of Republican Subordination	22.2%	22.6%	21.8%	10.5%	26.3%
	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%	1.6%	3.7%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	48.6%			47.6%	49.0%
	Female	51.4%			52.4%	51.0%
<b>Age groups</b>	0–4	11.1%	11.6%	10.6%	11.0%	11.2%
	5–9	11.7%	12.3%	11.1%	11.7%	11.7%
	10–14	12.4%	13.3%	11.5%	11.9%	12.5%
	15–19	12.7%	12.7%	12.8%	12.1%	12.9%
	20–24	10.5%	9.4%	11.6%	9.8%	10.8%
	25–29	7.4%	7.1%	7.8%	7.1%	7.6%
	30–34	6.0%	5.9%	6.0%	6.7%	5.7%
	35–39	5.3%	4.9%	5.6%	6.4%	4.9%
	40–44	5.3%	5.2%	5.4%	5.7%	5.2%
	45–49	4.9%	4.8%	4.9%	5.1%	4.8%
	50–54	3.9%	3.9%	4.0%	4.5%	3.8%
	55–59	2.6%	2.6%	2.7%	2.5%	2.7%
	60–64	1.6%	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%
	65–69	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%	1.7%
70+	3.0%	3.0%	2.9%	2.5%	3.1%	
<b>Ethnic background</b>	Tajiks	75.9%	76.5%	75.3%	84.5%	72.8%
	Uzbeks	22.7%	22.5%	22.9%	11.9%	26.5%
	Russians	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%	1.8%	0.1%
	Other	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	1.8%	0.6%
<b>Poverty status</b>	Poor	53.5%	53.1%	53.9%	49.4%	55.0%
	Not poor	46.5%	46.9%	46.1%	50.6%	45.0%
<b>Quintiles of per capita consumption</b>	1—Poorest	20.0%	19.4%	20.5%	21.5%	19.4%
	2	20.0%	19.9%	20.0%	18.2%	20.6%
	3	20.1%	20.2%	19.9%	13.8%	22.3%
	4	20.0%	20.1%	19.8%	18.9%	20.3%
	5—Richest	20.0%	20.3%	19.7%	27.5%	17.3%

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