

REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Introduction and enhancement of SHE methodologies and COVID-19 impact on children's health

Achievements:

- Two-day seminars on building SHE capacity involving WHO International Consultant Laura Utemisova (Kazakhstan) were held between 10 and 15 February 2020 for healthcare and public education specialists in Tashkent and each region. Seminar aims: Support the SHE pilot in Uzbekistan, aimed at developing the national strategy to transform all schools into schools for health, based on a school-wide approach to health in line with the SHE recommendations.
- The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Education have jointly selected 6 schools to be involved in the 'Schools for Health in Uzbekistan' pilot project: 2 schools in Tashkent (one public and one private); 2 schools in the Fergana region (one urban and one rural); 2 schools in the Kashkadarya region (one urban and one rural).
- The School for Health Concept was included in the State Programme for Further Healthcare Development approved by the President of Uzbekistan.
- A national working group has been created, comprised of officers from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Education, plus the WHO representative in Uzbekistan.
- A decision has been made to appoint one person from the national working group to monitor and provide technical assistance to schools during the pilot project. The appointments will be made by the ministries of health and public education of Uzbekistan.
- All seminars in the regions concluded with individual plans being drawn up and deadlines set for: working group creation; communication with the school community; quick assessment tool completion; prioritisation.

School	Pupils	Working group creation, school community notification	Quick assessment tool completion, prioritisation	Planning
No.163, Tashkent	800	10.02. - 17.02	By 08.03	By April
Leader School, Tashkent	666	End-February	Mid-March	April
No.5, Fergana (city)	1,600	12.02 - 26.02	26.02 - 04.03	04.03 - 11.03
No.20, Rishtan	1,146	12.02 - 04.03	04.03 - 11.03	By April
No.25, Karshi (city)	1,116	12.02 - 26.02	By 20.03	April
No.85, Dehkanabad	1,376	12.02 - 25.02	By 20.03	April

Challenges:

The SHE pilot was complicated by the epidemic, with the imposition of tight quarantine restrictions:

- The scheduled pilot study could not be carried out
- Pupils and teachers have shifted to online learning
- Teachers have been overloaded (checking school and homework and filling in digital school diaries)
- The monitoring event scheduled for May and June at schools involved in the pilot study was postponed.

Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Last year, teaching moved online (lessons were aired on TV channels, and digital school diaries were rolled out); all final exams at schools were cancelled.
- The new academic year started on 14 September 2020 (2 September at private schools)
- Studies are held in person or online, depending on parents' preferences, with lessons being aired on TV channels.
- Staged reopening of schools for in-person teaching is carried out with consent from the special republican commission, provided that schools comply with learning safety standards under SanPiN No.0375-20, titled "Organisation of Activities at Comprehensive Secondary Schools and Boarding Schools in the Republic of Uzbekistan during the COVID-19 Pandemic."
- Classes were reordered by start time to prevent mass gatherings and close contact between pupils.
- Classroom rotation was cancelled, with only main subjects remaining in teaching.
- Assemblies, performances, competitions, and public events were banned.
- School canteens and lunchrooms have been closed for the duration of the pandemic

COVID-19 impact on children's health and wellbeing:

- Unusual psychological atmosphere in learning
- Poor absorption of learning material
- Challenges for families with two or more pupils
- Misunderstanding and increasing conflicts between pupils and family members

COVID-19 impact on health promotion:

- All planned events devoted to health promotion have been postponed;
- Tight quarantine restrictions have helped contain the spread of infection among children;
- Public health education campaigns have been run through the mass media (TV, radio, press) and on social media;
- Hygiene improved among children;
- Healthy diet at home in a family setting

COVID-19 impact on healthcare services at schools:

Healthcare services at schools

- Schools are reopening in line with WHO recommendations and in strict compliance with SanPiN No.0375-20, titled "Organisation of Activities at Comprehensive Secondary Schools and Boarding Schools in the Republic of Uzbekistan during the COVID-19 Pandemic."
- Doctor's offices have been revamped to include sickbays;
- Schools have been restocked with medicine, sanitisers, and disinfectants;
- Schools have been staffed with more medical professionals (10,000 doctors and nurses);
- An 18-hour retraining course on COVID-19 prevention has been organised for medical professionals at schools.

Teachers

- Teachers have had increased workloads
- Mass testing for the coronavirus was carried out among teachers ahead of the academic year
- Teachers will be vaccinated against the seasonal flu free of charge by 1 October

- Temporary recommendations on COVID-19 prevention have been drawn up for teachers
- Medicine is made available to prevent COVID-19 infections

Main objectives and plans for 2021:

- Restart the SHE pilot in Uzbekistan, to develop the national strategy to transform all schools in the country into schools for health
- Continue the team's work with pilot schools.

Nazokat KASYMOVA,
October 2020