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## **Landscaping child data systems and planning actions in the context of child-related SDG indicators in Tajikistan**

**Note by the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and UNICEF Tajikistan**

### *Abstract*

The child rights related data landscape in Tajikistan is vast, however sometimes may be not prominent in the national statistics. The landscape analysis of the child-related data systems provides an overall assessment of data availability and accessibility of child related SDG indicators and, more broadly, of the child rights commitments from the demand, supply and use perspectives. The landscape analysis identifies the strengths, gaps and opportunities for translating data potential into results for children. The analysis illuminates the areas for strategic investments in data for children in the short and long terms and serves as a Roadmap for improving data on children. This Roadmap aims to help the Government of Tajikistan, UNICEF and other partners to direct limited resources on the concrete actions to improve availability, quality and use of data for children and inform the future resource mobilization efforts." More specifically, landscape analysis and action plan will help the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and other relevant ministries to view and implement the priorities positioned in the National Strategy for Statistics Development until 2030 with the purpose of improving child statistics. It will also help UNICEF to focus on key data improvement efforts in a more comprehensive and systematic way.

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## I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has developed the National Development Strategy up to 2030 and has committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some obstacles still may exist in the way to achieving results for children, including the availability of baselines and regular disaggregated data on child related SDGs. In this context UNICEF in partnership with the Tajstat conducted the landscape analysis of the child-related data system with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This landscape analysis aimed to provide a rapid and overall assessment of data availability and accessibility for monitoring the child related SDG indicators and more broadly the child rights commitments from the demand, supply and use perspectives. This analysis identified the strengths, gaps, bottlenecks and opportunities for translating data potential into results for children.
2. The child rights related data landscape in Tajikistan is vast, though a bit indistinct. Child-related data is generally reflected, though sometimes may be not prominent in the national statistics. In order to set some boundaries for this landscape analysis it was agreed during the scoping phase that its primary focus will be on the child-related SDG indicators at national and subnational levels in Tajikistan. More generally, it provides an overview of data on a broader child rights framework. This document describes the child-related data landscape including survey-based and administrative data sources around child related SDG areas.
3. The landscape analysis is undertaken based on the desk review of a wide range of existing reference documents such as assessments of information systems, statistical publications, national legislation and strategic documents, and official websites. It also uses the information collected through three rounds of consultation workshops with the government agencies within the frame of a sub-set of the inter-agency SDG working group under the Tajstat, key informant interviews with the relevant representatives from the line ministries, academia and development partners and consultation meetings with relevant UN agencies and UNICEF staff at the national level.
4. There are some limitations of the methodology. Firstly, this analysis provides an overview of child related data systems. The landscape analysis did not intend to be comprehensive and exhaustive due to resources limitations and capacity. Therefore, it neither provides in-depth analysis of data systems based on each sector or SDG, nor encompasses all the topics relevant for children. Based on the availability of information there may be imbalances between the sections, which may be addressed over time. Secondly, though data quality is an important aspect of the data life cycle, this assessment did not undertake an in-depth assessment of all quality criteria in each data system. It mainly highlighted the challenges related to availability, accessibility, accuracy, timeliness and relevance.

## II. Child related data landscape

### A. Data demand

5. Over the last years Government of Tajikistan integrated several measurable child rights commitments in the national and subnational strategic planning documents. In 2021 the county began implementing the Midterm Development Programme 2021–2025 (MTDP), a nationally owned multisectoral results-oriented strategic document operationalizing the National Development Strategy 2030 and outlining the Government’s commitment towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The MTDP reflects several key child-related priorities and indicators and lays a solid groundwork to monitor socio-economic development considering results for children<sup>1</sup>. Sectoral strategic documents, particularly in education development, health protection, social protection, water and sanitation, include child-related priorities and SDG indicators to varying degrees.
6. At the subnational level, the socio-economic development programmes (called District Development Programmes for 3-5 years) define the development priorities for the 68 cities and districts, three provinces of the country and Dushanbe city. The lessons from the past showed that solving many challenges in the regions may have significant impact on reaching the SDGs by the country. The Mid-term Development Programme 2021–2025 points out the lack of information to assess social inequality in the country and the need for Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into local development programs and expanding the process of localization of the SDGs.
7. A more result-oriented action plans with inclusion of relevant NDS and SDG indicators in national strategies created a growing demand amongst all institutional users for statistical information, as well as for other types of statistical services. The increasing understanding across all data users that national strategic commitments and the SDG agenda will require comprehensive and disaggregated data on children and its effective use at all administrative levels in the country and beyond.

### B. Data supply

8. Tajikistan has a centrally coordinated system of official statistics. The Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (further referred as Tajstat) is the authorized central executive body that produces official statistics as regulated by the Law on State Statistics. Legal and policy framework of the national statistical system facilitates appropriate data governance and statistical reporting procedures within and across ministries. The National Strategy for Development of Statistics of the Republic of Tajikistan (NSDS) until 2030 was developed in view of the NDS 2030 and the SDGs. It aims to contribute to achieving the Government’s objectives on transforming the state statistics system into a high-level institution that will support development of evidence-based policy
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by providing reliable and high-quality data, ensuring easy access to statistics and increasing the use of administrative data resources.

## 1. Administrative data systems

9. The administrative data has additional tremendous potential for improving results for children. The 2022 Guidance on Statistics on Children underlines the importance of investing in improving admin data. Administrative data have also some limitations, such as admin data cannot provide prevalence data, but only information on the number of children who come into contact with a service or reported incidences; quality and comparability of admin data on children can also be a concern.
10. The administrative data is routinely gathered and recorded by the members of the statistical system through sectoral information systems. Sectoral management information systems in Tajikistan are in different stages of development with the education, health, social protection, and civil registration being more advanced and supported by development partners and international financial institutions. Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures to ensure accuracy and reliability of administrative data across sectors require further investment.
11. Policy framework for e-governance and electronic data systems is in place with gradual transition cognizant of limited financial resources. There is an overall data digitization trend across sectors, nonetheless the paper-based systems still prevail. In Tajikistan, the administrative data is regularly collected, however age and sex-disaggregation are not applied in a uniform way which may pose challenges to generate child related data. When data on the most vulnerable children are not made prominent, it is difficult for decision-makers to direct their policy decisions towards them.
12. At the subnational level, the primary data collection point varies depending on the sector: primary health care facility in the health sector, schools in the education, jamoats (local municipalities at sub-district level) in the social protection and demographics. Data is accumulated and verified at the district/city level and prepared for further transmission to the regional level and then to the national level vertically by sectors. Thus, in most systems the level of cities/districts are the lowest level of geographic disaggregation, although the district level authorities have access to more disaggregated data (by villages, schools, health facilities), though this is no unified approach across all districts. Across all sectors the challenges are faced mostly at the subnational level.
13. The rapid growth of country's population, poses pressure to the technical capacity of existing electronic systems and needs technical improvement. Predominantly paper-based data collection and reporting relate to production of data on children without parental care, children in alternative care, justice for children. Data collection processes and systems do not fully take into account the certain disadvantaged groups of children and young people (street children, stateless children, children of refugees). Subsequently data gaps affect the inclusion/non-inclusion of SDG indicators in the national policy frameworks. A single statistical publication or portal on children is not yet available and the lack of harmonised and interoperable administrative data systems remains a key bottleneck for generating timely and relevant evidence on children.
14. Lack of fiscal space for sustaining large scale data reform and conducting regular household surveys in more frequent manner poses challenges to generating data for some of child related SDG indicators. As an alternative source, the administrative data has a major

advantage of providing timely and more disaggregated data on SDG related themes for operational decision making and planning processes within and across sectors, especially at subnational level.

15. Tajikistan conducted a more in-depth assessment of administrative data on children in alternative care and in adoption in the context of the overall landscape analysis of child-related data systems with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals. This work has reinforced the need and critical importance of enhancing data and information systems for evidence-based advocacy and programming for children. The diagnostic assessment was conducted in a consultative manner using the toolkit for country-level self-assessment of Administrative Data Systems on Children in Alternative Care and Adoption. The consultations were helpful in identifying data gaps, bottlenecks, and opportunities for enhancing the data systems for children in alternative care as relevant to legal and normative framework, data governance, infrastructure, coordination, completeness of data, standardisation, data quality management, demand, dissemination and relevant use of data.

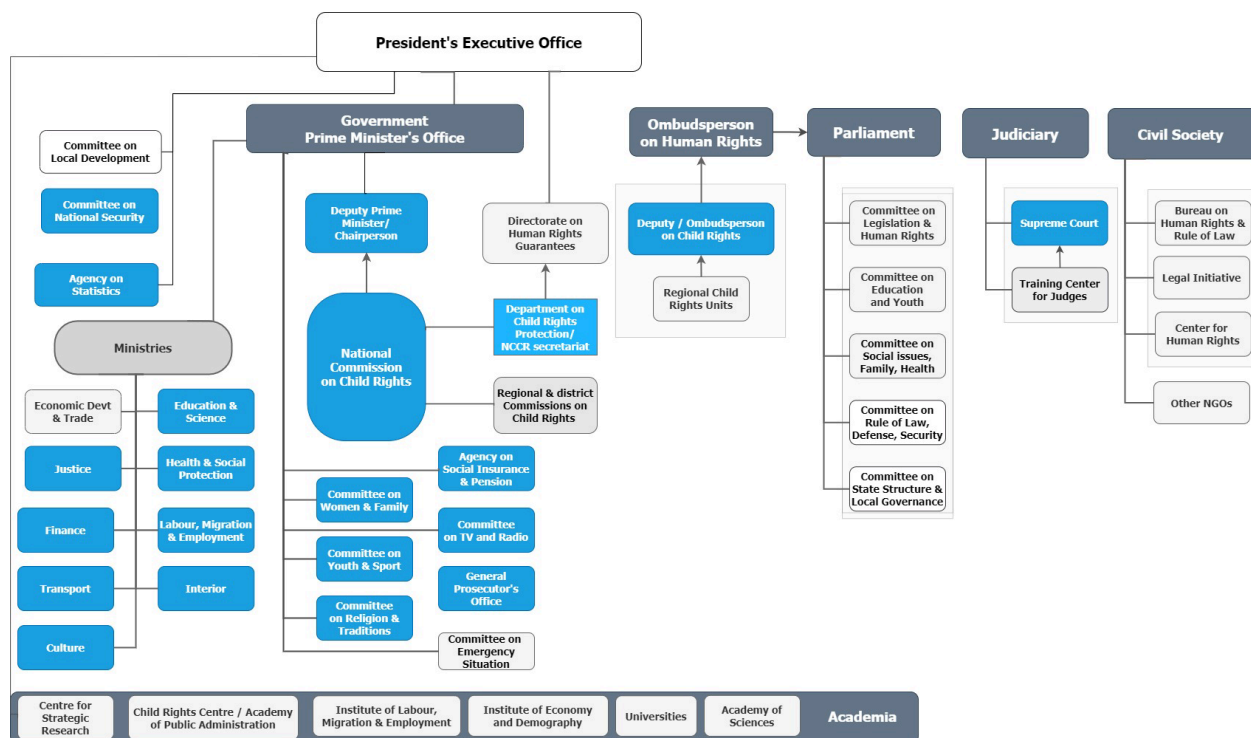
## 2. Census and Major National Household Surveys

16. With the overall SDG index of 69.7, which measures the total progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs, Tajikistan's SDG index ranks 78th out of 163 countries. Monitoring of child-related SDG indicators primarily relies on the household-based surveys in Tajikistan. There are several major household surveys conducted in the country, but their rare frequency and data gaps do not allow to monitor the child-related SDGs indicators and the situation of children's rights to inform policy.
17. Over the last three decades Tajikistan conducted three rounds of censuses. The latest 2020 census attempted to collect data on some of the SDG indicators. Surveys remain the primary source of reliable disaggregated data around multiple topics of relevance to children. The most common household surveys conducted in Tajikistan with regular intervals are the Demographics Health Survey (DHS 2012, 2017, 2023), Multi-Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS 2000, 2005), Labour Force Survey (LFS 2004, 2009, 2016, planned in 2024), Child Labour Survey (2012, 2023), Household Budget Survey (HBS quarterly since 2009). Surveys offer high quality information that is challenging to collect through administrative data. High cost and low frequency of the surveys is the main challenge for regular monitoring of the SDG indicators and the situation of children. With high variability of the situation in different districts, none of the surveys offers data at the district level due to high costs.

## C. Data use

18. There is a broad range of stakeholders who use data on children mainly with a focus on monitoring the two frameworks – CRC and SDG. The CRC as a legally binding treaty puts forth all the rights that Governments must respect, protect and fulfil for all children under their jurisdiction, while the SDGs are a universal, timebound call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030, with the pledge of leaving no one behind at its core.

Figure 1  
Mapping of child rights institutions and stakeholder groups



19. The users of child related data usually access information through existing publications or mostly through special ad-hoc requests. Availability of updated and user-friendly access to disaggregated high-quality child related data and information remains challenging. Availability of information on the specific vulnerable groups of children such as children with disabilities, orphans, and children in alternative care is prioritized. However, often data users handle the aggregate data, and the equity focused analysis is not systematically practiced. With enormous data being compiled at the district level, there is no standard mechanisms for data sharing and use available for the local government, service delivery organizations and civil society organizations to plan and monitor the implementation of interventions and assess their relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency within and across sectors. Nonetheless the demand for evidence-based decision-making is growing in the country.

### III. Strategic areas for data investments

20. Effectively supporting the demand, supply and use of data for children requires both realigning UNICEF’s existing data resources as well as making new investments in the future directions of data in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. UNICEF advocacy, resource mobilisation and support should focus on strategic areas to address systemic challenges and child data gaps. The following key strategic areas emerged

from the mapping of existing data systems and SDG data sources, as well as stakeholder consultations.

#### **D. Demand: Strengthen demand for child rights data**

21. Timeline (short to mid-term): There is the child rights system grounded on the child rights protection-oriented legislation and policy framework in the Republic of Tajikistan. The child related priorities and some of the SDG indicators recently integrated into the national strategic documents shape the demand for data. The national child rights coordination body - the Commission on Child Rights of the Government of Tajikistan (NCCR) chaired by the deputy prime minister convenes on a biannual basis. Annually the NCCR workplan is developed to implement the CRC. As the practice shows the reporting by the members of the NCCR remain to be activity oriented, while consistently the Chair draws attention to results oriented indicators on the situation of children. The national action plans for the implementation of the CRC concluding observations are consistently monitored (not yet the status of each of the CRC recommendations). Hence there's an emerging demand for regular data and evidence on the situation of children and the realization of child rights.

#### **E. Supply: Close the data gaps through surveys**

22. Timeline (short and long-term): There are some data gaps in the country when it comes to child rights and SDGs: a) Availability of recent data: outdated data on child labour, young people who are not in education, employment or training. b) Compliance with methodology. Some data do not fully comply with the global methodological requirements in terms of age groups (child discipline, child labour). c) Lack of baseline. For some key child related SDG indicators baseline data is non-existent, such as with early child development, sexual violence by age 18. d) High frequency data. There is a system to generate real time and longitudinal data on the wellbeing. Key child-related indicators to inform decision-making in the planning and monitoring processes are being integrated into the Listening to Tajikistan survey.

#### **F. Supply: Improve the quality of administrative data based on in-depth assessment**

23. Timeline (Short to medium-term): The overall assessment of administrative data shed light on gaps and shortcomings that hinder the process of continuous monitoring of the SDGs and the situation of children's rights to a decent life, survival and health, quality education, clean drinking water, safe living environment and life free of any violence. The quality of administrative data is one of the factors that restrains the use of data. The emerging need for expanded use of administrative data for production of official statistical information requires establishment of the system and procedures for managing their quality.

### **G. Supply: Improve interoperability of data and cross-sectoral data exchange mechanisms**

24. Timeline (medium to long-term): The information systems in Tajikistan evolved over time with support of various donors and development agencies. While some systems are prioritized and more advanced (e.g. HMIS, EMIS) challenges remain across all. Apart from technical and staff shortages, their significant fragmentation remains a major challenge. Even within one line ministry the responsibility for sectoral data is divided across different institutions, and coordination within and across the sectors is constrained. To address the competing interests of different actors from different sectors, duplication or conflicting data the work on integration of different information systems is being prioritised within the National Strategy for Statistics Development.

### **H. Supply: Improve the accessibility of child related data including at subnational level**

25. Timeline (medium-term): Access to the sectoral information systems is limited to relevant staff only. Considering that the existing administrative data on children mostly rests in different thematic or sectoral paper-based publications, it is important to first make the key sectoral and cross-sectoral data on children accessible for use. For improving accessibility of child related data, there is a need for a dedicated flagship publication on state of children's rights in the country or similar bringing together all child statistics and analysis. This would set the grounds for establishing a child data portal either through a dedicated webpage or integrating into the existing national data dissemination platform administered by Tajstat. It is important also to compile all the existing administrative data on child related SDG indicators at the subnational level for tracking on a more frequent basis using the administrative data as an alternative source.

### **I. Use: Promote use of data including at subnational level**

26. Timeline (short to medium-term): It is important to understand and create the demand for evidence working closely with the potential data users. The collected data is often not turned into information and often is not used for decision-making. Along with improvement in the supply of data efforts need to be made in foreseeing the intended use of data and raise awareness of the institutions involved and responsible for realization of child rights about child rights indicators, child-focused programming and how data can be used responsibly and effectively in their work to make use of the evidence for better outcomes for children. This can be done through investing in capacity development of decision makers and child rights institutions in an institutionalized sustainable manner and partnerships with national institutions and academia on secondary analysis of data including census, major surveys (DHS, HBS) and administrative data around priority issues related to children, as reflected in the national strategies.



## IV. Conclusions

27. The landscape analysis informed the roadmap for improving data on children and illuminated the areas for strategic data investments in the short and long terms. The roadmap will help the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, UNICEF and other partners to direct limited resources on the concrete actions to improve data for children and inform the future resource mobilization efforts. More specifically, landscape analysis and action plan will help the Tajstat and other relevant ministries and agencies to view and implement the priorities positioned in the National Strategy for Statistics Development until with the purpose of improving child statistics.
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