

## **UNICEF, WHO, UNDP AND UNESCO IN UZBEKISTAN: PRIORITY AREAS OF COOPERATION**

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Cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and international organizations plays a vital role in the country's reform process, modernization, and sustainable development. Particularly important in this context are partnerships with key specialized United Nations agencies — UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, and UNESCO. Their activities cover areas that are of strategic importance for Uzbekistan, such as healthcare, education, social protection, environmental sustainability, institutional development, and cultural heritage preservation. These organizations contribute to strengthening human capital, improving the quality of life, and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted under the UN's global agenda. This article provides an overview of the main areas of cooperation between Uzbekistan and these UN agencies and analyzes their contribution to national reforms and the country's international integration.

### **1. UNICEF: Child Rights Protection and Inclusive Development**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been operating in Uzbekistan since 1994 and has since become one of the country's most active partners in child rights protection. Key areas of cooperation include:

- ensuring the rights of children and adolescents,
- developing inclusive education systems,
- protecting maternal and child health,
- supporting the social protection system.

UNICEF provides technical and expert assistance in the development and implementation of state policies aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fund actively contributes to legislative reforms and promotes child participation in decision-making processes, especially in rural and remote areas. In 2022, with UNICEF's support, the National Action Plan for Child Rights was developed to enhance inter-agency coordination.

Early childhood development is a major focus area. In partnership with the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, pilot projects are being implemented to introduce inclusive practices and train educators. As part of violence prevention initiatives, training programs have been conducted for law enforcement officers, educators, and social workers. UNICEF also facilitates access to services for children with disabilities and promotes their social integration.

### **2. WHO: Healthcare System Reform**

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides significant support to Uzbekistan in modernizing its healthcare system and strengthening public health. Key cooperation areas include:

- prevention of infectious and non-communicable diseases,
- development of primary healthcare (PHC),
- health education and vaccination campaigns,
- healthcare digitalization,
- mental health and maternal and child health.

WHO played a critical role in supporting Uzbekistan's COVID-19 response by supplying personal protective equipment, medical tools, and assistance in organizing mass vaccination.

Between 2021 and 2023, over 10,000 healthcare professionals were trained under WHO protocols for COVID-19 patient management.

In PHC development, WHO is supporting the introduction of family medicine and expanding the role of general practitioners. Electronic health monitoring systems, including digital vaccination cards, are being implemented with WHO's assistance. National programs for combating diabetes, tuberculosis, hypertension, and mental health disorders have also been launched.

### **3. UNDP: Sustainable Development and Innovation**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a long-standing partner of Uzbekistan in promoting sustainable economic and social development. Since the country's independence, UNDP has implemented hundreds of projects. Main cooperation areas include:

- promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth,
- supporting innovation and digital transformation,
- environmental protection and climate resilience,
- institutional development and rule of law.

Special attention is given to the Aral Sea region, which has suffered from an ecological disaster. In Karakalpakstan, projects are underway for afforestation, sustainable agriculture, and job creation for women and youth. In 2023, a green energy initiative provided solar panels to remote villages, bringing electricity to over 5,000 residents.

In the field of digitalization, UNDP collaborates with the government on creating a unified e-government platform and training civil servants in digital governance. Programs are also being implemented to promote women's entrepreneurship and improve financial literacy in rural areas.

### **4. UNESCO: Education, Culture and Science**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) actively supports Uzbekistan in promoting cultural dialogue, modernizing education, and strengthening scientific capacity. Key cooperation areas include:

- preservation of cultural heritage,
- development of the education system,
- support for science and innovation,
- strengthening international academic and cultural relations.

Uzbekistan possesses a rich historical and architectural legacy, and UNESCO is involved in the preservation and restoration of endangered sites. Cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. In recent years, joint programs have been launched to protect intangible cultural heritage, including traditional crafts, music, cuisine, and oral folklore.

In education, UNESCO supports the integration of modern teaching methods, digital technologies, and sustainable development concepts into curricula. Teacher training initiatives are underway, along with pilot programs in rural schools on ICT use. UNESCO also fosters participation of Uzbek scientists in international research and innovation networks.

### **Conclusion**

Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and UNESCO has a multifaceted impact on the country's development. Through this collaboration, systemic reforms are being carried out in healthcare, education, environmental protection, social policy, and governance. International support not only helps address internal challenges but also strengthens Uzbekistan's role as an active member of the global community.

Given modern challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and demographic shifts, the role of UN agencies remains strategically important. Going forward, key focus areas are expected to include sustainable resource management, mental health services, inclusive education, and regional cooperation in Central Asia. Expanding partnerships with UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and UNESCO will be vital to Uzbekistan's successful progress toward sustainable development, human rights, and societal modernization.

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