

Newsletter of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Kazakhstan

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Neonatologists in Eastern Kazakhstan undergo training on modern methods of treatment of mothers and newborns

International expert in neonatology Dmitro Dobryanskiy on UNICEF's invitation held training for neonatologists in East Kazakhstan Region on effective prenatal care. In addition to the theory, neonatologists also learned how to use high technology equipment on intensive care, which is nearly in all medical institutions in the region.

The training was held at the City Maternity Hospital No2 in Semey city, and workers of the Semey State Medical University, the Prenatal Centre, Maternity Hospital No3, the Scientific and Research Dermatovenerologic Institute (Almaty) as well as the Almaty State University for Enhancing Doctors' Skills participated in the training as co-trainers.

A total of 39 medical workers from Semey and Ust-Kamenogorsk cities as well as from districts of East Kazakhstan Region and staff of the Midwifery Gynecology Department of the Semey State Medical University took part in the training.

The problem of child and maternal mortality was prioritized by Health Minister Zhaksylyk Dorskaliyev, and immediate measures should be taken to solve it. In this connection, the following modules of the training were very important – on safe motherhood and effective prenatal care, examination of newborns, baby delivery and prevention of infections which can be transmitted from mother to child.

During the training it turned out that despite many years of efforts, not all recommended effective prenatal technologies, presented at the training, are introduced in medical institutions (both in midwifery and neonatal practices). In particular, the observation of the state of newborns is not conducted properly, mothers are not involved in this process either; the care of the babies born through cesarean section is weak; most maternity hospitals are not equipped with the necessary amount of simple equipment for reanimation of newborns, which casts doubt on the real and right use of this important technology in practice and etc. The institutions are equipped with expensive high-technology equipment for intensive care but the personnel are not trained on how to use it. There is neither necessary infrastructure nor diagnostic opportunities and nor there is enough equipment for basic care of newborns (mattresses, beds with heating, reanimation equipment, infant incubators, phototherapy and etc).

The participants in the training supported the idea to carry out interactive training courses in the future and discuss peculiarities of everyday clinical practice in order to better understand the essence of the training and apply it in different aspects of midwifery and prenatal practice as well as to learn new skills in clinical practice.

Youth health centres are unique approach to healthcare of adolescents and young people

A total of 10 youth health centres are functioning now in Kazakhstan with UNICEF's support, including two in Semey city. The centres' work is unique: adolescents and young people go there

to receive reliable information on issues of health, development, prevention of bad habits, reproductive health, and etc.

Special training for personnel of youth health centres was held on 24-26 August 2009 at the Semey State Medical University. Personnel of youth health centres, teachers of higher educational institutions and colleges in Semey, chief doctors of clinics as well as social workers, psychologists and volunteers (38 people in total) took part in the training course.

The topic, format of the training course and trainers were provided by the Demeu youth health centre (Astana)¹. At UNICEF's support, the first youth health centre was set up at the Demeu centre for primary health care. The highly-qualified specialists now work there who were trained by personnel of the Social Work School of the Columbia University (the USA) and social work experts from the UK, Kenya, and the CIS. The Centre's experience of establishing a Kazakhstan model of socially oriented primary health care, the highly-qualified personnel as well as the new legal basis on social work make it possible to replicate the experience throughout the country.

According to MONEE 2008, UNICEF's social development report on Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, Kazakhstan comes second in the numbers of mortality among adolescents. This dire figure makes us understand how it is important to render psychological help to adolescents and young people. That is why the training's main goal was to stress the unique role of youth health centres in improving the health of adolescents and young people, to discuss ways to improve and develop youth health centres and train volunteers. Also, the training course considered age peculiarities adolescents. The participants learned basics of neurolingual programming and psychotherapy of crisis situations.

The participants in the training expressed the will to learn about skills of effective communication, skills on consulting adolescents and young people, prevention of risky behavior of adolescents (prevention of unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, family planning), basic strategies of work of youth health centres, skills of public speaking and propaganda of healthy life style.

UNICEF launches campaign on importance of consuming food products enriched with vitamins and minerals

For the purpose of iron deficiency anemia (IDA) and its consequences prevention among children and women of reproductive age, UNICEF Kazakhstan initiates communication and advocacy campaign on improving the knowledge of the population about significance of the consumption of foodstuff enriched with vitamins and minerals.

As the Kazakh President signed the Code on Health and Healthcare System on 18 September 2009, Kazakhstan became another country where the fortification of flour is necessary as part of public healthcare programme. The Code provides for the mandatory fortification of wheat flour of the highest and 1st grade quality with iron, folic acid, zinc, riboflavin and thiamine.

Thanks to flour fortification, through bread and other products made of fortified flour consumers will be receiving necessary vitamins. Populations in Central Asia will also benefit from flour fortification in Kazakhstan since they consume Kazakh flour. The flour fortification programme is to cover 70 per cent of Kazakhstan's population (over 11 million people) and 15 million people in Central Asian countries which import Kazakh flour.

¹ The Demeu Centre is the only organization in Kazakhstan which successfully introduced complex medical, social and psychological services in primary health care.

According to the Kazakh Nutrition Academy, a Kazakh citizen consumes about 220 grams of white flour every day. The addition of vitamins and minerals in flour will not change consumers' preferences nor will it make them buy additional food products.



The campaign on mandatory flour fortification started five years ago. UNICEF, the Kazakh Nutrition Academy, the Health Ministry and a working group of Kazakh Parliament as well as the Kazakhstan Union of Grain Producers and Bakers were involved in the process. Thanks to the grants from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, which were managed by Asian Bank of Development, 16 mills were provided with feeders and substances on favourable conditions for two years. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition provided funds for the social mobilization campaign in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan produces over 5mln tons of flour annually. At the moment, 7 mills produce fortified flour, 25 mills will start fortifying within next few months and the rest will start fortifying within the next three years.

The state control of quality will be carried out by the sanitation and epidemiological service, which will issue the quality certificate. Every enterprise, including mills, which are involved in fortification, will carry out semi-quality analysis through stop-testing for internal control during production.

The campaign will involve production of promotional video and audio reels to spread the benefits of enriched flour consumption, public informative films for children and teachers, arrangement of workshops for journalists, NGOs and flour millers, as well as organization of contest among representatives of mass media for best highlighting the benefits of consumption of products baked from enriched flour.

“UNICEF has gained an experience in conducting communication campaigns in Kazakhstan”, - UNICEF Representative Hanna Singer said at a UNICEF media workshop held for journalists from all over Kazakhstan. Mrs. Hanaa Singer reported: “As a result of the campaign on raising the population awareness about iodized salt consumption launched in 1999, the consumption level increased to 92% in 2006 compared to 29 % in 1999.”, and concluded: “In this regard, our great hope is to find support from mass media representatives in this issue, which is vitally important for the population of Kazakhstan”.

East Kazakhstan Region and UNICEF sign memo of understanding

“We highly appreciate the will of the East Kazakhstan Region’s leadership to ensure growth and development of children as well as the observation of their rights. This is particularly important to us in the run-up to the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is a landmark in creating a world fit for children,” said UNICEF Representative Hanaa Singer at the ceremony to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.



Semipalatinsk Testing Ground (Abraly, Beskaragay, Kurchatov, Brodulikha).

UNICEF has been working in the region since 2005. It was this region that UNICEF's Child Friendly City Initiative started, a child-friendly school project was tested, and family support and youth health centres were created as well as measures were taken to include children with special needs in preschool educational institutions and involve them in sports activities. The Memorandum lays grounds for further cooperation between UNICEF and East Kazakhstan Region.

New methods of providing medical and social care are also applied in the districts in East Kazakhstan Region suffered from the nuclear tests at the former

Round-table held to discuss Semipalatinsk area

A round table meeting, which was held at the UNDP in Astana on 29 September 2009, was attended by the heads of UN agencies which are working in the Semipalatinsk area (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, International Atomic Energy Agency), General Director of the Kazakh Nuclear Centre Kairat Kadyrzhanov as well as the Japanese ambassador in Kazakhstan Natsui Sigeo.

The participants discussed the problem of nuclear safety on the territory of the former Semipalatinsk Nuclear Ground, the social and economic situation of the population there as well as issues of further assistance to the people who have been suffering from the aftermath of nuclear tests and institutional support for local authorities from the state and donor organizations.

At the moment, a low birth rate is being observed in East Kazakhstan Pavlodar and Karaganda Regions² which were bordering on the former Nuclear Testing Ground (17 babies per 1,000 in 2008), whereas the mortality rate is the highest in the country (13 people per 1,000 in Karaganda and East Kazakhstan Regions and 11 per 1,000 in Pavlodar Region).

Despite the fact that the GDP per capita is above the national average there, those regions are among the six regions where the life span is the shortest in the country (65.81 years in East Kazakhstan and Karaganda Regions, 66.48 years in Pavlodar Region, the average figure for the country is 67.11 years). The analysis of the economic situation revealed the low purchasing capacity of the population, the weak development of the market, a weak infrastructure (roads and communications), difficulties with selling commodities and the remoteness of trade centres.

UNICEF analyzes situation with children within Child-Friendly City Initiative, reviews mid-term progress on 'Enhancing Human Security in the Former Nuclear Test Site of Semipalatinsk (Semey)' programme

The Government of Kazakhstan has undertaken important commitments towards children over the past 15 years. It follows up on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and on meeting the goals set by an outcome document of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children – "A World Fit for Children" Declaration and the Plan of Action.

² According to the archive data, about 1.5 million people were residing in the Semipalatinsk area and they were exposed to nuclear radiation

Actions to fulfill such critical objectives, however, cannot be confined at the central government level only. Therefore, the Kazakh Government in cooperation with UNICEF is promoting the Child-Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) - a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children's rights. To meet it effectively, local governments have a principal role to play to increasingly commit and grant priority to children.

Mr. Ray Lorenzo, a UNICEF international consultant, visited Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Almaty and Astana on 2-14 September 2009 as part the CFCI introduction initiative in Kazakhstan, and, in addition, carried out a mid-term assessment of UNICEF interventions in the Semipalatinsk region (within the "Enhancing Human Security in the Former Nuclear Test Site of Semipalatinsk" project) and advised on further actions to be taken by UNICEF in the region.

The mission included meetings with stakeholders concerned to overview, discuss, analyze and summarize the situation when it regards CFC launching, and, hence, to further propose on a set of measures/interventions that need to be undertaken by the UNICEF and local authorities to introduce CFCI; to discuss and prioritize feasible reforms at local levels, and describe data of technical assistance required to make decisions on the initiative.

UNICEF looks into impact of financial, economic crisis on child wellbeing in Kazakhstan

UNICEF in cooperation with the Overseas Development Institute (the UK) and the National Analytical Centre under the Government and the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan is commissioning the Assessment of the Impact of the Financial and Economic Crisis on Child Wellbeing in Kazakhstan in order to support the Kazakh Government in generating policy responses to mitigate the impact of the financial and economic crisis on child wellbeing and prevent a slowdown in the progress made so far towards achievement of MDGs,

On 24 August – 9 September 2009, a mission of international and national experts visited Astana, Almaty, Shymkent and Baidibek District in South Kazakshtan Region, and Karaganda to meet with the government, non-government and international partners and households and obtain data and informed on the developments relating to the financial crisis impact in the country and to further: (i) gain a better understanding of the financial and economic crisis impact on child wellbeing, including poverty and social exclusion of children; (ii) support broad-based dialogue on policy alternatives, (iii) generate policy alternatives or compensatory mechanisms to mitigate the social impact of the crisis, and (iv) to provide an entry point for the UNICEF Country Office in Kazakhstan for assessing the short and medium term impact of the financial crisis.

The Assessment's findings and recommendations will be shared with the Government of Kazakhstan in late October 2009 and will be later on publicly discussed at the round table in November 2009.

About UNICEF. *UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.*

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