



THE HARDEST JOB

Parenthood — A Lifetime Assignment

Being a parent is the most awesome responsibility any mature person is likely to have. Bringing a child in the world is doing what comes naturally, but rearing that child to healthy adulthood is a daily challenge and for most, a daunting one. There are so many things to consider — it is truly interdisciplinary and not a duty that one can retire from. Once a parent, forever a parent.

UNICEF recognizes that parents out of ignorance or economic and social hardships are making choices which run contrary to what is in the best interests of the child.

In Tajikistan, lack of basic parental skills is affecting children at the most fundamental level and at the earliest ages. UNICEF's better parenting initiative is designed to address many of the health-related

concerns that impede a child's normal development. Attention will be given to low knowledge and skills on child care management and childhood illnesses at home. Efforts will be made to educate parents on how to recognize the danger signs of diseases, when to seek medical intervention and the importance of longer-term breastfeeding.

Public information networks will be established within pilot districts to disseminate posters and information sheets that simply, but effectively communicate knowledge on nutrition, breastfeeding, disease control, disease identification and how to go about seeking assistance.

Collaboration with NGOs and other international agencies is integral to implementation.

Ignorance is not Bliss

There is a serious lack of awareness by parents, particularly young mothers of the inter-relationship of childhood illnesses, birth registration and good nutrition.

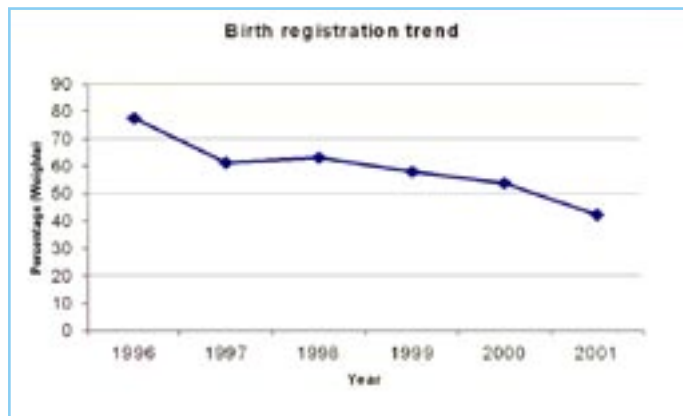
Weaning practices and knowledge of nutrition amongst parents is generally poor. From the age of six months, infants are being fed the same food as adults, including tea, bread and sugar.

Breastfeeding is more evident in rural areas, but only 19 percent of infants less than four months are "exclusively" breastfed. A survey conducted in 2003 found that more than 50 percent of women at reproductive age and children under five were suffering from anemia and iodine deficiency disorders. Thus, malnutrition seen amongst young women, echoes back on to the infants and children — in effect, creating a vicious cycle of disease and illness.



Birth registration has a profound affect on the short and long-term well-being of children in Tajikistan. There is of course, the obvious official recognition that the child exists. Registration also means that a child will be able to travel internally and internationally, have access to existing or future social benefits and enjoy higher education.

The ripple effect of parents not registering their children early also has an impact on government policy. Under-registration means that demographic statistics are incomplete and inaccurate. Without good data, authorities cannot analyze trends and make appropriate policy decisions or allocate resources efficiently.



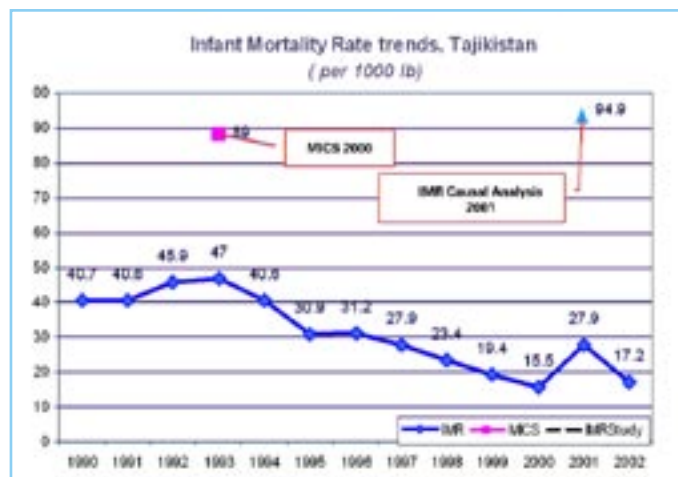
PROJECT STRATEGY & EXPECTED RESULTS

UNICEF's concept of childhood development is rooted in a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers. At its core is the principle of bringing under one umbrella early learning, health, nutrition, protection and water and sanitation to families and communities.

At the community and family levels emphasis is being placed on improving proper child-care practices, particularly the empowerment of primary child-caregivers, especially young families, but also explicitly involving elders in the community. At the community level, UNICEF is devoting resources to strengthening institutional capacities for effective service delivery.

At the national level actions are being taken on national policy development to standardize quality MCH services, including prevention of mother-to child transmission of HIV, capacity-building and financial sustainability. Specific results include:

- National policy and strategies on Early Child Care & Development designed and integrated into existing health and education policies;
- 70 percent of parents and caregivers will improve their knowledge and practices on integrated early child care development and psycho-social stimulation in pilot districts;
- Four early child care centers at regional and district levels will be established; and
- 90 percent of lactating women will practice exclusive breastfeeding.



UNICEF estimates the under-five mortality rate to be 118 per 1,000. This ranks as the 40th worst in the world. According to official statistics, the infant mortality rate (IMR) dropped from 40.7 to 27.9 between 1990 and 2001; however, surveys conducted by UNICEF in 2000 and 2001 suggest the rate during this period was much higher, i.e. between 78 to 95 per 1,000 live births — more than a doubling of official statistics and the highest IMR in the Central Asia. Discrepancies such as this lead to under-estimations of resources needed, including the flow of international assistance.

Major causes of infant and child deaths are infectious diseases, acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and malnutrition, compounded by poor management of illnesses at the family level. All can be linked to inadequate prenatal care, which contributes to low birth weight and congenital abnormalities.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO-DATE

- Inter-sectoral National Early Child Care & Development Group established;
- Assessment survey, "Children's and Families' Needs Assessment" completed;
- Better Parenting messages and training tools integrated into IMCI & MCH programme;
- Training package on Early Childhood Development and Better Parenting Initiatives developed; and
- Eleven maternity hospitals certified as 'baby friendly'.

APPEAL SUMMARY 2005-2009 (US\$)

Mother & child Health Services	1.200,000
Better Parental Initiatives	330,000
Programme Support	300,000
Budget Appeal to Donors	1.830,000
UNICEF Contribution	880,000
TOTAL BUDGET	2.710,000