



## **SAVE THE CHILDREN TAJIKISTAN CHILD PROTECTION SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**



**May - September 2011**

## Table of Contents

1.0	Acknowledgement.....	3
2.0	Terminology .....	4
3.0	Executive Summary.....	5
3.1	Gaps and Recommendations .....	8
4.0	Introduction .....	10
5.0	Methodology.....	12
6.0	Main Findings.....	13
6.1	Education System .....	16
6.2	Awareness on child rights.....	17
6.3	Child Labour /Hazardous work .....	17
6.4	Violence Against Children .....	18
6.4.1	Physical and Humiliating Punishment.....	18
6.4.2	Gender Based Discrimination and Violence .....	19
6.4.3	Physical Harm .....	19
6.5	Harmful Traditional Practices .....	20
6.5.1	Child Marriage.....	20
6.5.2	Attitudes towards girl child .....	21
6.5.3	Use of Cradle (Gahvora) .....	22
6.5.4	Kolak (removing bad blood) .....	25
6.6	Institutionalization.....	25
6.7	Sexual Abuse .....	26
7.0	Existing Child Protection Interventions .....	27
8.0	Legal Framework for Child Protection duty bearers.....	27
9.0	Conclusion.....	29
10.0	Annexes .....	29
10.1	Annex 1: Ongoing Child Protection Interventions.....	29
10.2	Annex 2: Legal System in Tajikistan .....	29
10.3	Annex 3: Referral Contacts for CP Concerns.....	29
10.4	Annex 4: Interview and FGD tools.....	29

## **1.0 Acknowledgement**

This child protection situational analysis has been completed as a combined effort of Save the Children staff in Dushanbe and KurganTube Offices, local government officials, child protection actors and volunteers.

In particular, we would like to thank William Lynch, the Country Director at Save the Children Tajikistan, who supported us in the entire process. Our gratitude also goes to the Chairman of the City and the Head of the Child Rights Department in Isfara City, who supported the process. Many thanks to the volunteers from Red Crescent Society in Rasht Valley, social workers in Isfara City, and community members in Khatlon Region who participated in data collection. For the volunteers in Dushanbe City who participated in data entry and data translation, thank you.

We are also thankful to the children for devoting their valuable time by providing us with constructive feedback and sharing their stories.

Manzura Bakhtdavlatova and Yvonne Agengo

Child Protection Specialists

2011

## **2.0 Terminology**

1. CBO – Community Based Organizations
2. CEDAW - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
3. CP - Child Protection
4. DRD – Direct Rule Districts
5. ILO – International Labour Organization
6. INGO – International Non-Government Organizations
7. MLSP – Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
8. NGO – Non-Government Organization
9. UNCRC – United Nations Convention on Child Rights
10. WFCL – Worst Form of Child Labour

### 3.0 Executive Summary

Children in Tajikistan face many Child Protection (CP) issues and challenges. The CP issues include the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL), domestic work, corporal punishment at homes and schools, domestic violence, gender based discrimination and violence, sexual abuse, physical harm, institutionalization, and high levels of school dropout, especially among girls.

Among the CP challenges the most common were lack of access to services and awareness about child rights and protection issues among children and caregivers.

Children do not have a voice or participate in decisions that affect them as there are no mechanisms to ensure this. They are also unaware of the existence of CP systems and protection services.

The cycle of CP violations and issues begins right from birth when some harmful traditional practices such as cutting “kolak” and the use of the traditional cradle “gahvora” puts the growth and development of the child both physically and mentally at risk. This continues to the early childhood years when the children have no access to pre-schools and then lack a decent quality of education at primary school. Many children, especially those whose family members have migrated, must work to earn money in order to support the family members that are left behind. These children sometimes are forced to engage in some of the WFCL and/or in domestic chores.

Corporal punishment is regarded as an appropriate way of disciplining children in both homes and schools. This can negatively affect children’s behaviour when they grow up as they become accustomed to this method of discipline and these values are ingrained in them, inevitably perpetuating a cycle of violence with their children.

Gender based discrimination and violence put the girl child at a great risk. They have to be handed over to the boys’ family upon marriage. Therefore many families do not invest in girls’ education. The girls usually drop out before completing high school in order to engage in day to day household chores and to prepare for marriage. Their freedom of movement and recreational activities beyond the household are restricted by the adult counterparts for fear that they may bring “*shame to the family*”. While the campaign against early childhood marriage has had a positive impact, the families are attempting to get the girls married as soon as they reach 18 years old. Mothers want to get their daughters married off as early as legally possible due to societal pressure and fears that if they wait it will be too late.

The harmful traditional practices that affect the survival and development of both boys and girls need to be urgently addressed. These include the practice of binding and putting children in the “*traditional cradle*” for an average of 20 hours a day and the practice of “Kolak”, which involves cutting newborn children in order to remove “*bad blood*”.

Institutionalization of children and family separation is another major issue; this is due to the increasing numbers of people migrating to Russia and other countries to seek work. While the Child Protection Situational Analysis in Tajikistan – 2011

government and communities are highly dependent on remittances sent by migrant workers, it has many negative impacts on the social lives of women and children who are left behind. As a result, families are separated and marriages break down. Children end up in institutions and in kinship care where they face various forms of institutional violence and engage in domestic work and other hazardous forms of work outside of these institutions.

While the Government has signed the important international conventions and treaties and has national legislations and policies in place, children and caregivers have a low awareness on their rights and the existence of the various child protection systems that can deal with and respond to their issues. Information campaigns should be provided to communities to raise their awareness about the existing child protection systems and on child rights and protection issues in general. A proper, functional mechanism should be in place to prevent and respond to any CP issues that arise.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

Current data on child protection violations is not readily available in Tajikistan, either from the government or other child protection actors. The government's Child Rights Department under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), however maintains a private database on children in conflict with the law, street children and children with disabilities. In order to understand the current child protection situation, and to have current data on child protection for future programming, this child protection situational analysis was undertaken by Save the Children between May and September 2011.

This situational analysis report gives an overview of the child protection situation in Tajikistan. Specifically, it highlights the views of community members on what the child protection violations are and further provides information on the ongoing interventions being undertaken by government and NGOs. The report gives recommendations for child protection interventions based on the suggestions of the children themselves, the community, the child protection actors interviewed and it also undertakes a gap analysis.

Children in the community were asked what child protection violations they had faced which were then ranked in terms of priority concerns. The views of children as well as adults' perceptions of the child protection situation were explored, and this gave an indication of what violations children in the community are exposed to. The analysis of community perceptions is important because child protection violations in most cases and in different contexts are not usually reported, as the violations are either viewed as the norm or if reported it would bring shame to the family's honour. This came up in this assessment, as respondents remarked that: *“If my daughter was abused I would want to report to the police but we are afraid about this because the community will say bad things about our daughters”*.

### **Limitations of this study:**

Efforts have been made to ensure that the study is representative of the entire country and steps have been taken to talk to communities and children from different ethnic and geographical areas

however due to limited resources and time frame the study is limited in its geographical coverage. This study covers a variety of CP issues exemplifying the prevailing concerns faced by many children in Tajikistan.

## **Findings:**

### **Child Protection issues:**

The most reported child protection violation was working children, many of them engaged in the WFCL, with the highest percentage reported by 53% of the boys in DRD and 45% of the girls in Isfara. The issue that emerged is that not only are the children working for long hours but also have to face violence and abuse from their employers or from the family members where they live. This was followed by corporal punishment at home, reported by 50% of all girls and 48% of the boys interviewed in Isfara, and 47% of the boys in DRD. 35% of these children are from migrant families, where one or both parents have migrated to Russia for job purposes. The children of these migrant workers are often engaged in domestic work and exposed to domestic violence by extended family members.

Children also reported cases of domestic violence, targeted at girls and mothers. In ninety-six cases women who were living with their in-laws, many of whom are merely in their teens, experienced different forms of violence, which prompted them to return to their father's homes. The situation remains unchanged, though, as the women faces violence in their parental home families as well.

Overall, girls reported higher percentages of verbal and sexual abuse by strangers when compared to boys. The fact that sexual abuse was only reported by 5% of the children should not be misconstrued as an indication that the problem does not exist. It is difficult to solicit response on such sensitive issues without first developing a close working relationship with the respondents and this was not possible due to time constraints. From a literature review and discussions with other NGOs, it appears that sexual abuse is a problem faced by many children in the community. Currently, the NGO "Girls' Support Service", in collaboration with the Government of Tajikistan, runs an interim centre for girls at risk/victims of sexual abuse. This service is aimed at girls between the ages of 10 and 18 who have been, or are at risk of being sexually abused, trafficked or exploited, offering educational, medical, psychological and social services, training local authority, law enforcement and NGO representatives, with the aim to combat impunity for perpetrators of abuse<sup>1</sup>.

Gender based discrimination and boy preference is the norm and it was reported that parents, both mothers and fathers, valued and preferred the boy child to the girl child, leading to problems such as girls dropping out of school, parents not investing in girls' education and mothers living in fear of domestic violence and risk being divorced if they delivered girls.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/>

## **Child Rights knowledge and perceptions:**

Community perceptions on child protection were also analyzed during this assessment. The analysis gives an indication of how the community may perpetuate or prevent child protection violations. Out of all the respondents interviewed, most believed that children from families considered vulnerable should be sent into institutions as they believed that children were provided with better opportunities in these institutions.

Forty-five per cent of interviewed adults in all three regions, 55% of the children in Isfara and 50% of the children in Rasht claimed to be aware about child rights. In contrast, only 6% of the children interviewed in Khatlon region had information on child rights. Most of the adult respondents had learnt about child rights through the radio and television, while children got this information mainly from teachers and the television and radio. It is evident that their knowledge and perception about Child Protection is either limited or at best theoretically based as their behavior, attitude and practice, in some cases, are completely violated according to the child right principles.

With regard to prevention and response to child protection violations, the community members mentioned government committees and village heads as a strength. The majority of children mentioned that when faced with child protection problems, they would report to their parents, while the parents mentioned that they would either solve the issue themselves or report to the police. However, on further probing, the community members were not aware of exactly how and to whom they would go about reporting these violations. The biggest barrier to reporting was lack of information about where to report and to whom. While in theory a government system exists to respond to “serious” child protection issues, there is limited capacity in terms of case management and referrals. There are no mechanisms to deal with Child protection violation issues and the community has little information about the systems in place.

### **3.1 Gaps and Recommendations**

1. **Services for Children affected by violence:** while services exist for women who face domestic violence, there is a gap in providing the same services for children and where these services do exist, the children and community members are not aware of it. There is little effort in solving the root cause of the problem but the focus is on dealing with the manifestations.
2. **Gender Based Discrimination:** Negative attitudes towards girl children leads to multiple vulnerabilities: lack of educational opportunities, lack of free/recreational time, restriction of rights on the pretext of protection, early marriages, viewing the girl child as a liability are some of the protection issues they face.
3. **Domestic violence:** Awareness raising/parenting sessions among community members to highlight the effects of domestic violence on the child in that environment is important. This should go hand in hand with community sessions to highlight the effects of violence directed



towards children, particularly girls. The impact of domestic violence on children needs to be further assessed.

4. **Education:** While there are programs focusing on girl child education, awareness and programming to influence behavior change that will protect the life and the development of a girl child at the community level is lacking.
5. **Physical and Humiliating Punishment:** Corporal punishment is considered a normal means of disciplining a child. In order to curb corporal punishment, teacher training on alternative forms of discipline should be done, as well as advocacy to the government to ban the use of corporal punishment in school and at home. This needs to go hand in hand with Positive Parenting programs in communities. Save the Children should engage in advocacy with the government of Tajikistan to impose a ban on corporal punishment, and work with teachers in schools and with parents and community members to develop awareness and use of alternative forms of discipline.
6. **Child Participation and Access:** At present, parents and community members approach the government committee to have child rights issues solved, but children do not have a mechanism to directly report their concerns. The link between the children and this committee should be strengthened and made safe (confidential and effective) for children to voice their concerns when faced with violence at home.
7. **Working children:** Most children mix work and education however to reduce the hours that children work after school the government needs to improve on the education component, more needs to be done in terms of lobbying the government to provide quality education (including after school physical education for girls) and qualified and trained teachers.
8. **Harmful traditional Practices including early marriage:** Sustained behavioral change communication programs are lacking to deal with community perceptions and practices on issues such as (1) the use of cradle that prevents exclusive breastfeeding, lack of physical and emotional support to the child and has a negative impact on the physical and mental development of the child and hygiene issues; (2) cutting “Kolak” a wound into the child’s body and drain blood to ‘cure the child’ and (3) early marriages, while there is a general awareness that girls should not get married before the age of 18 the issue of immediate marriage upon reaching the age of 18 needs to be dealt with.
9. **Accountability:** Children should be involved in preparing the alternative report for the UNCRC by giving their views on how the different articles are being implemented or are affecting their lives. Child participation in the process and consistent follow-up will ensure that the government is accountable to the children and ensure that there is budget for children allocation.
10. **Institutionalization and kinship care:** Extended family and Kinship care is traditionally practiced while institutions are preferred and viewed preferably. To improve quality of care for children in alternative care, government social workers should be trained and supported in establishing and maintaining a case management system for follow up on children in need of alternative care. Minimum standards of care should be established for all forms of alternative care including institutions, Best Interest Determination Committees established and trained and Community Based Monitoring mechanisms established.
11. **Mine Risk Education (MRE) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** MRE programs needs to be undertaken in areas where mines have been identified as a risk and DRR programs need to be incorporated in school curriculum’s, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.

12. **Community Capacity building and Awareness Programs:** There is a need to undertake many child rights and protection issues especially on growth and development, gender issues, and harmful traditional practises.
13. **Community Awareness Raising on Physical Harm:** The Government of Tajikistan should acknowledge the practice of the cutting and ban it. The government should raise the awareness of the community on the physical harm, pain and suffering it causes to children due to cutting practice.
14. **Community Awareness Raising on Early Childhood Development:**
  - The use of the cradle, while acknowledged to be a practical process, should be limited and combined with emotional connection between child and caregiver. The government should ensure that its citizens are aware of all spheres of development that a child needs, particularly in the early stages of life. This includes physical, emotional and cognitive growth.
  - The Government and civil society actors should invest and raise awareness on early childhood development through trainings, seminars and sharing information materials for medical personnel at hospitals as well as social workers. Medical personnel and social workers are a useful media for sharing information with mothers on early childhood development.
  - The government and civil society actors should raise the awareness of women on prenatal care and exclusive breastfeeding through trainings for women and medical personnel at homes and in hospitals. The government should raise the awareness of parents on minimum standards of care for children through community trainings.

#### **4. Introduction**

Tajikistan has a population of approximately 7,627, 200<sup>2</sup>. Children aged 0 – 14 years account for 33.9% of the population, and the age group 15 – 64 accounts for 62.7%, while those aged over 65 are estimated to be 3.4% of the total population. The results of the national census conducted in 2010 are yet to be released. Administratively, Tajikistan is divided into four regions: Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), Khatlon, Sughd and the Direct Rule Districts near the capital, Dushanbe. Modelled on the Presidential form of governance, Tajikistan had its last elections in 2006 and referendum to amend the constitution in 2003.

Agriculture dominates the economy of Tajikistan, with cotton being the most important commodity for export. In 2010 the Government banned the use of students in raw cotton harvest, but according to an IOM research<sup>3</sup>, school children were still used in cotton campaigns, especially in the Khatlon and Sughd regions. The data collected during the survey shows that at least 28% of the students spend between 30 and 90 days per year picking cotton, therefore missing school for a long period of time. In 2010 most families (52%) had up to 2 children involved in the harvest. Both groups acknowledge the destructive role of cotton picking on children's health and education, but while in the past children and students were forcibly recruited by the authorities to

---

<sup>2</sup> CIA World Fact Book

<sup>3</sup> Monitoring of child labour use in the cotton fields in Tajikistan, IOM International Organization for Migration, May 2011

work in the cotton fields, nowadays parents have no other choice than to bring their children to the fields in order for them to contribute towards the family budget.

While most people rely on food from farms for consumption, the food security situation in the country is worsening, affecting all spheres of life, including education, health and nutrition and migration patterns. Reports reveal that the number of meals eaten daily has decreased, staple food prices are soaring, there is low dietary diversity and food stocks are low.<sup>4</sup> According to the World Food Programme, the poorest groups of the population spend over 70% of their income on food. Around 10% of the rural population, or 1.4 million people, are estimated to be chronically food insecure and a further 17% very vulnerable to food security<sup>5</sup>.

In recent years, labour migration and associated remittances have become very important in the Tajik economy; various estimations from several hundred thousand to more than a million Tajik migrants work in Russia and some other countries on a permanent or seasonal basis, which has broad consequences on the families left behind, particularly on children. Remittances have emerged as the main source of imports financing, outstripping official loans and grants. In 2006, IMF estimated that remittances contributed to 33% of GDP.<sup>6</sup>

## **Save the Children**

Save the Children has been present in Central Asia since 1994. The organization has in the past implemented emergency, recovery and development projects including child protection programmes. Tajikistan is a natural disaster prone area, with cases of frequent flooding, avalanches, and mudslides. The region is also prone to earthquakes. In 2010-2011, the organization responded in small scale emergency response projects in child protection, targeting community members affected by floods, with the most recent being June 2011. SC has actively participated in the Universal Periodic Review stressing child rights issues. Current programming includes: Women's Empowerment (DFID), DRR (ECHO), Health (USAID), Education (Private Foundations). An FCO program that ended in April 2011, and achieved its objective of influencing the government policy makers to incorporate ILO convention No 182 to its regional action plan on the implementation of the labor and employment strategy.

In order to come up with relevant child protection programs and to align interventions with the thematic areas of the Child Protection Initiative (CPI), a Child Protection Situational Analysis was imperative. Secondary data on the child protection situation in the country goes back 3 years, yet the situation on the ground has changed, further necessitating the need for the CPSA. The CPSA explored the key child protection concerns in Tajikistan as reported by children, caregivers, child protection actors and government officials. The CPSA will serve as a document to guide the Country Office in developing programs based on identified needs and gaps.

**In analyzing the child protection situation, the researched key areas were:**

---

<sup>4</sup> Tajikistan FSMS bulletin number 8; December 2010

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/countries/Tajikistan/Overview>

<sup>6</sup> Implication of Labour Migration on Children in Tajikistan, Save the Children , April 2008  
Child Protection Situational Analysis in Tajikistan – 2011

- a) Community perceptions on child protection. An analysis of the perceptions of adults and children on a range of child protection issues indicates whether these violations exist and how the community would respond when a child is abused.
- b) Child protection violations as reported by children. It should be noted that child protection violations are not always reported, especially when it revolves around sexual abuse. The cases reported by the children were a direct indicator of existing child protection abuse.
- c) Analysis of community prevention and response mechanisms
- d) Ongoing child protection interventions
- e) Legal framework for child protection

The findings reveal the existing child protection violations, the gaps in prevention and response and existing protective structures within the country context. Community views on basic child protection problems and their causes are mentioned against the backdrop of community attitude towards boys and girls and separated families.

An overview of the current education system and of the makeup of the community is also presented in this analysis. This gives an understanding of how child protection violations can be perpetuated, prevented or how an agency can respond to these violations.

## **5. Methodology**

For this research, a wide range of respondents were interviewed to get representative data on the child protection situation. The assessment covered all four regions of Tajikistan: Khatlon region (targeting 135 people in 11 districts<sup>7</sup> where Save the Children was implementing health and nutrition projects), Direct Rule Districts (targeting 124 people in 3 districts<sup>8</sup>) and Sughd region (targeting 118 people in Isfara district in locations bordering Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Separate discussions were held in GBAO region (targeting 4 districts<sup>9</sup> focusing only on harmful traditional practices).

Selection of the different districts was based on availability of competent volunteers to undertake the survey. Volunteers from the community in Khatlon, from the Red Crescent society in Direct Rule Districts (DRD) and government social workers in Isfara supported the data collection process. A total number of 618 people, of whom 241 were adults (133 female and 108 men), and 239 children aged 11 – 17 years (119 girls and 120 boys) participated as respondents through interviews. One hundred and thirty-eight children under 10 years old also participated in focus group discussions in the 3 regions. Government personnel and child protection actors from UN agencies, I/NGOs and CBOs were interviewed and their views incorporated.

In order to find out more about traditional cradle use and the local population's point of view of this tradition today, a structured discussion on this topic was held with women. Of the seven women who took part in one of the discussions, 3 of whom were from the village named "1<sup>st</sup> of May" in Tursunzoda district, and 4 of whom were from Navobod village in Shahrinav district.

---

<sup>7</sup> These districts were Bokhtar, Jilikul, Jomi, K. Teppa, Khovaling, Kulob, Khuroson, Rumi, Sarband, Vakhsh and Vose.

<sup>8</sup> These districts were Rasht, Jirgatol and Tojikobod.

<sup>9</sup> These districts were Khorog, Darmorakht, Gund and Suchon

Save the Children staff also conducted 3 Focus Group Discussions with women in Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast region in 3 locations: Khorog city, Suchon Darmorakht, and Gund Districts.

*Sources of Information:* In order to get an informed picture of the child protection situation, a wide range of stakeholders were involved. The data collection process was facilitated by SC Child Protection staff and volunteers including the Child Protection staff in GBAO region, former project staff in Khatlon region, and volunteers of the Red Crescent Society in Rasht and government social workers in Sughd. Efforts were also made to triangulate the information with the secondary sources and available data.

The information sources for this child protection situational analysis were:

- a) Government officials from the Child Rights Department, Labor Inspection Office and Education Department (in Dushanbe, Khatlon, Direct Rule Districts and Sughd region)
- b) Child protection actors from UN agencies and NGOs/CBOs
- c) Community members, including children and caregivers (in Khatlon, DRD, Sughd and GBAO region)
- d) Hospital personnel in GBAO Region

Stakeholders' perspectives were captured through direct interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Open-ended meetings were held with government officials and child protection actors with a view toward analyzing the child protection situation, responses and gaps. Both qualitative and quantitative questionnaires were administered in Tajik language to all adults and children interviewed. While the government officials were purposively selected, the children and care givers were randomly selected from the district based on the accessibility of selected areas. The English translation is attached as annex 3.

Selection of districts for data collection was purposive, with a focus on areas where volunteers were available, and their movement feasible and affordable. The selection of respondents was random, with the data collection team moving from house to house in different villages of the selected districts. The number of female and male respondents was not equal, as this depended on the number of male and female interviewers in the different regions.

Open-ended discussions were also held with government child rights officials, specifically from the Child Rights Department and Education Department. Further discussions were conducted with UN agencies (ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR) and I/NGOs and CBOs. In all these discussions, the objective was to understand the key child protection concerns, the ongoing interventions and the existing gaps. Before the data collection, SC CP staff conducted trainings for volunteers/data collectors on SC Child Safeguarding Policy, on Child Protection and Rights, and introduced them with the assessment tools and methodology prior to the field work.

## **6. Main Findings**

A typical Tajik home is composed of an extended family all living together under the same roof however nuclear families can also be found. Upon marriage, a woman usually moves in with her husband in his parents' home. The role of the woman (daughter-in-law), under the control of the

mother-in-law, is to maintain the home (in terms of household chores/farm work and other duties as in the family, and in some instances, she may be permitted to find employment outside the house as well).

On average, the respondents mentioned that a child is somebody up to the age of 15. The belief being that they have reached maturity/puberty therefore adulthood. (Save the Child defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years)

Husbands and fathers-in-law are primarily the breadwinners. With the problem of unemployment in the country, many Tajik men travel to other countries, mostly Russia, for work, leaving their wives behind. In such cases women become solely responsible for raising children and looking after the elderly, managing the household chores, the family fields and animals. Since the wives are living with her in-laws, they do not directly receive or manage remittances which means, that women cannot devote enough time and resources to their children exposing them to neglect.

The average household size was 7. Less than 10% of all adults interviewed reported to have a household size of less than 7. There were also examples of female headed families with single mothers fending for themselves and their children and these were either all divorced women or abandoned labor migrant wives earning an average income of less than 400 somoni per month by working seasonally on other's land, running small business like sewing, baking and selling.

## Data Sheet on Child Protection Violations

The child protection violations reported during this assessment include cases of corporal punishment, institutionalization, child labor, abuse (including sexual abuse), child marriage and harmful traditional practices. Children from 2 regions, Sughd (Isfara district) and Direct Rule Districts (Rasht, Tojikobod and Jirgatal Districts) were asked if they had been faced with these child protection situations, and the responses are detailed in the table below.

Percentage of Children aged 10- 17 who reported Child Protection Violations					
	Overall	Isfara		DRD	
		Female <sup>10</sup>	Male <sup>11</sup>	Female	Male
Physically Abused by a stranger	18%	40%	17%	12%	8%
Sexually abused by a relative/someone known to child	5%	5%	3%	8%	6%
Working for more than 5 hours a day	44%	45%	41%	31%	53%
Hit by a teacher as a form of discipline	35%	29%	55%	15%	42%
Hit by parent as a form of discipline	43%	50%	48%	19%	47%

<sup>10</sup> Percentage of total number of girls interviewed who reported the child protection violation

<sup>11</sup> Percentage of total number of boys interviewed who reported the child protection violation

Child Marriage	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
----------------	----	----	----	----	----

Corporal punishment is the norm both in the school and home environment and though both children and adults view it as a child protection violation it continues. Children working are seen as the norm as they are required to contribute to family income or household chores especially in poor families. While the figure for sexual abuse is small the belief is that it is under represented due to the sensitive nature of the violence.

Perceptions of CP violations:

Percentage of children who agreed with the perceptions listed below							
Perception	Isfara		DRD		Khatlon		overall
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Children are usually abused by strangers	62%	41%	23%	33%	33%	36%	43%
Girls should ideally get married before 18	2%	31%	19%	22%	22%	27%	21%
Children make up stories to draw attention to themselves	67%	45%	46%	25%	45%	31%	43%
Children are safe in groups	98%	97%	62%	81%	43%	56%	70%
Children with disabilities are less likely to become victims of abuse	38%	55%	27%	47%	33%	38%	39%
Children in orphanages receive the best education	40%	66%	50%	83%	47%	42%	53%
working in the farm for more than 5 hours is child labour	71%	52%	27%	53%	88%	62%	63%
Abusers can be well known people in the society	57%	14%	50%	39%	24%	20%	33%
Only girls can be sexually abused	36%	45%	19%	17%	24%	33%	29%
Children with vulnerable parents should be sent to institutions	67%	59%	38%	72%	61%	60%	61%

Percentage of adults who agreed with the perceptions listed below							
Perception	Isfara		Rasht		Khatlon		Overall
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Children are usually abused by strangers	64%	21%	48%	35%	39%	39%	41%
Girls should ideally get married before 18	9%	36%	28%	16%	20%	12%	18%

Children make up stories to draw attention to themselves	58%	29%	48%	38%	39%	47%	44%
Children are safe in groups	97%	93%	64%	81%	39%	46%	61%
Children with disabilities are less likely to become victims of abuse	55%	50%	68%	62%	35%	39%	47%
Children in orphanages receive the best education	33%	100%	64%	92%	57%	65%	64%
Working in the farm for more than 5 hours is child labour	82%	64%	48%	81%	73%	67%	71%
Abusers can be well known people in the society	52%	14%	32%	38%	21%	23%	29%
Only girls can be sexually abused	42%	21%	36%	22%	25%	25%	28%
Children with vulnerable parents should be sent to institutions	52%	86%	48%	84%	53%	63%	61%
It is acceptable to hit a child as a form of discipline	36%	50%	44%	43%	29%	21%	33%

Both children and adults from Khatlon, Sughd and Direct Rule Districts were asked about their perceptions on these child protection violations. This reveals whether the violation was viewed as the norm or not. The perceptions of children can be interpreted as an influence of their environment, adults' perceptions and as an influence of their upbringing.

While the majority of children and adults do perceive children working more than 5 hours a day as child labor it is very common to find many children still engaged in work. The root cause of working children lies in family poverty. Similarly institutions are held in high regards by both children and adults as a place for receiving quality education, an issue that needs further investigation.

There is general consensus on marriage after the age of 18 years but it seems like the focus has shifted to the need to be married off immediately upon reaching this age rather than delaying marriage to enable a girl child to educate herself and be able to have an independent life.

## 6.1 Education System

Of the children interviewed, 6% from Isfara, 2% from DRD and 6% from Khatlon had dropped out of school. From this group, 68% were girls of average age 15 and 32% were boys of average age 16. Most boys drop out of school to start working (many young boys migrate to Russia to look for work as soon as they can obtain a passport). Girls' education is not considered a priority by the



families as she is perceived as a commodity that has to leave home while the boy remains and later on provides for the family.

The education system in Tajikistan is divided into pre-school for ages 2-6, primary secondary education (grades 1-4 for age group 7-10 years old), incomplete secondary education (grades 5-9 for age group 11-15 years old and complete secondary education (grades 10-11 for age group 16-17 years old). After this, children may proceed to the university. Classes are carried out in shifts, a practice that has been going on since Soviet times, hence it is the norm. Lower grade classes are conducted for up to 4 hours, each lesson taking 35 minutes for first grade classes and 45 minutes from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes while children from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> grade have lessons for up to 6 hours, each lesson taking 45 minutes.

The biggest challenge of the education system in Tajikistan is lack of qualified and motivated teachers. The reason, as stated by the head of the Education Department in one district, is that the salary package is very low. Most people who graduate as teachers seek other, better-paying career opportunities. To deal with this problem, the government official mentioned that efforts are made to engage the top graduates as teachers. At the moment, the German company *GIZ* funds teacher training for such uncertified educators in Khatlon region, to catch up on teaching practice.

Schools are also faced with challenges such as the lack of clean drinking water for children and inadequate stationery and textbooks. Education is essentially free, but children purchase their own school uniforms and stationery, and contribute to the construction of school infrastructure.

When asked about the differences between boys and girls in the community, respondents mentioned that girls were expected to attend school up to grade 9 and then drop out. Some respondents stated that:

*“Girls don’t study as well as boys because they know they will not attend higher education”.*

*“Girls work in the farm and miss some classes and cannot catch up, they get married early and do not have skills”.*

This was also mentioned by the education department representative, that girls who came from remote villages dropped out of school when they reached the higher grades: schools are too far and traditionally parents do not invest in the education of girls, due to de facto discrimination brought forth by negative traditional and religious attitudes on the roles of girls and women in the society because the girl will be married and afterward will not contribute to provide for her family.

Children mentioned that after school they help their parents and relatives with whom they live in household chores, in the farm, selling produce in the market and in taking care of their siblings. Given the few number of hours that children have in school, it is likely that these children spend most of the remaining day working.

## **6.2 Awareness on child rights**

It is important for caregivers and children to be aware of child rights. Even when the implementation of these rights is wanting, knowing their rights is a first step towards claiming them. Forty-five per cent of all adults, 55% of the children in Isfara and 50% of the children in DRD interviewed were aware about information on child rights. In contrast, only 6% of the children interviewed in Khatlon region were aware about information on child rights. Many of children in Khatlon reported they watch TV and newspaper very rare because of household chores. Most of the adult respondents learnt about child rights through the radio and television, while children got this information mainly from teachers and the television and radio.

Children participation in giving feedback on the child rights/protection situation in the country is lacking, and this is more so for the children living far from the capital.

## **6.3 Child Labor /Hazardous work**

The assessment set forth to find out whether the children that were exposed to work, limits or affects their education, physical and sociological development.

Forty-four percent of the total children interviewed reported to work for more than 5 hours in a day, with the highest number being 53% of the boys interviewed in DRD and 45% of the girls interviewed in Isfara. These children combined work with school. Most of the adults (71%) and children (63%) however, believed that working for more than 5 hours a day was is a child labor. Further discussions with the children revealed that girls, after school, were not allowed to go outside the home to play, but were expected to go straight home and continue with chores. The girls expressed a desire to have a chance to play. It is evident that some of the girls' rights were curtailed in the name of protection and the gender biases where a girl child was expected to contribute to household chores while the boys had time for recreation.

According to an ILO publication<sup>12</sup>, child labor remains a huge problem in Tajikistan. Children continue to work in market places or streets, as workers at brick production or in agriculture (cotton picking in particular). Apart from economic reasons, this problem is due to a number of social factors such as large families, family violence, neglect of parental duties, and loss of one or both parents.

The use of children in farm work during school hours in Tajikistan has significantly reduced after the government banned compulsory cotton picking imposed on school children. However, children still worked for more than 5 hours daily back at home. While it is important for children to participate in work for their development, it is a concern that more hours are spent working than studying or even playing, which is necessary for the all round development of the child. Given that

---

<sup>12</sup> Decent Work Country Programme 2011-1013of the Republic of Tajikistan  
Child Protection Situational Analysis in Tajikistan – 2011

*“Girls get married early without adhering to law because they misbehaved and got pregnant. They then end up getting divorced and their children stay in the streets without anything“.*

children attend school for 4-6 hours per day, it is likely that they spend equal or more hours working each day than attending school.

The value of work to the growth and development of a child was stressed by most adults in the assessment, and children mentioned that it would be a shame if they were not able to participate in providing for the family or support in household work.

Save the Children completed a project on eliminating the worst forms of child labor in April 2011. The project successfully lobbied the regional government in Sughd to develop a regional action plan to address and eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Currently, the national action plan is being drafted, led by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. ILO is also planning a nationwide assessment to find out the absolute number of children engaged in child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is also working on compiling a list of hazardous forms of child labor, to be incorporated in the national labor laws.

## **6.4 Violence against Children**

### **6.4.1 Physical and Humiliating Punishment**

Children reported undergoing corporal punishment, and this continues into adulthood as the cycle of violence perpetuates itself in the form of domestic violence. Thirty-five percent of the children interviewed reported that they face corporal punishment at school, while 43% reported that they face corporal punishment at home. When asked their view about corporal punishment, 33% of adults reported that it was okay to hit children as a form of discipline. Children of migrants who are in kinship care reported that they are usually hit by elders in the family if they don't obey them in fulfilling domestic work or if they fight with the other children in the household. Children below 10 years old also reported that beatings and humiliating attitude from their teachers caused them to dislike school.

Overall, corporal punishment at home was the highest reported child protection violation, most reported by children in kinship care. This shows that while kinship care is a viable option for children without appropriate care monitoring mechanisms need to be in place and families providing kinship care need to be educated on child rights and protection issues.

### **6.4.2 Gender Based Discrimination and Violence**

On discussing the problems that girls and boys faced in the society, children as well as adults reported that girls are beaten not only by their fathers but also by their brothers, perhaps something that they have observed amongst their elders. Children below 10 years old also reported instances of domestic violence and that fighting between parents made them unhappy. This is an area of

concern because these children witness violence in the home, where they should be the safest. Children who grow up witnessing violence in the homes may be affected in different forms, including living in fear, have negative impact in their growth, development and performance, resentment of parents or replicating the same when they become adults.

### 6.4.3 Physical Harm

During one FGD, children below 10 years old in Isfara reported that there are incidences of mine explosions. They mentioned that:

*“We are unhappy with the mines that still remain hidden in the mountains almost every year while looking for pasture or animal grazing boys die from mines explosion”.*

Mines had been planted along the border of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during the civil war and were reported to have been cleared. The assessment was unable to locate documented proof of mine explosions however it is a concern with the children in the community.

## 6.5 Harmful Traditional Practices

### 6.5.1 Child Marriage

The view of the community on sexual abuse was that girls who were victims had misbehaved. This is an indication that girls who were faced with sexual abuse also ended up being forced into marriage with the abuser thereby further sacrificing the victim. During this assessment, only one girl child, aged 17, reported that she was married. The same girl also reported that she was

*“My mind was at ease when my elder daughter got married at 16 as I work with my husband in Russia and left my three daughters and two sons with my sister’s family. Anything can happen to a girl. Mostly I was afraid that someone would have sex with her and she would bring shame to my family”*

sexually abused by a person known to her. UNICEF statistics<sup>13</sup> (2009) reported that 13% of girls were married before the age of 18. The government of Tajikistan has passed a law prohibiting child marriage, and from discussions with

community members, this law seems to be widely recognized. This does not necessarily mean that the practise has died out, since many girls were reported to have dropped out of school after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but it is safe to say that the prevalence of child marriage is low. The adherence to this policy meant that children are married off when they turn 18.

While it is not illegal to get married after 18, children and community members reported that marriage as soon as possible after turning 18 was the major problem facing girls in the

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tajikistan\\_statistics.html#81](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tajikistan_statistics.html#81)  
Child Protection Situational Analysis in Tajikistan – 2011

community. This meant that while the girl is in school, she is already engaged and awaiting marriage.

*“There is a girl who was engaged and told not to go to school. She complained to her mother and brothers and they beat her while her father threatened to kill her. The girl wrote a letter and committed suicide. The head of the village was told by the family to hide the letter because they said the girl was crazy that no one in their right mind can commit suicide because of school”.*

*“Fathers think they do not have an obligation to care for their daughters economically and socially after they get married and that the daughter will not bring shame to the family.*

*“My father died and my mother remarried when I was 9 years old. When I graduated 9<sup>th</sup> grade I got married to my stepfather’s nephew. After one year he went to Russia and did not come back. I heard he has a Russian wife. The second time my family decided that I should get married to our neighbor who is very old. Now I live with my little son in my second husband’s house. His children do not like my child and me. They often beat my child and I myself beat him as well when I get too nervous with my husband’s children. I release my anger this way”*

It is evident that the girl child do not decide when and who she wants to marry. She is expected to obey the instructions of the family elders.

This tendency for fathers to cut short their obligations of supporting girls was identified by community members to lead to a cycle of poverty by making a girl completely dependent on the husband and his family for support. The community members also mentioned this to be the main reason for the high rate of divorce and religious marriages (in many cases the girl is the second or third wife; polygamy being illegal in the country, these marriages are not registered, and in case of divorce the woman has no support from the State) in Tajikistan.

Tajik weddings involve a girl buying household furniture, new sets of clothing and mattresses, among other gifts, to be given to the groom’s home, while the groom typically buys food (such as sacks of rice) for the bride’s family. In most cases the girl has no choice in the marriage and cannot afford lavish gifts for the in-laws, in which case she ends up married into a family that can accept her humble gifts. Also abandoned migrants’ wives after getting divorced remarry (through religious ceremony only) to the old men as second and third wives, and they and their children are subject to domestic violence by their husbands’ family.

The problems faced by the mothers have trickle-down effects on the child, as these children are at risk of child labour and institutionalisation. When the mothers cannot provide for them anymore,

their children are forced to work to support the family, or in some cases the mother thinks that children would be better cared for in institutions.

### 6.5.2 Attitudes towards girl child

When asked about the difference in the treatment of boys and girls in the community, most of the respondents mentioned that husbands were not happy when their wives delivered a baby girl. This perception was shared across the 3 regions and reported even by children under 10 years old. Mothers also expressed their fear and disappointment when they delivered girls.

*“I have four daughters – the eldest is 9 years old. My youngest daughter is now 3 years old but my husband has not looked at her all this time. Other family members including mother in laws did not talk to me for a year after her birth. Several times I thought about leaving my husband’s house but I never did it because my children and I do not have a place to stay. My parents will not accept me. My husband has a son from his first marriage. I did not know he was married when I married him. I look after his son and I as if he were my own child”*

This means that children, especially girls, grow up knowing that they are not wanted, and the mother who is not the breadwinner is faced with risk of divorce and domestic violence. Violence in the family can have negative psychological effects on the child. One mother when interviewed mentioned that she prayed to God for her newborn daughter to die, since she had two daughters already and no son. She reported that the child ended up sick and died after a few months. While the cause of death was mentioned to be illness, it is likely that the child was neglected, as it was not wanted.

### 6.5.3 Use of Cradle (*Gahvora*)

Historically, Tajik people have cared for newborn children in a low, small traditional rocking cradle. The process involves binding the child in a tightly wrapped swaddle and using a special apparatus to keep the infant dry. To put the child in the cradle, the baby is clothed, covering the chest area and the head. The baby is then put to lie down in the cradle and a “*tuvak*” or vessel is placed underneath a hole in the bottom of the cradle to collect urine and solid waste, and a tube called a “*sumak*” is used to drain



urine away directly from the infant into the *tuvak*. After the apparatus have been put, the arms of the child are straightened at its side, and the child’s feet are also straightened. The mother then takes a special cloth and binds the child to the cradle, with the child’s arms at its sides. The cloth is wrapped round the cradle and is tied off at the top handle of the cradle. Another piece of cloth is used to bind the child’s legs to the cradle in a similar manner, with the cloth being tied off at the top handle of the cradle. In this way, the child cannot move its arms and legs, and cannot turn from side to side, only the head can be moved slightly sideways. This is done to ensure that the

child does not fall out of the rocking cradle and the mother can continue going about her business until they hear the child crying.

This practice of caring for children, especially at the newborn stage, is one of many cultural traditions that have been passed on from one generation to generation for over a century.

## Findings

On average, the age range of children kept in cradles is from 2 to 20 months<sup>14</sup>. The discussion revealed that most newborn infants (70%) are placed in the cradle as early as 5 - 7 days after birth. Infants typically spend up to 20 hours of a 24-hour day in the cradle. The younger the baby, the more time he or she spends in the cradle. The baby stays in the cradle until he/she begins to cry, and at this point, the child is not unwrapped and removed from

*“I put my child in the cradle at 9 am and take her out at 2 pm for about 1 hour; I feed her and put her back till 8 pm. At 8 pm I take her out, and at 10 in the night I put her back till morning”.*

the cradle, but the cradle is rocked until the child goes back to sleep. Mothers try as much as possible to breastfeed without freeing infants from their swaddling or taking them out of the cradle. Even when the child is taken out of the cradle, she/he will be tightly covered in a sheet. Typically, a child uses the cradle for up to 2 years until he/she outgrows it.

When asked why they prefer to use the cradle in caring for their babies, women gave the following answers:

- It is our cultural tradition, which our mothers passed on to us.
- My child always stays warm and dry and sleeps well in the cradle, which is especially important in winter. (It should be noted that during the winter, most of the rural areas in Tajikistan have no electricity which is needed to heat the house)
- Another reason for using the cradle is lack of water. If mothers do not use the cradle along with the tube and vessel combination to keep the baby dry, they need to change and wash the baby's swaddling clothes several times a day. Using the cradle is very economical as there is no need to buy diapers.
- For mothers who have a lot of work at home and in the fields, the cradle is very convenient as it allows them to complete their work with less interruption or difficulty.
- For babies in large families or households with several small children, using a cradle can be a way to ensure the infant's safety and prevention of accidental injury. For babies of migrants who are under the care of grandmothers it ensures the safety of the child because the grandmothers sometimes have no ability or desire to give the appropriate care for the child.

---

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.babyblog.ru/user/mkhamraeva/1933473>

- Women believe that in the cradle the child's head will take an appropriate shape (flat and firm at the back), his/her hands and legs will not be crooked and his/her back will take a straight shape.
- The community believes that those children who were not put in the cradle develop limps when they walk.

### **The Harm caused when using the cradle**

***Exclusive breastfeeding:*** Wasting and stunting is very common in Tajikistan, and this is directly related to lack of exclusive breastfeeding. Since the child is tied all the time in the cradle, mothers are confident that he/she is safe. The child is left alone or with other members of the household. When the child cries, someone will rock the cradle until the child falls asleep. This puts mothers at ease about their child's safety and enables them to engage in the household chores, usually in the lands. Traditionally, daughters-in-law carry out all the household chores to please their mothers-in-law and husbands, consequently leaving them with very little time to take care of and breastfeed their child. There are many cases where both parents of the newborn babies migrate to Russia to seek work leaving newborn babies under their grandparents care, thus the cradle is convenient for the grandparents as they are insured that the child stays dry in the cradle at all times. By not exclusively breastfeeding, their milk dries and the child is no longer able to breastfeed.

***Respect and modesty:*** In rural areas of Tajikistan, the sons marry and together with their wives live with their parents in one house. When any older members of the household enter the house, women are expected to stand and bow to show respect. This means that a mother would have to interrupt breastfeeding, which can emotionally and physically affect the child. Furthermore, if a man enters the house the women should cover their chest and stop breastfeeding. The child gets furious every time this happens and cries loudly and for a long time. As a result, women do not concentrate during the breastfeeding as they expect someone to enter the house. In addition, the wives are expected to carry out the household chores to please their mother-in-law and other members of the household. As a result, women lack the time to visit doctors, to rest and to care for themselves during and after child birth.

***Physical and mental development:*** When asked what harm cradle use might cause the child, most women responded that it causes no harm. Only two respondents noted that some children can become physically weak or that their physical development can be delayed because of cradle use, and that extremely vigorous rocking of the cradle can cause brain damage. Mothers who took part in the discussion noted that, among their children, those who spend over 10 hours per day in the cradle during infancy show some signs of delayed physical, mental or cognitive development when compared to other children of the same age who were not Subject to the cradle for extended periods of time. Infants and small children who are kept in cradles that are tightly bound in swaddling have very restricted freedom of movement. Often they do not develop the ability to sit at the age when developmentally they ought to, and they can be delayed in learning to walk. Often mothers do not engage their babies in any physical movements or play that would specifically



target physical development and emotional bonding with their babies, such as performing hand and feet movements, or even sitting and walking. Another problem arising from extensively using the cradle is that babies do not get enough sunlight, causing delayed growth of teeth and also rickets from lack of vitamin D.

Many of the physical development milestones that infants ideally should be reaching in the first year of life include: the baby being able to lift up his/her head while lying in a prone position (stomach down) by about the age of 1-2 months; should be able to roll from side to side by about the age of 3-4 months; teeth should begin to emerge and the baby should be able to sit steadily by average age of 6-7 months; the baby should be able to crawl at average age of 7-8 months; and she/he should be taking steps and beginning to walk alone at 11-12 months.

According to the discussion with a doctor at the local hospital in Darmorakht district of GBAO, the cradle can cause harm to the child. The doctor noted that the vigorous rocking of children in the cradle may lead to mental/emotional problems in the child. She also noted that most women breastfeed the child while he/she lies in the cradle, causing improper circulation hence the child ends up vomiting the milk up. Consequently, mothers think that the child is not able to feed this way and hence stop breastfeeding.

**Hygiene issues:** Another tradition in Tajikistan is that for the first child, the newlywed bride and groom receive a new cradle as a gift, as well as a new traditional ceramic tuvak and other necessary items. The first child grows up using the cradle and the family devotes a great deal of attention to this child. As time goes on, the family uses this same cradle and implements (or as the original items break, substitutes such as glass jars are used). The cradle may get broken or damaged and can become dirty and unhygienic from repeated and prolonged use. In families where there are fewer resources and less information available about hygiene and disease prevention, there can be less attention paid to keeping the cradle clean and in good condition.

#### **6.5.4 *Kolak* (Use of balde to remove newborn child's blood)**

When a new born child cries most of the time and his/her skin turns from pale to a darker shade<sup>15</sup>, it is believed that the child's blood is "dirty", will get thick and hence the blood needs to be removed. Traditionally, in Eastern parts of Tajikistan people remove the newborn child's blood 5-6 days after birth by cutting the back, chest, tummy around the navel and palate (roof of the mouth) with a blade allowing some blood to be removed. This practice is done for both girls and boys and people call the blood that is removed "dirty blood". The child is generally taken to a woman who has the skills and knowledge of cutting. Usually these women have learnt it from their grandmothers. This practice is done 3-4 times each week until the child stops frequently crying. In another case, when a child cannot suckle the breast milk, drools and the lips looks dark, his palate (roof of the mouth) will be cut with blade to remove the thick blood. Presently, doctors recommend a "*potassium permanganate*" as an alternative to removing "dirty blood", with this;

---

<sup>15</sup> According to a doctor at a local hospital, the baby's skin turns "darker" (red) due to crying, which is normal for a new born

women can add it to the water and clean their child with it. After doing this the child becomes much calmer. This practice of removing the babies' blood is no longer allowed by doctors but women believe it is an essential cultural tradition. Therefore practice continues.

During the focus group discussion that was held with women, it was observed that children as young as 1 year old cutting marks on their backs which is further evidence that the practice still continues.

## 6.6 Institutionalization

Children are at high risk of institutionalization, especially in cases where the parents/guardians consider themselves unable to take care of the child. This practice is perpetuated by the perception that children in institutions get a better quality of education. During the interviews, 64% of adults and 53% of children reported that children in institutions get a better quality of education. Moreover, 61% of all adults and children interviewed believed that children whose parents are poor should be sent to institutions.

*“I sent my two sons to orphanages because I don't have my own house. My husband went to Russia and didn't come back. Now I work as a cleaner in hospital and rent an apartment with basic condition however the landlord didn't allow me to bring my children to this apartment. He gives it only to families without children. He thinks that children will bring more damage to this already damaged apartment. I visit my sons every weekend however I don't want this. They cry and beg me to take them home. But I have no choice. My parents don't allow me to stay in their house with my children.”*

Poverty has caused many husbands and fathers, and an increasing number of women as well, to migrate to other countries for work. This has led to many social problems, including family breakdown, abandonment and institutionalization of children.

According to UNICEF<sup>16</sup>, the number of children placed in social institutions has risen by 32% in the past five years, and contrary to international guidelines it was found that even new born children are sent to institutions.

## 6.7 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is one of the problems that both boys and girls face, but it is not reported or at best under reported. While less than 10% directly mentioned that sexual abuse exists, many adults and children when interviewed gave an indication that girls are sexually abused. The quotes below give an example of the indication given by community members where sexual abuse occurred.

*“We take care of girls so that the bad men do not violate them”* is a standard statement that one can hear when the girls rights may be violated in the pretext of protecting them and prevention of

---

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/protection\\_4684.html](http://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/protection_4684.html)

sexual abuse against the girl child is not so much associated with the implication that it has on the child but more about family honor.

*“Girls do not go outside, should not talk in public and should come back from school as early as possible. If girls go somewhere alone in day time and should not leave the house alone at night because they can be sexually abused”.*

During the assessment, only 5% of the girls and 3% of the boys in Isfara reported to have been sexually abused by someone known to them. In Rasht 8% of the girls and 6% of the boys interviewed reported to have been sexually abused by someone known to them.

Based on interview, 29% of the children and 28% of the adults believe that only girls can be sexually abused. This is an indication that boys are also at risk of sexual abuse. Forty-three per cent of children interviewed and 44% of adults believed that children make up stories to draw attention to them. Coupled with the sensitive nature of sexual abuse cases, the children may find it hard to report.

Children at risk of sexual abuse would be sent to the Girls Support Centre (NGO) in collaboration with the government’s Committee of Women and Family Affairs department. This was found to be a good model as the girls were removed from risk and placed in interim care, with an ideal number of up to 6 girls placed in a home under the supervision and support of a guardian. The centre accommodated the girls for up to 6 months, while the families were supported and prepared to receive the girl back.

There were reported cases of children committing suicide. Parents mentioned that children who were neglected could end up as thieves or could commit suicide.

## **7.0 Existing Child Protection Interventions**

A wide range of child protection actors offer services for children with disabilities, in the sphere of juvenile justice, to address child labor, for children at risk or victims of sexual abuse and for children without appropriate care. Most of these interventions are carried out in collaboration with the government, either through strengthening the capacity of the government to act or through the provision of direct service from government referrals.

The government Child Rights Department, under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, has a committee in every district that handles child rights concerns. This committee is composed of representatives from the Women’s Council, Health Department, Education Department, elected leaders, the marriage registrar, respected community members and representatives from the judicial system. The committee has the responsibility to solve or refer all cases related to child rights at the district level.

Less than 50% of the community members were aware of the government committee including some children. The majority of respondents mentioned that in case their children were faced with abuse, they would report to the police, take legal action or report to the government ministry. However, when probed further, the respondents were not aware of how to go about this, and

mentioned that lack of information about where to report violations represented a barrier to reporting such incidents. Children mentioned that they would report to the parents.

UN agencies, I/NGOs and CBOs are also actively working on child protection. Annex 1 provides information about the ongoing child protection interventions by these actors.

## **8.0 Legal Framework for Child Protection Duty bearers**

Tajikistan signed the UNCRC in 1993 and the optional protocols in 2002. While 45% of adults and 55% of children in Isfara and 50% in DRD were aware of the UNCRC or what the rights of the child were, it does not necessarily mean that they are aware about how to exercise these rights.

Among other conventions, the ILO convention No.182 was ratified in 2005, and was the basis of Save the Children's advocacy work up to 2011. The government of Tajikistan also ratified the ILO convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work, and ILO Convention No. 29 concerning forced or compulsory labour.

The existing Tajik domestic legislation includes provisions for the protection of children but lacks a comprehensive child protection law. Laws relevant to child protection include the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan (1994) and the Family Code of the Republic of Tajikistan (1999), which establishes the duty of the State to protect the family, the obligations of parents to their children and the obligations of the State to intervene if parents fail in their duties. These laws, along with regulations of administrative bodies, form the general framework for child protection in the country. Unfortunately, many pieces of this framework overlap and there are significant gaps in the legislation. This leads to confusion over who is in charge of delivering each stage in the child protection system<sup>17</sup>.

Tajikistan has also ratified the CEDAW in 1993. National laws have also been introduced to prevent the discrimination against women and protection of children, such as the law prohibiting marriage of children below the age of 17 and requiring all marriages to be registered. On the other hand, amendments to prevent violence and discrimination have failed, for example, an amendment that would prohibit domestic violence and consider it to be a crime.

Annex 7.2 below is a report produced by the Child's Legal Centre, UK, giving a detailed analysis of the child protection legal system in Tajikistan.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

Given that many people in rural Tajikistan are reluctant to openly acknowledge problems that may exist, issues regarding child protection were more difficult to discuss with communities due to the low awareness on child protection conception itself. Many caregivers have a low knowledge on child development. This is because many of them get married while they are only a child themselves and uneducated or poorly educated which negatively effects their lives and their

---

<sup>17</sup> Legal Analysis of the Child Protection System in Tajikistan, Children's Legal Centre UK, September 2008  
Child Protection Situational Analysis in Tajikistan – 2011

children' lives as well. On the other hand, traditional and social issues that prevent children and parents from reporting abuses can increase the number of abuses among children. Widespread discrimination of girls in the family and society makes them more vulnerable to abuses and put them more at risk of being abused. In Most cases Children's opinions are usually not regarded with much importance which results in children not discussing their problems with their caregivers making them more vulnerable to various abuses. Systems should be in place so that children can report their concerns freely in local communities. Awareness raising campaigns on child development, child protection and child rights should be conducted among communities. Discrimination of girls and children with disabilities should be addressed through increasing knowledge of children on their rights and enhancing the quality of parents' skills. The deteriorating quality of education in Tajikistan is one of the main reasons that children have a low knowledge on their rights and protection issues and furthermore engaged in child labour. All these factors contribute to the child's vulnerable condition in the face of different abuses. This study helped us to identify the main child protection concerns and look for future programming to address, prevent and respond to various child abuses in Tajikistan.

## **10.0 Annexes**

### **Annex 10.1: Child Protection Interventions**



Child Protection  
Interventions.doc

### **Annex 10.2: Legal System in Tajikistan**



legal system in  
Tajikistan.doc

### **Annex 10.3: Referral Contacts for CP concerns**



Referral Contacts for  
CP Concerns.doc

### **Annex 10.4: Interview and FGD tools**



FGD Guide CP  
Survey.docx



Children KAP  
Tool.doc



Adults KAP Tool.doc