

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**United Nations Children's Fund****Expert meeting on statistics on children**

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Intergovernmental collaboration to improve multi-faceted data on children at the national and sub-national levels**Note by Bureau of National statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan****Abstract*

Statistical and administrative data concerning children carry even greater significance, serving as a crucial tool to inform both central and regional government levels about the status of children. Without this data, it becomes impossible to conduct high-quality monitoring of the implementation of state programs and strategies designed to ensure and protect children's rights. This deficiency hampers the ability to make effective decisions aimed at improving the overall situation of children in Kazakhstan, especially the most vulnerable ones.

A collaboration between UNICEF and the National Bureau of Statistics (BNS) has led to the establishment of an Inter-Governmental Working Group. This group comprises key line ministries such as education, healthcare, social protection, internal affairs, HR Ombudsman, and subordinate agencies and bodies. Its purpose is to strengthen data generation and national information systems focused on priority child rights areas.

This paper is grounded in a sustainable collaborative platform for accelerating data improvement run by BNS. The primary focus lies on four key aspects: (1) the Annual Statistical Yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan"; (2) TransMonEE for Kazakhstan; and (3) tools, mechanisms and integrations to enhance data sharing and dissemination; (4) Lessons Learned. The objective is to share experiences, results, and relevant examples while putting forth general recommendations and thoughts about the future.

Keywords: Intergovernmental; data for children, SDGs

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I. Introduction

1. Ensuring the rights of the child is one of the vital demands of the modern world and in the addressing it, the whole world community is interested. The specific role is given here to the younger generation in guaranteeing the viability of society and ensuring its future development. We all agree that no State in the world can claim to be a role model in respecting rights of the child. Even the most democratic and economically developed States are characterized by an increase in juvenile delinquency, the presence of families with a low standard of living, increase of child mortality cases due to inadequate medical care and strong social protection mechanisms in place. All these facts prove the impossibility of solving the child related issues by States alone.
2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989, and entered into force on September 2, 1990. Its parties are 196 states. The Republic of Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994 and February 16 of this year just celebrated 30 years since the signing of this document.
3. The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
4. All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on the implementation of the relevant rights. States are required to submit an initial report two years after accession to the Convention, and periodic reports every five years thereafter. The Committee examines each report and provides the State party with its views and recommendations in the form of "concluding observations".
5. Kazakhstan has submitted six periodic reports on the implementation by Kazakhstan of the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹, the most recent of which mentioned the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on data collection (paragraphs 14, 15 of the concluding observations) with regard to children:

"Kazakhstan has undertaken measures to enhance the system of monitoring and collection of various data on the situation of children.

In 2017, a statistical yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan" was developed. The structure and content of the yearbook were developed with the participation of representatives of interested government agencies, non-governmental organizations (hereinafter - NGOs) and the UNICEF office in Kazakhstan. The objectives of this yearbook are: systematization of indicators, public awareness, monitoring of the situation of children, as well as data exchange/interoperability between the relevant ministries, subordinate bodies and etc.

The data in the compilation are collected from various official sources and categorized into the following sections: demographics, health and healthy

¹ More information on periodic reports and their recommendations can be found at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/countries.aspx?CountryCode=KAZ&Lang=RU

*lifestyle, education, leisure, social protection, children in contact with the law, welfare and social cohesion, NEET, adolescents and comparison with international data, in particular with the Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter - SDGs), etc."*² .

II. Intergovernmental collaboration to improve data on children

6. As of today, all institutional mechanisms have been established in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the collection and dissemination of data on the realization of children's rights and human rights in general. As mentioned above, Kazakhstan provides international reporting (Report) on the fulfillment of obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan annually prepares and sends for consideration by the President of the country - national Reports on the situation of children in the Republic of Kazakhstan, based on statistical and administrative data.
7. From the side of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BNS) - statistical data is provided starting from 2000 to fill the UNICEF regional database "TransMonEE", from 2017 onwards BNS annually issues the statistical yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan", since 2019 publishes information on the situation of children in a special section (web portal) "Statistics on Children" on the official website of BNS - bala.stat.gov.kz.
8. All information published on the website and provided by the BNS to international organizations is collected from various sources, both statistical surveys and reports and administrative data from other ministries and agencies. In order to generate official statistics, the BNS has legislative authority to obtain data from various sources, including administrative records.
9. It should be noted that the availability of systematized and regularly published data on the situation of children in Kazakhstan has become available relatively recently, after receiving the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Fourth Periodic Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (October 30, 2015):

"Data Collection.

(14) While noting the extensive data provided by the State party both in its report and in its written replies, the Committee is concerned that the data provided are not specific enough to effectively assess the overall situation of children in the country.

15. In light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation, the Committee urges the State party to promptly improve its data collection system and identify specific indicators. Furthermore, the Committee

² <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2100000942>

*recommends that data and indicators be shared and utilized among relevant ministries for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee also recommends that the State party strengthen its technical cooperation, in particular with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and regional mechanisms*³.

10. In order to implement the recommendations received from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as to improve the collection, analysis and use of data on children, with UNICEF's support BNS established in 2016 an Interagency Working Group on Systematization of Child Indicators (IGWG), comprising representatives of various government bodies, non-governmental, academic and international organizations.
11. In the initial phase, the following were identified as the main objectives of the IGWG:
 - a) Analyze existing data on the situation of children and the regularity of their collection at the national level.
 - b) Release of the first statistical yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan", which will include key indicators for monitoring national strategic documents and international commitments.
12. Thus, the members of the IGWG together with international experts from DevStat, engaged with the support of UNICEF, worked actively during 2016-2017, eventually collected the first set of data (both statistical and administrative) on the situation of children and presented the statistical yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan" at the national and regional levels to a wide range of public.
13. The success of this work and the demand for children's data among decision makers has inspired the IGWG members to continue working together to systematize indicators on the situation of children.
14. Taking into account that the age of information technology requires more and more information available in electronic format, the IGWG continued its work in developing a separate section on the BNS website - the web portal "Statistics on Children", where, in addition to data from the statistical yearbook "Children of Kazakhstan", the sections "Rights of the Child", "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)", "TransMonEE" and "Sustainable Development Goals and Children" were also included. Additionally, the following essential information have also been included:
 - a) BNS publications which includes data on children.
 - b) Institutions related to children's rights protection in the Republic of Kazakhstan.
 - c) international databases where data on children are published.
15. Thus, as a result of the efforts of the IGWG members, the Child Statistics web portal was officially published in 3 languages in 2019 and has been regularly updated since then.
16. Throughout the existence of this IGWG, regular activities are also carried out to populate and expand the data sources for TransMonEE database, involving many of the IGWG's member state agencies.

³ <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/O1500000003>

17. Despite the positive developments in providing monitoring of the situation of children with systematized and regular data, it is worth noting the significant challenges that emerged during the period associated with restrictive measures due to COVID-19, when the IGWG meetings were held in online format and the productivity of its work was significantly reduced.
18. After the removal of restrictive measures, the work of the IGWG gradually returned to the former format of offline meetings, but the impact of the downtime period and the replacement of some key members is still being felt.
19. In general, the membership of the IMWG is periodically updated and expanded to include new areas of work related to the activities and sectoral plans of other governmental bodies. Collaborative efforts, close interaction and thematic and cross cutting expertise contribute to the sustainability of this platform and continue strengthening the data on children serve to the purpose of policy making and efficient.

III. Conclusion

20. In conclusion, it is not possible to make good management decisions today without a solid and reliable evidence and the availability of good quality data on the situation of children becomes even more important.
21. The establishment and coordination by National Statistical Offices helps to work systematically at the national level to ensure that the current situation is monitored at the regional levels and the right decisions are made for improvement of wellbeing of children.
22. It is important to maintain regular interagency collaboration and institutional frameworks in order to further develop statistics on children.