

BUCKET

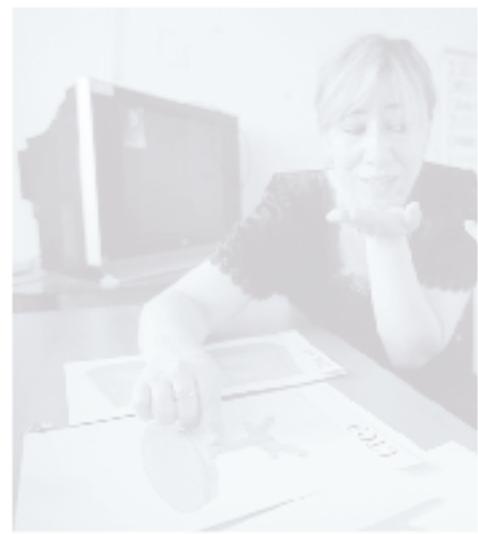
UN Tajikistan



СОЗМОНИ МИЛАЛИ МУТТАҲИД
ДАР ТОҶИКИСТОН

UNITED NATIONS IN TAJIKISTAN

ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ОБЪЕДИНЁННЫХ
НАЦИЙ В ТАДЖИКИСТАНЕ



Dear Reader,

I am pleased to share with you the latest edition of the UN bulletin dedicated to the national post-2015 consultations in Tajikistan that ran from February until May 2013. All UN agencies present in Tajikistan jointly participated in the consultation process connecting Tajikistan to the extensive global conversation on a Post-2015 Global Development Agenda, an inclusive and people-centred development agenda beyond 2015.

We thus embarked on a series of national consultations to reflect the aspirations and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders, especially the most marginalized strata of Tajik society, on the way to shape the future of Tajikistan. The consultations offer an analytical base together with ideas and recommendations that not only benefit the Government but also stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and development partners involved in Tajikistan, allowing them to better align their priorities, programming and interventions with the voices of people from different walks of life.

Since the Tajikistan National Development Strategy is aligned with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spanning up to the end of 2015, the Tajikistan post-MDG consultations are an important contribution to the planning of the subsequent National Development Strategy of the Government and its vision beyond 2015.

In the course of our consultations we reached out to civil society organizations, persons with disabilities and the elderly, minority groups, women, youth, the private sector, national and local government, parliament, NGOs, international organizations and to the general Tajik public, via online surveys and social media.

The newest edition of the UN bulletin will paint a personal picture of the consultation process and will allow the reader a glimpse behind the scenes: What was most surprising for the people involved? What were the most memorable moments? What hopes are tied to these consultations and what did we learn from the process?

For my part, as UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan, I am confident that the results of these national consultations will bring the people of Tajikistan closer to the Tajikistan they envision in the future. The development process is remarkable, but it is also high time for it to include the voices of the population, their needs and views on what the most important issues are, on the issues that are still to be tackled. I will spare no effort as UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan to achieve an inclusive development process in order to give every person in Tajikistan the opportunity to realize their full potential.

Alexander Zuev

United Nations Resident Coordinator

Results

National Post-2015 Consultations in Tajikistan

Between February and May 2013, civil society organizations, persons with disabilities, the elderly, minorities, women, youth, the private sector, national and local Government, parliament, NGOs, international organizations and the general public via social media and online surveys were consulted to obtain an inclusive picture of the Tajikistan the population envisions in the future. This consultation process is the preparatory phase for building a people-centred development agenda for after 2015, when the current Millennium Development Goals have run out. Through group work, round-table discussions, questionnaires and, as mentioned above, through online tools, as many views and visions as possible were gathered to include in the ongoing consultation process.

The most important topics identified by the stakeholder groups were: education, health, employment, inequalities, good governance, food security, social protection, conflict prevention, energy and environment and population dynamics.



Education:

The most important issue raised by all participants was education. Generally, access to it, or lack thereof, was discussed widely. It was acknowledged that access to education for children with disabilities, girls, children from poor families, of labour migrants, refugees, from ethnic minorities and street children can still be problematic. Concerning the quality of education, the stakeholders identified the need to attune curricula to the demands of the labour market, to accent marketable and life skills and to shift from a knowledge-based to a competency-based system. Teachers lack skills, motivation and incentives because of low salaries. Therefore participants suggested raising their salaries and offering incentives. Inadequate school infrastructure was criticized. Lack of funding and weak financial management at school level were also identified as hindering the evolution of the educational system. It was noted that corruption persisted at all levels of the education system and participants asked for an end to all informal payments in this system. All stakeholders agreed that education is a precondition to achieving other development goals.

Health:

MDG 4 (child mortality), MDG 5 (maternal health) and MDG 6 (prevention of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases) have not been met and should therefore receive further priority attention. Stakeholders agreed that it is important to raise awareness on health-related issues, e.g. on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and STDs, especially among youth, labour migrants, commercial sex workers and their families. Concerning access to health care services, several issues were raised in the discussions: physical distance, affordability, discrimination or the lack of specialized services can hinder access to such services. Furthermore, the quality of the health services provided was called into question. Stakeholders agreed that infrastructure, equipment and health and safety standards in medical facilities need addressing urgently. To enhance the situation of poorly motivated and badly paid medical personnel, participants suggested raising salaries, creating attractive conditions for young health workers and establishing a monitoring service. There was a call for comprehensive financing reform in the health sector, better coordination between state and non-state actors and making health and medical workers more accountable.

Employment:

Another pressing issue is youth unemployment. Once again, the importance of education was underlined. Stakeholders pointed out that fixing the broken link between the education system and the labour market requires a solid understanding of the labour market and its demands. Therefore, research should be conducted more frequently so that curricula can be adapted to labour market needs. Some participants

noted discrimination in the recruitment process on the basis of political convictions, religion and nationality. Another issue that was raised on employment was low wages that fail to meet the minimum living standard levels. Closely connected to the lack of job opportunities in Tajikistan is the phenomenon of labour migration, which will be a reality for a lot of young Tajik people, well after 2015. Many stakeholders are agreed that job creation for youth, women and people with disabilities needs special attention. The development of a vibrant private sector is necessary to boost job creation in Tajikistan.

Inequalities:

Gender inequality is one of the most pervasive forms of inequality in Tajikistan's society and economy. Participants noted that despite many promising laws, policies and programmes, there is little progress towards gender equality. Inequalities also persist for people with disabilities. They are faced with stigma and discrimination, limited access to services, lack of specialized care, limited opportunities for education or employment and limited influence in the governance process and elections. Youth also mentioned inequality on grounds of age, with limited economic opportunities and job prospects and a limited voice in governance processes.

Governance:

Governance issues were implicitly addressed in all thematic discussions and in the surveys and online consultations. Participants called for participatory or, at least, consultative decision-making, better rights awareness and accountability mechanisms. Stakeholders agreed that it is paramount to tackle corruption head-on in Tajikistan's future, because its effects are felt in virtually all aspects of life. The root cause of corruption was identified as low salaries in the civil service and proposed solutions were raising salaries and tightening control.

Food Security and Nutrition:

Tajikistan is heavily dependent on imported food and can only meet roughly 40 per cent of its demand for food. Therefore local production would need to be increased, but the absence of quality control, subsidized imports and the poor functioning of quarantine services hinder Tajikistan's development towards self-sufficient food production. Further issues raised concerning food security are: local governments do not support small-hold farmers; ethnic minorities do not have access to land; child labour is used in agriculture; input costs for farm produce are high but sale prices are low; the lack of veterinary services; decaying irrigation systems; and land salinity. Concerning nutrition, stakeholders agreed that there is limited information and education on healthy nutrition.

Social Protection:

Participants in the consultations who discussed social protection found that the retirement age and disability pensions are too low, and that the Government budget must be increased. Also the difficult access to social benefits was criticized. Social services are generally not sufficiently developed and vulnerable people may face stigmatization. Systematic data collection for better planning, budgeting and management of social protection was called for. Concerns were raised about transparency and accountability of the state bodies in charge.

Conflict and Conflict Prevention:

Concerning conflict and conflict prevention in Tajikistan, relations with its neighbours were in focus. The low level of education, social inequalities and discontent among youth were also named as threats to stability and peace.

Laura Gees

UNV Communication Officer

Encounters with Young People

National Consultations on the post 2015 Development Agenda

Some of the most pleasant moments I have experienced in my work have been encounters and discussions with adolescents and young people to hear their perspectives and feelings. The post MDG National Consultations conducted by the United Nations in Tajikistan also reflected this view when we met with young people to hear them on the Tajikistan they wanted to see beyond 2015.

It is always a delight to see the fresh perspectives and drive of young people and I am always energized and reminded that young people everywhere are full of ideas, are highly engaged and have unlimited energy, but that societies are unable to harness this energy and make full use of it. The Post 2015 Consultations in Tajikistan also witnessed the desire of young people to contribute to a better world for the current and future generations. The young people were excited to engage in a unique opportunity where they felt they were part of a global movement, where they could give their views on what was needed for the society they wanted to see after 2015. They had so much to say about the importance of giving young people a chance to express themselves and be part of the country's development process, for young people to be considered and be given opportunities for self-realization and for growth, and about the prime importance that should be given to their education as a driving force for development. They were mindful of social inequities and also of discrimination toward girls.

In Khujand, when I asked the young girls and boys whether they had heard about the MDGs, I went on to note that if years from now someone asked them about the next development framework, they could respond that they were even part of it and had contributed to its creation! But should we merely be satisfied that young people were given the opportunity to express themselves in the post MDG Consultations? This was only one step. The real test would be when we look back to see how much young people have participated in the development that is going on around them, participation being a key human rights principle. This requires a shift in mind-sets, but also setting frameworks that would allow this to happen. This is a challenge that we should all embrace!

Laylee Moshiri

UNICEF Representative and

Leader of the UN Interagency Task Force on Post MDG Consultations

Youth of Tajikistan at the heart of the national post-2015 consultation process

In January 2013, the UN in Tajikistan established a National Working Group tasked with launching a series of national consultations and undertaking a thorough analysis and review of the challenges, gaps and successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the country. The outcomes of these consultations fed Tajikistan's input into the ongoing global UN consultations on the post-2015 framework.

Young people's needs and problems were considered within the process of national consultations from the very outset. The National Working Group facilitated youth engagement in the post-MDG review process, which included Tajik youth's visions, hopes and values, and took into account their opinions on the post-2015 agenda. Our meetings with young people had the following objectives to ensure that the youth of Tajikistan are at the heart of regional development in building the future we want:

- 1. Awareness:** to constantly share appropriate information about the post-MDG process with young people and inform them about opportunities to promote active participation in it;
- 2. Coordination:** to ensure a well-coordinated process and youth engagement in the post-2015 agenda in cooperation with various organizations and agencies - government, non-profit, UN and the private sector;
- 3. Participation:** to engage young people to hold discussions on thematic areas, conduct surveys and advocate for their active participation in national, regional and international consultations and ensure that their voice is heard.

Young people of diverse backgrounds – students, schoolchildren, migrants, and opinion leaders – participated in the meetings held in two regional centers – in Khujand in Sughd region, and in Kulob, in Khatlon region. During the meetings, young people chose topics of utmost importance to them, discussed problems they face in these spheres and came up with ideas about how to resolve them. The facilitators were impressed by the active and positive attitude of the young people, and their creativity and professionalism in resolving their problems.

Notably, young people, even from remote areas, are well informed about political, economic, and social developments in the country and in the world, and discussed various issues related to promoting democracy and sustainable development. Critical thinking, e-governance, education, health, responsible parenthood, intergenerational relations and globalization were among the issues discussed by participants.

Meetings with active students of the two most popular universities of Dushanbe were organized to inform them of the post-MDG consultations. More than 170 students participated in the meetings at the universities conducted as a follow-up to the consultations in the field.



Through the national consultations, the National Working Group was in charge of awareness raising and opinion gathering on the post-MDG consultations via social networks. More than 6,000 people were informed through the official Facebook pages of the UN in Tajikistan and the UNFPA in Tajikistan; more than 2,300 Facebook users viewed the questionnaire posted on the UN in Tajikistan Facebook page, and more than 250 people responded and shared their opinions on these issues.

The UNFPA Country Office in Tajikistan substantially contributed to reviewing and finalizing the National Report on the post-MDG Consultations, and, an extract from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014 Consultation Report was incorporated into the National Report, thus indicating success in promoting the ICPD agenda at the national level and enriching the report with valuable findings and observations.

“The meeting on post-2015 with youth was a great opportunity to meet my peers. I gained a lot of interesting ideas. I hope this kind of event will be conducted regularly and will help to unite young people to participate in the country's development. I'm proud we were given a chance to contribute to the future of the country.”

Gulshan Nekqadamova,
school student from Khorog, Tajikistan



“Today, young people are working equally with adults in different spheres, including health and education, governance and social protection. Therefore participation of young people in this process is crucial. For me, participating in the meeting on post-2015 consultations was fruitful because we were able to discuss in detail problems of the education sector and come up with more than two dozen concrete recommendations. This gave me a clear and distinct vision of our educational system in the future.”

Rustam Gulov,
youth activist and blogger, Khujand



Parviz Boboev
National Programme Associate
UNFPA Tajikistan

Photos: A. Zohidov, UNICEF (1); author (2, 3)

National minorities pursue dual goals in the area of education

As a multi-national state, Tajikistan is home to many national minorities. They make their contribution to the development of the country, share success and face problems the same as the rest of the population. National minorities were also part of the focus groups of the UN Post-2015 Consultations and during the meetings in Khujand and Kulob they had an opportunity to express their opinions, share their concerns and put forward their recommendations for making the world a better place after 2015.

Representatives of national minorities held discussions on several topics, including education, health care, employment, social protection and food security. These notes focus on education issues. During the meetings, Tajikistan's national minorities raised their voices for the promotion of studying both native and state languages.

Knowledge of the mother tongue is important for representatives of national minorities to preserve their identity. However, the scope of usage of some minority languages is gradually narrowing. There are several factors that contribute to this, including popularization of the Tajik and Russian languages and the lack of learning conditions for studying some native languages. In order to resolve the problem, according to participants, they need quality education in their mother tongue. Further, to be able to receive quality education, it is crucial to have improved curricula and quality textbooks adapted to the study of different languages and subjects. A lot of measures have been taken in this area, however, in some schools pupils still use textbooks published during the Soviet period. In others, teachers use their own resources to adapt old textbooks to the new realities. In addition, national minorities are concerned about the lack of qualified staff to teach some ethnic minority languages.

The issue of promotion of minority languages was raised during the consideration of the Tajikistan report at the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2012 where the Committee reiterated “its concern regarding the lack of textbooks for children belonging to minority groups and the lack of qualified teachers for minority languages”. The Committee also encouraged Tajikistan to continue its efforts to ensure supplies of school textbooks in minority languages and set up training programs for teachers of minority students, including mother-tongue vocational training.

However, during the debates, national minorities were more concerned about studying the state language, Tajik. As part of Tajik society, national minorities consider the knowledge of Tajik a key factor for better integration into this society; and they are right. Lack of knowledge of the state language hampers the chances of finding steady employment. Moreover, according to the law, knowledge of the state language is essential for finding work and pursuing a career in public service. Many parents concerned with the future professional career of their children, want them to have a good command of the Tajik language. That is why, reportedly, the number of some minority schools and classes decreased significantly during recent years. Fluency in

Tajik gives national minorities more opportunities to integrate into society and for successful career development. It gives them more chances to participate in decision-making processes at different levels. Therefore, besides recommending the promotion of minority languages, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also recommended the state to strengthen its efforts in providing education “according to the needs and wishes” of persons belonging to ethnic minority groups.

Hence, in the area of education, national minorities living in Tajikistan pursue dual goals. On the one hand, as representatives of different ethnicities, they are concerned about learning their mother tongues beyond the family. On other, knowledge of the Tajik language goes hand in hand with social and labour integration and the political participation of ethnic minorities. Indeed, the achievement of these dual goals would promote the balanced development of national minorities in a diverse society where everyone has equal opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Suhrob Shoev

*National Professional Officer,
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Regional Office for Central Asia*

Priority Online Surveys

Education, Ending Poverty top Tajikistan post-2015 MDG

Two main platforms where online discussions were conducted included: a specifically tailored survey for Tajikistan at www.untj.org/talk; and the UN Tajikistan Facebook page.

The survey asked two questions:

1. Which MDG goals should remain a priority after 2015?
2. Which priorities should be chosen for the post-2015 period on the basis of themes developed locally in Tajikistan?

The second question provided respondents with space for comment and gave them the chance to choose a priority of their own not listed in the questionnaire.

A specific website was developed for the post-2015 consultations within the official UN Tajikistan webpage and it will continue to serve as a constant online platform for citizens of Tajikistan to express their views.

The social media platform, although limited in scope during the consultation period, turned out to be the most appropriate platform for expressing views on the problems, issues, solutions and ideas with which Tajikistan is grappling. Participants in the online survey called for moving away from “mere declarations” to “getting concrete results”. Online respondents were keen to relay the very core of Tajikistan's problems as viewed from their perspective and propose their solutions. Reflecting an overwhelming appreciation of the consultations as a first step towards people-centered development, one respondent noted that “what you are doing is what will lead to solving the problems”.

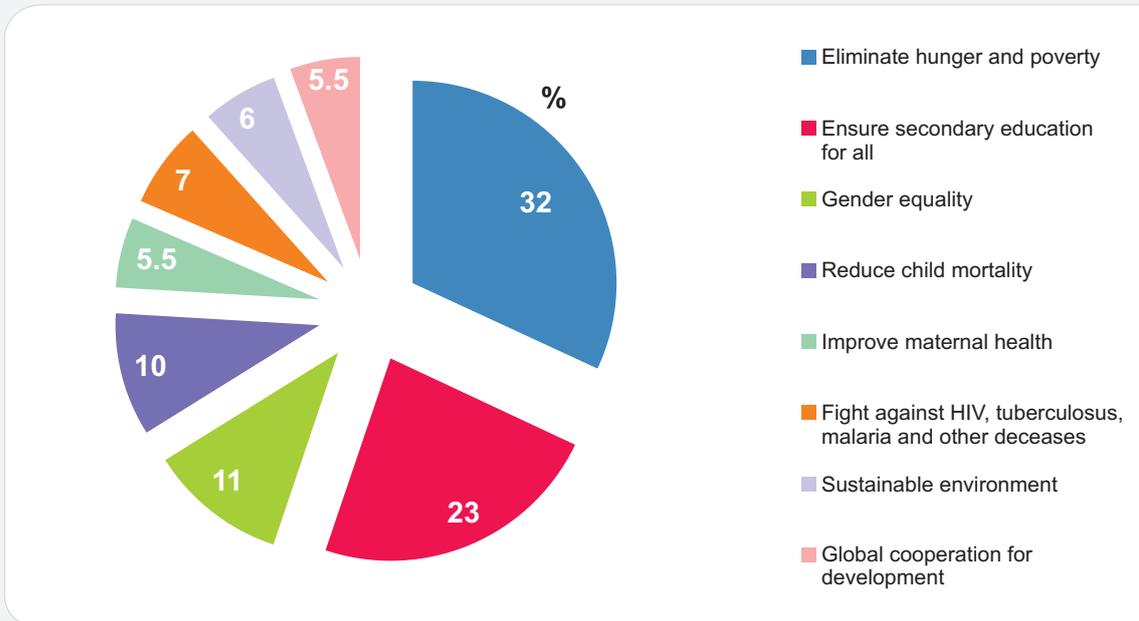
Education is the clear favorite priority in the online discussions and voting. It is interesting to observe how education is viewed not as a discrete sphere on its own but as rather the area whose success will greatly determine the future of Tajikistan. Education as a main component of the development of a well-rounded individual who can work for the good of society in various spheres, who is responsible and cultured, who is aware of and can fight for his rights are the main aspects of what online respondents view as the crucial functions of the education system and their expectations of what it should deliver. In a clear attempt to connect labour migration and all the ensuing problems, a respondent blames Tajikistan's inadequate education system for the deplorable conditions facing Tajik migrants abroad. Respondents also mentioned the usual set of problems facing the education sector, such as the declining school infrastructure, the lack of qualified teachers, low salaries in the education sector and the lack of incentives for teachers, especially, in rural areas, and inadequate reforms in the education sector. In the list of priorities for the post-2015 world, 24 per cent voted for including education in the three main priorities for post-2015. Access to social services came second, with 13 per cent of the votes, and economic growth and promotion of entrepreneurship held joint third place, with 10 per cent each of the votes.

In a separate question posted both in the survey and on Facebook on which MDG priorities should remain in the post-2015 period, a cumulative total of 558 responses were received. The elimination of absolute poverty and hunger clearly leads the results with 32 per cent of the votes, while education comes second with 23 per cent. However, it should be noted that respondents to this particular question frequently debated the relevance of priority number 1 as too general and all-encompassing. This was more evident once the priorities were divided into concrete areas, such as development of entrepreneurship, economic growth, and social inequalities in the second question.

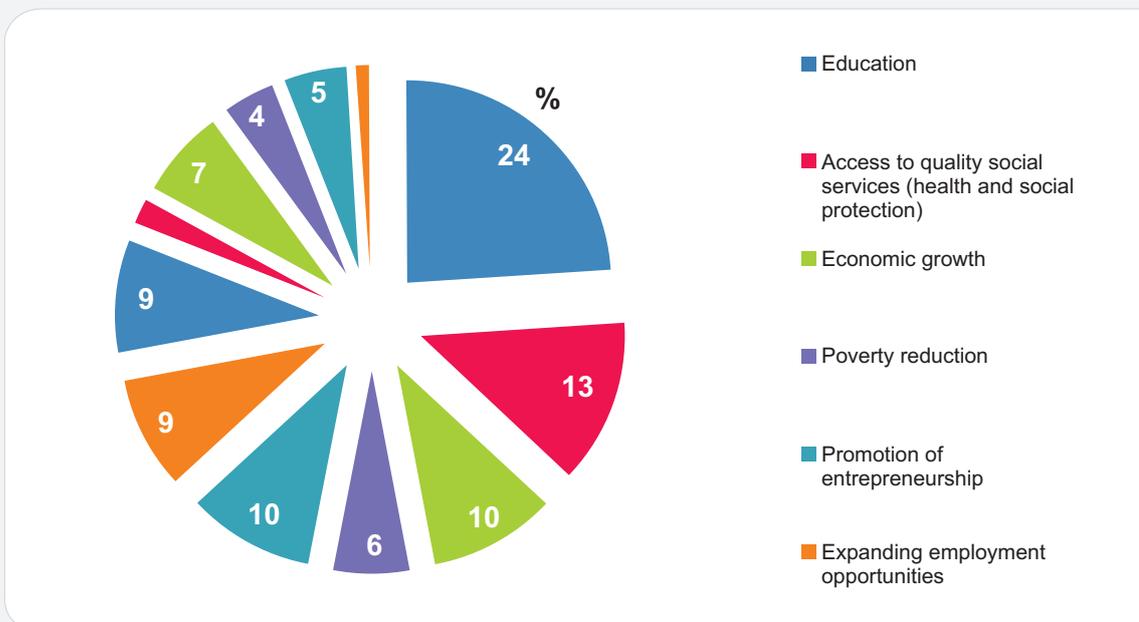
Beyond education, the picture reflects a more or less even distribution between three priorities: access to social services (health and social protection); promotion of entrepreneurship; economic growth. However, apart from the predetermined selection of priorities from the list, the comments' space showed that certain "cross-cutting" areas are of great concern for the respondents: corruption and greater opportunities for participating in decision-making processes. "Effective governance" did not receive as many votes but this is possibly due to a misunderstanding of this concept. Notions on democratic governance appeared here and there in the majority of comments and discussions. Respondents advocated: greater participation by civil society in a more inclusive and transparent system of governance; the democratic election of government officials of various level; the formation of committees to recruit government officials. Online discussions and comments also revealed that fighting corruption is probably the most important priority for the country. Some clearly suggested singling out "fighting corruption" as a separate priority in the post-2015 world, as it permeates every level and every government institution in Tajikistan.

The online voting graphically demonstrates the following results:

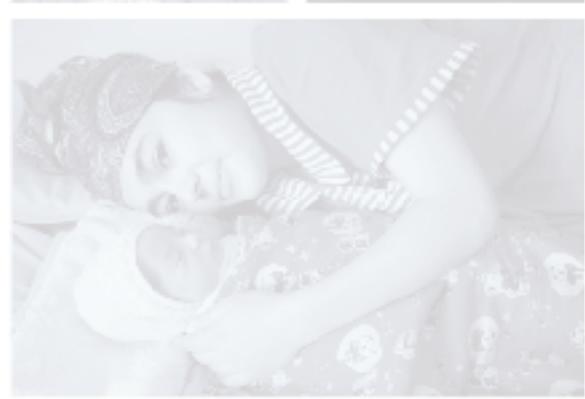
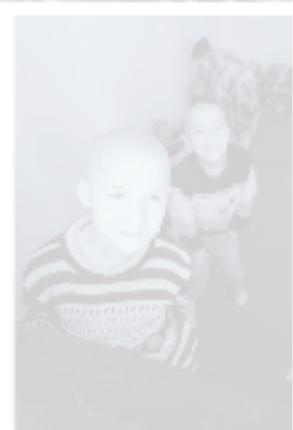
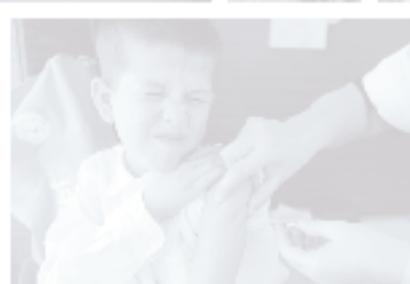
Question 1: Which MDG goals should remain in the post-2015 period (in %):



Question 2: What are the three main priorities which should be included as post-2015 goals (in %):



Bokhtar Bakozade,
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