RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations HumanRights Council 4ᵗʰ Cycle- 44ᵗʰ Session

Country Review: Turkmenistan

January 2023
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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that focuses on monitoring and minimising human rights violations in education worldwide. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support achieving societal peace by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling inequalities in education.

Content

0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk drafted this report to contribute to Turkmenistan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Broken Chalk is an organisation that fights against violations of Human Rights and improves the quality of Education around the globe. This report will discuss the main challenges Turkmenistan faces regarding Education and what those issues could be enhanced through Education. Finally, Broken Chalk will offer some recommendations for Turkmenistan in the field of Education based on the problems raised.

2. In the 2018 review, the Turkmenistan side supported 74 out of the 90 recommendations. Overall, Turkmenistan accepted 172 submissions, representing 90% of the total.[1] Those were related to the legal and general framework of implementation, universal and crosscutting issues, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, women's rights, and rights of other vulnerable groups and persons.

3. Turkmenistan has stated that efforts to guarantee the most comprehensive coverage and highest possible quality of education at all levels have been intensified. In that line, the share of total government expenditure increased a 3.01% per cent in 2019, concerning 2012. Twenty-three per cent of the government budget is addressed to Education[2]. This is a relatively high figure compared to other European Countries, such as Germany, Spain, Italy, and France[3].

4. Accordingly, completion rates are generally high for all school levels. Turkmenistan has a 100 per cent of completion rate of primary education, and lower and upper secondary education completion rates remain high. In line, the out-of-school rates remain quiet at all levels of education. Despite this, improvements are still being made, especially in the fields of Education and inclusion and accessibility to equal resources.

I. Main issues in Education

ICT Skills

5. Educational establishments are equipped with modern multimedia and computer equipment. However, despite the improvements made in Education, acquiring Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills still needs improvement to guarantee access to technology. Only 35 per cent of youth aged between 15 and 24 have at least one ICT skill.

6. A socio-economic influence in the share of children having ICT skills has been noted. In

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[1] OHCHR, 2018. Universal Periodic Review outcomes of Turkmenistan, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, and Germany. Available from: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/09/human-rights-council-adopts-universal-periodic-review-outcomes-turkmenistan

[2] World Bank, n.d. Government expenditure on education, total % of GDP -Turkmenistan. Available from: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=TM

[3] Datos Macro, n.d. Gasto público Educación per Capita. Available from: https://datosmacro.expansion.com/estado/gasto/educacion

that line, more than 30 per cent of the youth with ICT come from the wealthiest households.

Remote Learning

7. access to both Internet and a computer at home is related to developing specific skills. Children with access to both Internet and a laptop have higher foundational and numeracy skills than children without access.

8. Despite the efforts made, less than half of the children aged 3 to 24 have access to the Internet at home. Sixty per cent of the children have a computer at home. However, only 32 per cent of them can access the Internet and a computer.

9. Children currently attending primary or lower secondary education represent more than 80 per cent of those lacking access to those remote learning tools. The socio-economic background strongly influences access to the Internet and a computer at home. Only around 20 to 30 per cent of the children from the poorest to the middle class have both Internet and Computer at home, whereas more than the 60% of the children from the wealthiest households have them both at home. Only 10 per cent of the children living in the region of Akhal Velayat have both Internet and computer.

Regional Disparities

10. Serious regional disparities in foundational learning skills have been found. Nationally, over 70 per cent of the children-attending grade 2/3 have foundational reading skills. However, while over 90 per cent of the children living in Ashgabat City and Mary Velayat demonstrate foundational reading skills, only 34 per cent of the children from Balkan Velayat do.

11. Around 92 per cent of the children aged 7 to 14 from Ashgabat city have foundational numeracy skills, but just a little; over half of the children in Lebap Velayat have the same abilities. Regarding regions, children from Lebap Velayat represent 40 per cent of the children who need foundational reading and numeracy skills. That figure is the largest in any area.

Child Marriage

12. Socioeconomic characteristics and Education strongly influence early marriage.

13. On the one hand, young females from the poorest regions have the highest prevalence of early marriage. Around 11 per cent of young women in poor situations married before age of 18, compared to 3 per cent of women from the wealthiest regions.

14. Conversely, education plays a crucial role in preventing child marriage. As figures show, the educational level of the females who marry before being 18 is primary or secondary Education. However, the prevalence of early marriage is almost non-existent among

women who attended higher education.

Inclusive Education

15. Under the Education Act of 2013, the state ensures the conditions for enabling people with disabilities to attend regular schools[4]. However, the measures taken have failed to guarantee the development of children with special needs.

16. There is a statistically significant gap in the foundational skills children acquire with functional difficulties. Among children who do not have a practical problem, 82 per cent of them have foundational reading and numeracy skills. However, only 64 per cent of children with at least one functional difficulty have the same level of foundational reading and numeracy skills. Specifically, 4% of children needing foundational reading skills have practical problems.

Religious Discrimination in Education

17. Article 4 of the Law of Turkmenistan on Education establishes the right of citizens of Turkmenistan in the field of Education[5]. It states "the possibility of education irrespective of nationality, skin colours, […] and the relation to religion".

18. However, state officials have continued to pressure non-Muslims to change their beliefs and to bully non-Muslim schoolchildren and their parents and guardians.

II. Recommendations

ICT Skills and Remote Learning

19. Turkmenistan has equipped high education institutions with the latest computers, study and technical equipment and interactive multimedia technologies. In the same way, they have also put effort into modernising preschool and primary school facilities. However, its efforts have failed to equal skills development, as the vulnerable socio-economic sectors have minor access to remote learning tools and, consequently, more difficulties in developing ICT Skills.

20. Information and Communication Technologies increase motivation and opportunities to learn. ICT allows students to learn more effectively, collaborate, and reach different sources. It provides broader knowledge, and it facilitates access to information. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of accessing remote learning tools during times when going to conventional schools is impossible.

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[4] Law of Turkmenistan, 4th May 2013. Nº. 391-IV on Education. Available from:
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=96265
[5] Law of Turkmenistan, 5th June 2021 on Education. Available from: https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=59808

21. However, Remote Learning tools use goes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. It can help them continue learning when students are sick or living in remote communities.

22. It also allows more flexibility and, with that, makes Education more accessible to all kinds of students, being able to take a break if needed and set their learning rhythm.

23. Broken Chalk recommends that part of the budget is addressed towards developing ICT skills by imparting IT classes in school and using computers as a primary tool to conduct the classes. If each student had access to their laptop, which they could use in class but also at home, we would improve at the same time their ICT skills while allowing and giving them the necessary tools to learn remotely.

24. It is vital to gain efficiency in how ICT tools are used so that they do not become a distraction; thus, they should effectively be used for kids to access different interactive materials to improve teacher-parent communication.

Inclusive Education

25. There are many ways to understand Education when it comes to the different abilities of students. Broken Chalk recommends enforced training for teachers to adapt to the kids' various skills. It is necessary to keep better track of kids' evolution and needs. A monthly evaluation should be implemented to see if there is a positive evolution. In case it is needed, special reinforcing courses could be created.

26. Better training programs for teachers must be provided. Training should include information on the different forms of disabilities, both physical and intellectual, and how to structure the curriculum so that these students are included.

27. However, teachers should not be the only focus. For instance, they are creating courses covering para-sports and the language of signs. It is also essential to make students aware of other children's difficulties and give them the necessary tools to communicate and interact with them to make education fully inclusive at all levels.

28. Using technology within a remote learning framework can help also ensure that differently-abled students don't fall behind, as they could have the ability to pause, rewind or revisit a lesson. It can also reduce anxiety levels.

Religious Discrimination in Education

29. Broken Chalk recommends that school curriculums include topics explaining different religions and beliefs and related historical developments. State officials must stop their discriminative practices. Education is critical to fighting discrimination.

30. Violence against non-Muslim children is an urgent matter that needs to be addressed adequately. There needs to be a zero-tolerance policy for these acts of violence, and

classmates and teachers should not encourage but report any cases of violence or discrimination. 30. By doing so, it is possible for children to broaden their views and, ideally, reduce the hate and misconceptions about non-Muslim children.

Child Marriage

31. Broken Chalk recommends that school curriculums include information about the impacts of early marriage and education on feminism. There is a need to promote through education the independence and empowerment of women and the benefits of studying to avoid early marriage.

Regional Disparities

32. The government of Turkmenistan should increase efforts to reassure equal access to education and the same opportunities. It is essential to consider all regions and not leave any behind. Therefore, it is vital to evaluate each part to address more resources to the poorest areas of Turkmenistan, trying to give them more resources, and aids to access remote learning tools and higher levels of education.

III. References

UNICEF, 2019. Turkmenistan Education Fact Sheets: *Analyses for learning and equity using MICS Data.* Available from*:* https://mussila.com/top-top-11-benefits-of-remote-learning

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