



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO IN CENTRAL ASIA



AT THE DAWN OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM

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Sector for External Relations and Cooperation

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This brochure seeks to give the reader an overall picture of UNESCO's action in Central Asia since the publication of its previous edition in 1997. Events or activities have been highlighted to stress a particular point or action, but it is just a sample and is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of all what UNESCO does in the region. Should readers wish to learn more, we invite them contact the concerned National Commissions and UNESCO Field Offices and consult the UNESCO web-sites indicated in this brochure. Readers will also be able to widen their knowledge through educational, scientific and cultural publications of the Organization on specific issues and acquire an in-depth understanding of the history and peoples of Central Asia in the six volumes of UNESCO's "History of Civilizations of Central Asia".



Foreword

As one of the oldest cradles of human civilization, Central Asia is a fascinating region with its extremely rich history, vibrant cultural heritage, dazzling landscape, enormous natural resources and well educated population. Located on the crossroads between East and West, the region has fostered dialogue and interaction between cultures, languages and religions along the Silk Roads over centuries.

The region's five core countries -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan -- share much in terms of common history, culture and socio-political development. They all joined UNESCO after the break-up of the former Soviet Union, thus celebrating in 2007-2008 the 15th anniversary of their membership in the Organization.

Much has been achieved in UNESCO's cooperation with these nations over the years, making our partnership truly multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional. Today UNESCO operates actively in the region in all areas of its competence, being closely

associated with the aspirations of local people to improve the quality of education, to protect the environment, to manage social transformation, to safeguard the cultural heritage and to develop communication and information capacities.

While it is heartening to note that the Organization enjoys a high profile in the region and its assistance is greatly valued, it should be also acknowledged that our success is largely due to the unfailing support of the Member States, their National Commissions and a vast network of civil society partners. The present brochure thus recounts the Organization's major achievements in recent years attained in close cooperation with the so-called UNESCO Community in Central Asia.

Ahmed Sayyad

Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Cooperation

Central Asia at a glimpse



Part of the immense Euro-Asian steppe, Central Asia is a huge expanse of steppe and desert dotted with high mountain ranges. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan form the core of the region. The ancient history records of China, the closest eastern neighbour, called this once inaccessible area the "western regions". Today Central Asia seems less remote, with its huge natural resources bringing in foreign investment and its rich cultural heritage attracting tourists.



The five core countries, which have experienced the same long and vibrant history, share a culture defined by the area's dramatic geography and extreme climate, and shaped by the fearless nomadic tribesmen who once roamed it. Since the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 3rd century B.C., Central Asia has seen the rise and fall of empires and civilizations. During the golden era of the Silk Roads, a vast network of routes and merchant caravan tracks that linked China to Europe from the 2nd century B.C. to the 15th century, the region became enriched through accrued trade, and benefited from the arrival along these routes of new ideas, technologies and religions. It is this prosperity that made the region the object of many conquests,

much of its turbulent history stemming from the desire to control the lucrative trade routes that crossed it. Yet, if the inhabitants of Central Asia suffered the wrath of empire-building invaders, in many cases these vicissitudes proved to be the prerequisite to the rise of flourishing civilizations, the legacies of which today make up the region's rich and unique cultural heritage. For example, in many parts of Central Asia paintings and statues remain as examples of Gandharan art, a legacy of Alexander's Greek empire, while cultural aspects of other civilizations such as the Kushan, Parthian, and Sassanian civilizations have also survived. The Arabs bequeathed Islam and the Arab script, whilst the Samanid dynasty encouraged Islamic religious learning. Genghis Khan and his successors developed what is now called the Pax Mongolica, when travelers like Marco Polo could safely make the journey from

The Golden Man, a warrior's costume in gold pieces, 5th c. B.C., Central State Museum, Kazakhstan.

The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan is an outstanding example of the Timurid architecture.



The Central Asian region, the locus of the ancient east-west trade routes which come under the collective term the "Silk Roads", was a cradle, not only of nomadic power, but also during long periods of its history of sedentary civilization, scholarship and dazzling culture.

Europe to China. The magnificent monuments built by the Timurid dynasty today provide the main attraction of a successful policy of cultural tourism. Finally, following more than 150 years of cohabitation, Russia has left an indelible influence that includes rich linguistic, scientific and cultural connections.

However, since their independence in 1991, the five Central Asian States have leapt into a new era. This has obliged them to address a number of challenges, in particular those related to their integration into a globalized free market economy, as well as those related to the shaping of distinct and cohesive national identities. Emphasis on nurturing cultural identity has included a revival of religious practices. The Arab armies brought Islam to Central Asia as early as 705, and the majority of the inhabitants today are Sunnit Muslims. Fundamentalism is rare, but can be conceived as a danger in a few areas. Christianity is not new in the region, since Nestorianism flourished until the 14th century, when this sect, considered heretical, was eradicated. Today, largely as a result of

Russian influence, the Christian minority is essentially made up of Orthodox Christians. The population varies considerably from one Central Asian state to another, but overall it is a young population and one with a high growth rate. Taking all this into account, and without losing sight of their common ancestral heritage, the Central Asian States are more and more aware of the fact that each one possesses natural characteristics and individual features that are helping it meet the new challenges of the third millennium.

Kazakhstan, for instance, has developed a new capital, Astana, situated in the northern part of the country. In 2007 Kazakhstan's population was estimated at 15.2 million, which in an area of 2.7 million square kilometers, means a density of less than 6 persons per square kilometer. Kazakhstan is fortunate in having vast fossil fuel reserves, and it aims to produce 3 million barrels of oil per day by 2015, which will lift it to the position of fifth largest world producer of oil. However, wisely the country aims to achieve a sustainable economic growth by not putting all its eggs in one basket. As a result, it is also embarking on a policy designed to diversify its economy with the development of a light machine-building industry. In addition, once an important granary, with an annual economic growth rate nudging 10 percent, Kazakhstan is now becoming a magnet for both job-seekers and financial investors from the rest of Central Asia. Tourism is also income-generating, and whilst trekking in the mountains of the Tian Shan, taking a trip to see some of the oldest petroglyphs in the world at Tamgaly Tas or tracking down the falconers appeals to some, others seek out the Golden Man, a warrior's costume found in a 5th century B.C. Sakka tomb.

Kazakh girls in national costume.





Kyrgyzstan is a country of sheer natural beauty. About 94% of its land is mountainous, rising to over seven thousand metres. In 2004, the Kyrgyz government decided to name a 5000 metres high peak in the Sary-Jaz range (Tian Shan) after UNESCO. The seven hundred-metres-deep Lake Issik-kul is another natural attraction in this small, land-locked country of 198,500 square kilometres. Kyrgyzstan is home to around 5.2 million people, the majority of whom are ethnic Kyrgyz, an ancient Turkic people who arrived on the scene in the 9th century, but whose roots go back around 2000 years. Some 800,000 inhabitants live in

Bishkek, the capital. Kyrgyzstan's economic growth rate remains relatively modest. The little arable land available is mainly devoted to livestock, but strategic metals such as gold and uranium are also being harnessed, and free enterprise and privatization are strongly encouraged. In accordance with the agreement signed in April 2007, the construction of two hydro-electric plants in partnership with Russia and Kazakhstan will help solve some of the problems thwarting the country's economic development. Kyrgyzstan also has much to offer to the world in the realm of tourism, since in addition to its breath-taking mountain scenery, it has maintained a wealth of nomadic traditions, ranging from horseback sports through fine handicraft skills to Manas, the national epic revolving around its fearless warrior-hero and popularized by itinerant minstrels.

Today's horseback sports are reminiscent of ancient nomadic traditions.



A Kyrgyz participant at the Festival on Cultural Diversity & Dialogue in Central Asia, Paris, 2005.

Tajikistan's breathtaking scenery is due to the fact that over half the country is over 3000 metres above sea level and includes parts of the Pamir range and the southern reaches of the Tian shan range. The country struggled to control severe civil insurrection in the years following its independence but recent progress in national reconciliation is a most positive sign for its budding economy which is

The Tajiks are well known for their hospitality.



now looking to a free market economy. One of the country's main domestic targets is to increase its production of electricity. Recent efforts made to trigger off a cultural revival are beginning to foster a sense of national identity, in which the influence of the former Silk Roads and present-day silk production are playing a role. The population density is low with around 71 million people living in 143,100 landlocked square kilometers, and despite a rise in the inhabitants of Dushanbe, the capital, many still live in remote villages. Tajikistan has several natural, archaeological and monumental sites that are being considered for the World Heritage List, not the least of which are the Fann Mountains, the Tajik National Park, the Neolithic Settlement Sarazm, the Buddhist Cloister of Ajina-Tepe and other pre-Islamic sites such as Pyanjekent and Takhti-Sangin (studied during the UNESCO Silk Roads' "Steppe Route" Expedition), as well as Mausoleums such as the Hodja Nashron. These sites form part of a rich cultural heritage which Tajikistan is now beginning to highlight.

The Old Castle in Hisor, Tajikistan



Ornate silver jewellery is a legacy of the Sassanian art of metallurgy.

Turkmenistan contains one of the world's biggest deserts, the Karakum, which fills almost four-fifths of the land, and the traditions of the nomadic horse tribes that roamed it still permeate their descendants' way of life. Ashgabat, the capital, drains 500,000 of the just over 5 million inhabitants of this country, which, with its 488,100 square kilometres is the second largest of the five. Following a first cautious approach to economic reform, the country is now embarking on a more ambitious and outward-looking policy. Long-term economic prospects could be very promising if new outlets to world energy markets are found for its vast reserves of natural gas and oil. Amongst the archaeological sites to be found in Turkmenistan are three that are of particular importance to the history of the "Silk Roads"; the Parthian capital, Nisa, Kunya-Urgench and Ancient Merv. The latter served as a base for expanding empires from Alexander to the Seljuq Turks. Around 80% of the inhabitants of the country are ethnic Turkmen, and although most are now settled, their colourful garb and shaggy sheep's wool hat, together with a strong culture

The Uly Gyz Gala in Merv, Turkmenistan





Twilight falls on the Registan square in Samarkand, Uzbekistan

revolving around hand-made carpets, ornate silver jewelry and fast Akhal-Teke steeds, testify to a natural inkling for the nomadic lifestyle.

Uzbekistan lies in the middle of the other four Central Asian states. With its 447,400 sq. km., it is the third biggest Central Asian State, but the first in population with 277 million people estimated in 2007. Around 80% are Uzbeks, who had emerged early as a distinctive people and established themselves in what is now Uzbekistan. Today, over 2 million people live in Tashkent, the capital, and more than 60% of the inhabitants live in densely populated rural communities. The Uzbek economy has one of the most advanced infrastructures in the region, but combined with efforts to avoid social disruptions resulting from a rapid political transition, the country is gradually seeking to lessen its dependence on “white gold” (cotton), of which it is the world’s 5th largest producer, by tapping its considerable reserves of gold ore, and by up-grading its important natural gas exports. Uzbekistan, however, has to address the serious environmental problems caused by the shrinkage of the Aral Sea, which it

shares with Kazakhstan. The former Silk Roads trade centers have always been a blessing, and today, Tashkent, the capital, as well as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, all of which house some of Central Asia’s most spectacular buildings and monuments, are a boon for cultural tourism, which forms part of the policy designed to boost economic growth.



Rich tangible and intangible heritage of Central Asia is an important factor to boost cultural tourism.

Introduction to UNESCO's action in Central Asia

UNESCO's interest in Central Asia stems back to the Orient-Occident project (1957-1966), when it already attempted to situate the effect of historical factors in the complex Central Asian inter-ethnic relationships. The scholarly research undertaken during the Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue (1988-1997), during which the Steppe Route Expedition crossed the five countries, was to have a greater impact. The results are still proving fruitful today. In addition, the six volumes of the History of Civilizations of Central Asia published since 1992 provide a state-of-the-art picture of the history and cultures of Central Asia with articles written by renowned specialists, many of whom are from the countries concerned.

Since the independence of the five core countries in 1991 and their subsequent membership in the Organization in 1992 and 1993, the Organization has intensified its cooperation with Central Asia. In 1994, the UNESCO Office was established in Almaty, which later became a Cluster Office covering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 1996, UNESCO set up a National Office in Tashkent, which focuses its activities essentially on Uzbekistan. The UNESCO Office in Tehran, established in 1996, covers activities in Turkmenistan.

Through these Offices and with the support of the National Commissions and other bodies which make up its operating network, UNESCO has accompanied the five Member States in order to strengthen the existing education systems, preserve the environment, contribute to the development of an independent media, act on societal issues, strengthen professional

and national capacities, improve the management of natural resources and revive and conserve the rich cultural heritage.

In 1995, UNESCO set up a unit within its Sector for External Relations and Cooperation, known as "Central Asia Project, CAP" and published a first brochure relating its action in the region (*"UNESCO in Central Asia"*, Paris, 1997). The CAP Project, which played an important role to facilitate the smooth integration of the region's new states into UNESCO's multinational family, was eventually mainstreamed into the Organization's biennial programme and budget. Encouraged by the success achieved during this first period, UNESCO has since widened the range of its activities and intensified its work in Central Asia. This brochure will provide the latest information on new projects designed to meet the challenges of the third millennium in the region.



UNESCO Steppe Route Expedition, 1991

Education

The UN Literacy Decade 2003-2012 and the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 form guiding structures in the field of education. However, UNESCO's action is anchored in the Six Dakar Goals, voted during the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000, and which confirmed the Organization's role as Coordinator of Education for All (EFA).

Central Asia inherited widespread literacy and high educational standards from the former Soviet Union. However, since the dissolution, education systems have undergone serious financial crises and economic pressure often means that families are better off allowing children to work than attend school. In order to reinforce its function as a capacity-builder, UNESCO has been seeking to widen its cooperation, leaning not only on the governments and the official bodies concerned but also on the burgeoning civil society. New links and partnerships, both operational and financial,

were developed at the international, national and local levels, drawing upon the expertise of informed stake-holders and professionals.

As summarized in the **EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2008**, which raises the crucial question "Education for all by 2015: Will we make it?", there is steady progress in Central Asia regarding the participation at all levels of education. However, the report has pinpointed some subjects of concern, for instance: a lack of education for some currently excluded; the fact that in general there are less men in tertiary education; and the fact that the overall quality of education has declined.



"UNESCO's mission to promote education is central to all its tasks and for its international standing. To provide quality education for all will be a paramount challenge for all countries."

EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA)

World Education Forum, Dakar, April, 2000

Six Dakar Goals

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults;

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to basic education;

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The UNESCO Office in Almaty considers that *"there is a need to develop a common agenda in Central Asia with regard to reforming the education systems, to define the most burning issues in each country, to get an overview of the national plans of action."*

In this respect the **Central Asian Education Forum**, established in Kazakhstan in 2002, has proven to be a highly useful tool, acting as a mechanism for implementing education system reforms and launching partnerships and cooperation between the countries. The annual Forums, which draw policy makers together, provide a unique opportunity to consolidate the efforts of national education officials, researchers and the civil societies in the five Republics. Supported by its Executive Committee functioning the whole year round, the Forum itself rotates each year in the five Central Asian countries.

The Forum rotates each year in the five countries.



Several international agencies facilitated partnerships to foster inter-country commitments to implement the Dakar goals. UNESCO and UNICEF, amongst others, translated this commitment by supporting the Forum and providing technical assistance and professional expertise and in organizing the sessions and workshops on goals of particular concern to Central Asia.

In fact, UNESCO and UNICEF are working hand in hand to impulse necessary EFA strategies. An example of this partnership can be seen in Turkmenistan, where a round table and a three-day workshop with the Ministry of Education and others at decision-making level were organized in 2005, on EFA issues as well as educational planning for sustainable development. This was followed by Turkmenistan becoming the venue for the Central Asian EFA Forum in 2006.

With regard to **Early Childhood Care and Education** (ECCE), there is a definite decline in the infant mortality rate in the region. Another positive result is the increased participation in pre-primary education in all Central Asian countries, with a particularly high gross enrollment ratio (reaching 77%) in Kazakhstan, one of the countries involved in the UNESCO/OECD policy review project.

Overall, **Universal Primary Education** has been virtually achieved. This can be weighed on both sides

of the balance: on the one hand by a decline in the number of out-of-school children, and on the other with an increase of the gross intake rate. In Turkmenistan, for instance, there was an absolute explosion of new schools and kinder-gardens in Ashgabat in 2007.

Tajikistan is a post-conflict country and its social, economic and political situation posed added challenges. The country has, however, not only undertaken a national survey to review the current situation and identify concrete strategies to improve and promote ECCE and primary education, it has also tackled the task of providing support to street children, the number of which rose dramatically during the civil war. Support to these marginalized and at-risk children through the provision of basic literacy skills is one of the main goals of Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan has just about achieved the goal of universal access to primary education, so it has recently concentrated on providing education to children with special needs. With the assistance of UNESCO, a Resource Centre on Inclusive Education was established in order to increase learning opportunities for disadvantaged children through inclusive education.

Satisfactory results continue when it comes to post-primary education. Indeed, most

countries progressed since enrollment increased by three percentage points in Central Asia as a whole, with the result that the gross enrollment ratio is above world average. Tight financial constraints following the independence of the five countries lead to a steady decline in **Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (TVET) until quite recently. However, it was recognized that boosting technical and vocational education and tailoring it to fit specific needs are crucial to the success of the emerging Central Asian economies. Professional training is frequently the first step towards the establishment of small-to-medium enterprises.

Another step consists in acquiring the know-how with regard to new administrative and legal policies, and to this end a series of workshops were organized, combining the efforts of the UNESCO Offices in Almaty, Bangkok and Tashkent, and the NGO "EFA in Kazakhstan" Association, during which the regulative documents of UNESCO and ILO (International Labour Organization) were examined with policy-makers from the member countries. The UNESCO National Commission of Turkmenistan together with UNICEF and other agencies organized, for the first time, a two-day consultation in 2005, during which discussion topics included technical and vocational education.



A small beneficiary of primary education.



Young students of the School of Fine Arts in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has been especially active in attempting to ensure gender equality, and a UNESCO Chair in Gender Policy and Human Rights was established at the Kyrgyz Russian Slavic National University as early as 1998. Recently, the Chair implemented a research study into women's participation in decision making in rural families and communities. The results will be presented to the Presidential National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development.



Although full **Gender Parity** may not be reached in all the Central Asian countries by 2015, elimination of gender disparities in both primary and secondary education was virtually achieved

by 2005. As two of the 62 target countries of the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) project on Gender Equality, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are receiving special encouragement in their effort to attain the goal in secondary schools. Working in partnership with NGOs, mass media and the National Commission of Tajikistan, UNESCO organized mobile teams of journalists to conduct field visits to rural areas to raise awareness on girls' education. The UNESCO Almaty Office joined in a cross-cutting project to conduct girls' education advocacy campaigns, and to train journalists on how to report accurately on similar issues.

Interestingly, higher education portrays a different picture as young women now form the majority of students enrolled in most countries of Central Asia. This is a pattern that has definitely accentuated in recently, although boys still tend to be favoured in a few places. However, statistics show that women tend to be concentrated in traditionally "feminine" fields. With this in mind, UNESCO Almaty and the Kazakhstan Gender Research Institute studied the feminization of teaching in the country and presented the results at a regional conference in the Republic of Korea. Similarly, perspectives of gender sensitive education were presented to the Central Asian Education Forum held in Dushanbe in 2005.

EFA would not be complete without due attention being paid to the **Quality of Education**, and this has been singled out as being the most important educational issue in the area. It is essential to know what students learn and under which conditions. Since 2000, UNESCO has introduced concepts for

monitoring the results and achievements of the learning process and pilot surveys have been conducted at primary and secondary levels.

Among the many criteria that make up the generic "quality of education", are those concerning the quantity and distribution of the teaching force. On the positive side certainly it should be noted that the average number of primary pupils per teacher was 21:1 in the region as a whole, which is considerably better than the world average of 25:1!

On the other side of the coin, not all teachers are trained and more instructional hours are required for the first grade. So for example, as part of a new policy supported by UNESCO and UNICEF in Turkmenistan, a large number of teachers were given computer training, added to which the government increased the salaries of all the teachers by 40% in 2007.

Uzbekistan has been looking into the question of the quality of education since as early as 2000, when, with UNESCO's support, it organized a conference devoted to the "National Programme on Personal Training: Outcomes and Perspectives of Reforms in the Light of the Recommendations of the World Conference on Higher Education and the World Education Forum" with a view to modernizing the national education system and addressing the issue of quality education.

Young women now form the majority in higher education





Clearly, the quality of education must be measured and many countries in the world are carrying out assessments. A sub-regional workshop was organized in Almaty in June 2004 on monitoring and quality indicators. It transpired that before setting up national measuring systems, it was necessary to promote capacity-building and to mobilize adequate financial resources in each country.

Regarding Turkmenistan, within the framework of the close cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF mentioned earlier, planning, monitoring processes and quality education are both part of the joint Programme Agreement signed in June 2006 by the two Organizations for EFA in the country.

On the other hand it appears that at secondary and tertiary level, what goes

begging is **Science and Technology Education** (STE), with a notable lack in engineering and scientific-research teaching posts. In Uzbekistan, the authorities have realized that the deterioration of science and technology education is hampering the country's development, and a project to strengthen the teaching of science and technology in secondary schools was implemented (2006-2007) with the assistance of UNESCO. Kazakhstan is putting priority on the teaching of exact and engineering sciences in higher education.

With the same objective in mind, Turkmenistan is an active member of the UNESCO International Network of Government Officers in Science and Technology Education (INGOSTE). Launched in 2001, this network aims to establish closer links with and among Ministries of Education in matters pertaining to STE.

Although a very high literacy rate was inherited from the Soviet period, promoting **Life-Skills and Life-Long Learning**, the 3rd EFA goal, forms part of the work of NGOs in Central Asia. Indeed, civil society is now starting to play an active role in the region through the relatively recent creation of NGOs, which can reach the unreached more easily and extend help to marginalized groups of the population. Many such NGOs are particularly concerned by the development and strengthening of **non-formal education**.



Training projects provide practical skills, as in carpet weaving.

Recently UNESCO has helped five communities in Kyrgyzstan and seven in Kazakhstan start up **Community Learning Centres (CLCs)**. In Kyrgyzstan, the NGO "Forum for Educational Initiatives" served as coordinator for the CLC networks, which concentrated on improving agricultural skills. In Kazakhstan, where the accent was put on computer skills, sewing and hairdressing, as well as on tourism and sports, the CLCs were supported by the Association "Education for All".

In Central Asia handicrafts developed in tune with the traditional way of life, and they still play a major role in maintaining knowledge of ancestral traditions. Nowadays however, good quality handicrafts and folk art have a significant added value - they also form the basis for small businesses.

To this end, assisted by the UNESCO Office in Tashkent, between 2004 and 2007 Uzbekistan has run a series of workshops to train young people in crafts such as silk making, natural dye-making and carpet weaving. The aim was also to promote entrepreneurial development by helping people open small enterprises within a free market economy. Ten such workshops have formed 200 young men and women.

HIV preventive education can be regarded as a specific aspect of life-skills education and UNESCO's efforts to respond to the dramatic problems of HIV and AIDS have benefited from interdisciplinary cooperation within the Organization, notably between the education and communication sectors. Considerable work has been carried out at a very practical level, with the production of an advocacy toolkit on "HIV/AIDS and Education" for education planners, published in Kazakh/Kyrgyz/Tajik and in Russian, and the adaptation, by Kazakhstan, of manuals on "HIV prevention" for schools and teacher training colleges.

In addition, a series of training workshops involving education planners down to the teachers themselves were conducted, in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. An innovative kind of "peer-to-peer" training system in accurate, well-informed and well-balanced media reporting has also been operating successfully.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) : *should it also be considered as a specific aspect of Life-Skills Education, or included in the all-embracing issue of Quality Education?"* "Both", replies UNESCO, for on the one hand ESD aims to promote and improve basic education, to re-orient existing education at all levels in order to reflect the



ESD helps to preserve Kyrgyzstan's natural beauty for future generations.

principles of sustainable development, to increase general public awareness, and on the other hand ESD is also based on the premise that 'quality education' upholds and conveys the ideas of a sustainable world.

To boost ESD in Central Asia, since 2004 UNESCO has organized a series of sub-regional workshops with the participation of representatives from teacher training institutes, Ministries of Education from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as well as Associated School Project (ASP) schools. The immediate result was the publication of methodological guidelines on ESD in Russian and the integration of ESD into education policies. Another tangible result was a book containing good teacher training practices, following a sub-regional workshop conducted in Kazakhstan in July 2007.

A special word must be said about the very informative brochure entitled "Education: Voice of the Youth" which produces in a light, readable form the results of the conference "Voice of the Youth: Quality Education for All" held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2005. The facts and statistics presented come from the analysis of a questionnaire distributed among older school children and young students on issues concerning the quality of education, access to education, life skills and the role youth organizations can play in obtaining them. The replies from the young people show that they are anxious to be recognized as *"full value and equal in rights citizens"*, and that they wish to be given the *"opportunity to prove their capabilities"*.

31 educational institutions form a dynamic national ASP Network in Uzbekistan. Together with UNESCO, the National Commission of Uzbekistan has organized ASP summer camps for young people from the five Central Asian countries in Uzbekistan for nine years. These camps are very popular as they provide a platform for adolescents and young people of the region to play an active role in UNESCO's basic mission, the advocacy of a 'culture of peace, non-violence and international understanding'.

With more than 7900 schools in 176 countries of the world, the **Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet)**, founded as far back as 1953, is one of UNESCO's big success stories! ASP schools reflect on the societal issues that underlie the Organization's on-going programme, focussing on those for which young people, feel a special concern.

Higher education in Central Asia has faced numerous challenges including a considerable increase in student enrollment, knowledge explosion, advances in information and communication technology, as well as globalization and economic restructuring. A whole new impetus was required in order to recover the prestige as well as the funding some academics felt they had lost.

In 2006 a situation analysis of higher education in Central Asia was conducted by the UNESCO Almaty and Bangkok Offices, with case studies carried out in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. This strategy is already paying off with various higher education reforms in the pipeline amongst which are the important tasks of introducing changes in universities' management and in accreditation. The need to undertake research in collaboration with

industry in order to be competitive in a world of global economy has also been strongly underlined.

With the cooperation of the UNESCO Teheran Office, Turkmenistan is also making reforms in higher education, and for instance in 2007, university education was increased from four to five years. New disciplines were introduced, including the Japanese language, as well as some courses in specific socio-economic fields, such as the production of vegetable oil, rural economy and agriculture auditing, and courses related to civil aviation.

As mentioned earlier, Uzbekistan is undertaking a radical reform of education, including higher education. Solutions are being sought for problems of accreditation and recognition of diplomas. More and more students are going abroad and regional inter-university cooperation is being promoted. The International Conference on "Quality Assurance in Higher Education" held in Tashkent in November 2007, and which brought together policy makers, administrators, professors and students, proved to be an important event in aligning Uzbek higher education with international standards.

Central Asian youth in an ASP Summer Camp in Uzbekistan



UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme

Conceived as a way to advance research, training and programme development in higher education by building university networks, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs network was established in 1992. **Twenty two UNESCO Chairs have already been established in Central Asia:** five in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, ten in Uzbekistan, and two in Tajikistan which joined the network in 2004. In collaboration with the Kyrgyz National University and the NGO 'Education for Social Development', the Almaty Office organized a sub-regional conference of UNESCO Chairs in Bishkek in 2005 in order to present the activities and research work that were being implemented to promote EFA goals throughout Central Asia.

SCIENCES

The challenges emanating from globalization are becoming more and more complex. In addressing these challenges, UNESCO is taking into account both the absolute necessity for scientific research and its relevance with regard to the aspirations and needs of societies. This approach is in full harmony with the commitments which emerged from the World Conference on Science (Budapest, 1999), and equally in tune with the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), which highlighted science as the very foundation for sustainable development.

Natural Sciences

In the field of Natural Sciences, the needs of Central Asia, which already has huge scientific and research capacities and resources inherited from the former Soviet system, are directly related to the peculiarities of its geography and climate. This region is part of the immense Euro-Asian steppe and is composed of a huge expanse of steppe and desert dotted with high mountain ranges. It is home to a unique range of ecosystems and an amazing variety of flora and fauna.

Therefore, the programmes to be implemented in the natural sciences in Central Asia revolve around water-related issues, biosphere issues, biodiversity and the reduction of biodiversity loss and the interaction of these issues with sustainable development. In order to obtain the required results, UNESCO is endeavoring to build, or to strengthen, national and regional capacities for policy making, to promote exchange of information and best practices in these

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”



K kchetau lake region in Kazakhstan is known for its rich eco-system.

Tajikistan moved the Decade Water for Life (2005 - 2015) in the UN General Assembly as a result of the 'Dushanbe Water Appeal' adopted at the end of the above mentioned Forum. Following the launching of the Decade, the Government of Tajikistan organized an International Conference on Regional Cooperation on Transboundary River Basins in Dushanbe, which was held from 30 May to 1 June 2005 with the support of UNESCO.



In the the Sary-Chelek lake region of Kyrgyzstan more than 1000 species of flora are to be found.

highly technical fields, and to enhance training possibilities, in particular for young scientists. Several international programmes of UNESCO are active in the region, namely the **International Geoscience Programme (IGCP)**, **the International Hydrological Programme (IHP)**, and **the Man and the Biosphere (MAB)** programme.

Water is a precondition for human, animal and plant life on our planet. Protection of fresh water resources, ecosystems and the water we drink and bathe in is therefore a major issue. The stakes are high and the consequences can transcend national boundaries, so concerted action through the IHP is helpful in developing appropriate approaches for sound water management.

The Khulbuk Palace, Tajikistan



Central Asia, which covers an area of four million square kilometres, contains both arid and semi-arid zones, so water resource management has continued to be at the heart of UNESCO's natural science programmes for the last few years. Here, **the Global Network on Water Resources Management in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones (G-WADI)**, an outcome of the 15th session of the IHP, is playing a useful role. Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan in particular, put high value on this network, which emphasizes international cooperation and knowledge-sharing in the arid and semi-arid areas. The Teheran Office is a regional centre, and focal points have been appointed in the countries concerned and reports discussed at a meeting held in India in 2005, and at another on Water Harvesting held in Aleppo, Syria, in 2006.

Four-fifths of Turkmenistan are covered by a waterless desert, so it is hardly surprising that the country is especially alerted to the importance of water-related issues. As we will see all along in this chapter, participating in networks is beneficial to all concerned, and the Central Asian countries are working hand in hand with the IHP, for example, in a project entitled "Management of Aquifer Recharge and Water Harvesting in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions of Asia", for which focal points have been appointed in order to make up a sub-regional network. It is in this framework that papers were presented at a regional workshop recently held, in Yazd, Iran. Hot, dry and completely surrounded by desert, Yazd was a particularly suitable venue.

Tajikistan also puts high priority on water and associated ecosystems, including drinking water, water resource management and ground water, and plays an important role in freshwater issues. Notably, Tajikistan proposed the **International Year of Freshwater (2003)** during which the Dushanbe International Freshwater Forum, held from 29 August to 1 September 2003, was a major event, attended by over 500 participants, including UN organizations and high-level representatives from different countries.

The great life-giving rivers that run through the region, such as the Amu Darya, the Syr Darya, and the Zeravshan, which nourished ancient Bukhara and Samarkand, pose nowadays a number of challenges resulting from over irrigation and advancing desertification. So in Uzbekistan interest has also been focussing on “spring” water resources, and during 2006-2007 UNESCO contributed to field missions organized to collect data on springs and water reserves in the country. Drinking water being an absolute necessity, it is comforting to note that more than forty of the hundred-and-six debit spring waters are drinkable. The final information has been published as an atlas, in both book and CD form, and widely distributed.

The Aral Sea

The most acute water and environmental issue of the region is the disastrous shrinkage of the Aral Sea, once the fourth largest lake in the world. The sea is bordered by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, but the problems affect areas right into Turkmenistan, situated further

south. The picture is black and the catalogue of problems resulting from over irrigation and the concentrated use of pesticides is long. They range from important climate changes, through increased salinity, the disappearance of much of the flora and fauna, to the severe health problems affecting the Aral Sea Basin population.

In order to help the countries around the Aral Sea take stock of, and mitigate the damage, the German Ministry of Scientific and Technological Research (BMBF) has been cooperating with UNESCO since 1992. As a tangible result of the initial action, (1993-1999), 140 Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmen and Russian scientists have worked on the project, research centres have been equipped and new ones established in the northern and southern deltas. A second part, developed since 2001 by the Centre for Development Research (ZEF) at Bonn University in close cooperation with UNESCO and Urgench State University (Uzbekistan), has been focussing on rational land and water use in the region of Khorezm in Uzbekistan.

The Aral Sea in 1989



The Aral Sea in 2003



In this “before” and “after” version by satellite, the Aral Sea is seen as it was in 1989 (left), then in 2003 (right). Once the fourth-largest lake in the world, today it is just a quarter of the size it was half a century ago.

Source: NASA



The shrinkage of the Aral Sea is the most acute water and environmental issue in Central Asia.

Meanwhile, also within the UNESCO-BMBF programme and in an ultimate effort to restore the Aral Sea, if only partially, in 2005 Kazakhstan consolidated a dam it had built a few years earlier that separated the smaller, less polluted and still salty northern Aral Sea from the southern part, deemed irretrievable. This last-resort effort seems to have proven fruitful and this part is filling up more rapidly than expected. Once again people can fish in part of the Aral Sea!

Triggered off by the UNESCO Director-General's initiative for innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to the Aral Sea Basin, a new multi-faceted component, covering the whole of the ancient Khorezm region, has merged into the second BMBF project. Beneficial to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, it aims to generate employment and incomes through the improved management of existing natural and cultural resources and through the development of activities in the sphere of cultural tourism. Uzbekistan, for instance, has initiated a new tourist programme under the attractive title the "Golden Ring of Ancient Khorezm" and has set up training centres in tourism and in handicrafts as well as a "Culture Centre and Information Office of Ancient Khorezm" in Khiva.

The all embracing project, a **"Vision for the Aral Sea Basin"**, also involves the

participation of scientists from other Central Asian countries, as can be seen through the Water Central Asian Network (Water CAN) component. UNESCO, together with UNESCO-IHE Institute of Water Education in Delft (Netherlands), is currently preparing the next phase of Water CAN, which consists of helping Central Asian Universities to revise their academic curricula to take into account elements of the Aral Sea Basin Vision, in water-related, environmental and agricultural engineering disciplines.



The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda and capacity building aiming to improve the people-environment relationship. Launched in the early 70s, it targets the ecological, social and economic dimensions of biodiversity loss and the reduction of this loss. Its National Committees and the World Network of 531 Biosphere Reserves (as of May 2008) form vehicles for knowledge-sharing, research, training, and decision-making.

Around 94% of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous and about 40% of that is over 3000 meters high, with three-quarters under permanent snow and glaciers. This alpine geography made the country an obvious venue for the **Bishkek Global Mountain Summit**, in the framework of the *“International Year of the Mountains, IYM (2002)”*. UNESCO provided intellectual support for the preparation of the Summit, and helped finance several Round Tables. One of the outcomes of the Round Tables was the establishment of a UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Mountain Development at the International University of Kyrgyzstan in 2003, a joint UNESCO-Kyrgyz initiative. Looking towards the future, UNESCO has been assisting specialists from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to prospect for possible new biosphere reserves, whilst, importantly, it is proposed to hold the second Global Mountains Summit in Bishkek in 2009, which was endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

Renewable energy now plays a fundamental role in the process of developing sustainable development, as was highlighted during the

World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002). Central Asia is grappling with the fact that new industries and new rural and urban population needs are greedy in energy demands, so the possibilities provided by renewable energy as an alternative to the rapidly depleting fossil-fuels are being studied by Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan is particularly concerned by this issue and UNESCO participated with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan and its specialized offshoot, Kazakhydromet³, in the organization of the first international ministerial conference in the region on the *“Strategic Role of Renewable Energy for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia”* in 2006. Conferences at this level yield policy strategies and decisions, and in this case a will to determine the renewable energy potential in the region emanated, with the elaboration of an action plan and real pilot projects. For example,

The five Central Asian countries have set up National Committees and some have Biosphere Reserves, which demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development. At present there are four Reserves in Central Asia: the *Chatkal Mountains* in Uzbekistan, *Sary Chelek* and *Issyk-Kul* in Kyrgyzstan, and *Repetek* in Turkmenistan. The Issyk Kul biosphere reserve is now also one of the study sites forming part of the *“Global Climate Change Research in Mountain Biosphere Reserves”*, a UNESCO initiative that stemmed from the International Year of the Mountains and enables the impact of climatic change on the natural and socio-economic environment of mountain people to be assessed.

Global or holistic approaches to scientific problems enable social issues to be taken into account as well. This is the case with the **“Ecological Atlas”** developed by Uzbekistan with the support of UNESCO. The Atlas is a tangible outcome of the project which involved specialists in intermeshing fields ranging from geography, through biology and zoology, soil and air sciences to demography and urban issues.

Central Asia mostly consists of expanses of green steppe, high snowy mountains, some of which rise to 7000 metres and large areas of desert or semi-arid land.



³ Kazakhstan Hydrometeorological and International Cooperation Service, “Kazhdromet”, carries out atmospheric monitoring and participates in seeking energy from renewable sources.

Strongly encouraged to take part in these "knowledge-sharing" events related to water, environmental problems and capacity building, Turkmenistan scientists recently participated in five specialized workshops, including the recent Regional Expert Meeting on Sedimentation and Erosion held in Iran in 2007.

Special mention should be made of the "International Geoscience Programme" (IGCP), which is a cooperative enterprise of UNESCO and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and has been stimulating comparative studies in the Earth Sciences since 1972. Kazakhstan has an IGCP National Committee, and geoscientists from Tajikistan are participating in three highly specialized IGCP projects: Metallogeny of Central Asia, Tectonics of Central Asia and the Evolution of Ecosystems and Climate during the Devonian Period.

it was ascertained that the hydro-electric sector could be considerably developed. Even in Kyrgyzstan, which has abundant water power and is considered to be one of the two "water-castles" of Central Asia (the other being Tajikistan), some 10% of the hydro-electric power potential is exploited.

Solar power is another source of renewable energy to be tapped. In Uzbekistan, there are distinct advantages to the development of solar energy on a fairly large scale, including a suitable climate and a long-standing interest in generating power from sunlight. This dates back to the Soviet period, when in the '60s the Uzbek Academy of Sciences seriously started to study the question. In 2007, UNESCO's contribution in this field focussed on the organization, in cooperation with the UNESCO Office in Jakarta, of a training course for twenty young scientists from Central Asia and beyond, on the scientific bases of solar energy applications. It was natural that this took place at the Centre of Sun-Physics which is managed by the Uzbek Academy of Science.

Capacity-building constitutes the underlying factor of virtually all the activities mentioned in this brochure. It cannot be dissociated from sustainable development and is directly linked to the management of



Solar energy panels, Uzbekistan

science and technology policies. A measurable outcome is the accrued capacity of the Central Asian countries to evaluate and formulate science and technology policies.

Capacity building can also be enhanced through training. In today's world, science advances at great speed bringing with it the frequent advent of new and highly specialised techniques. In order to assist Central Asian specialists in keeping abreast with global scientific trends, some of the Regular Programme budget is spent on travel and stipends to help scientists participate in training courses and in international professional conferences, several of which have already been referred to. Of course many are organized in partnership with other bodies and with UNESCO Offices further afield.



Toktogul Dam: hydro-electric power can be further harnessed in Central Asia

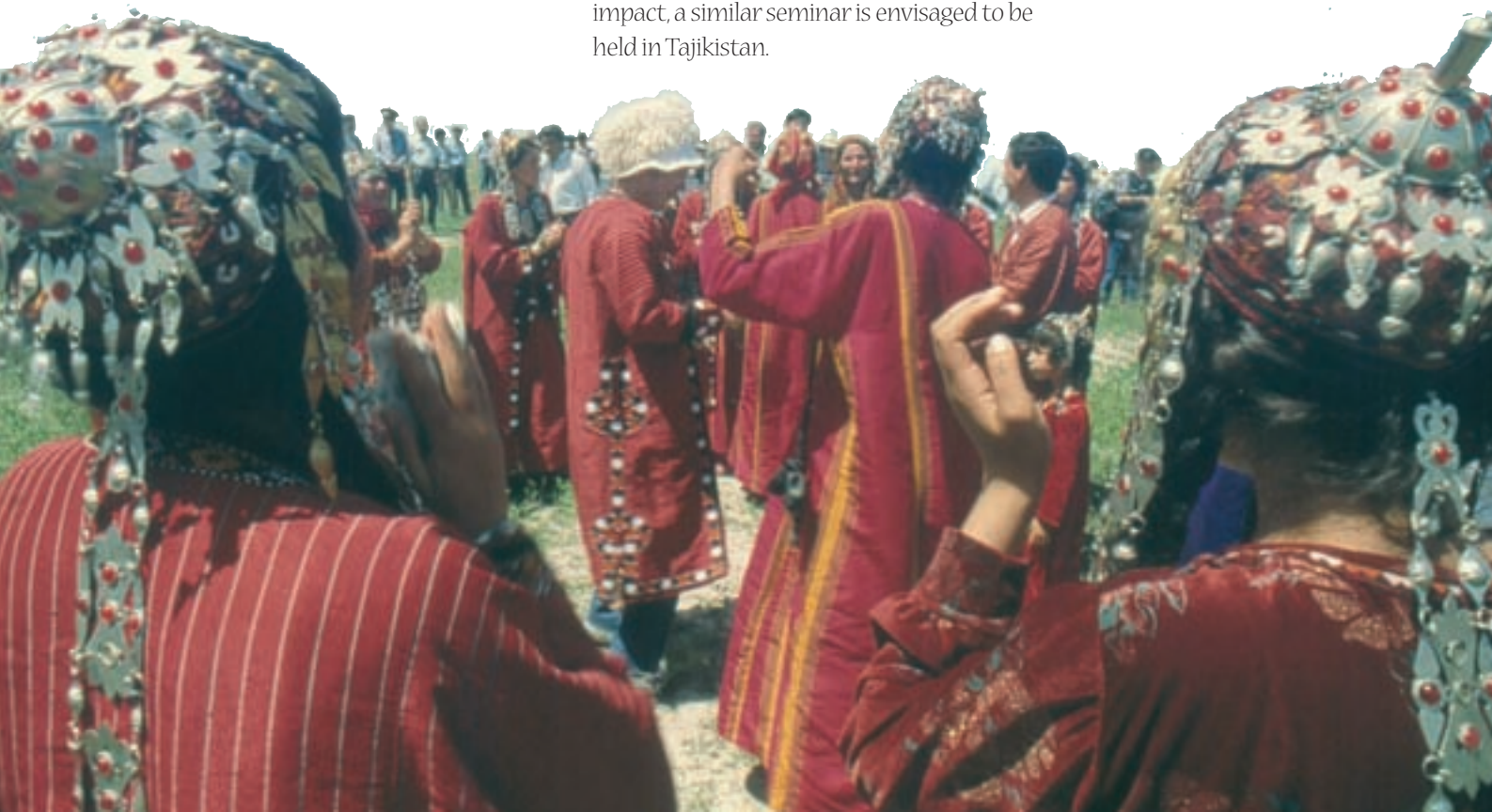
Social and Human Sciences

UNESCO's functions as a think-tank, a standard-setter and a catalyst for cooperation are especially evident in the field of the Social and Human Sciences, a group of academic disciplines that study human aspects of the world. Indeed, social and human sciences, although they may seem hard to grasp and difficult to quantify, have a vital role to play in helping to understand and interpret the social, cultural and economic environment, by providing research, analysing trends and proposing paths of action.

The Programme on Management of Social Transformations (MOST) has a holistic approach which combines all the above components. As a result, the policy-oriented approach it pursues on democratic governance in multicultural and multiethnic societies seems designed to fit the needs of the Central Asian states. The underlying assumption is that the peaceful transition to a modern democracy presupposes a balance between social cohesion and group autonomy, decreasing the potential for inter-ethnic tensions and conflict. Multicultural policies based on universal human rights are well equipped to foster social integration and can, therefore, be a core component of democratization in societies.

Based on these principles, a long-term project (1997-2007) was designed to support Kyrgyzstan in finding suitable legislation, public policy strategies, and administrative structures to guarantee equal ethnic participation within a democratic framework. Over the years, the project has published training materials on multicultural and multi-ethnic democracy, has established a rotating UNESCO Chair at several Kyrgyz universities, and has carried out in-depth training on multicultural policies for Kyrgyz leaders. This well-targeted and pioneering UNESCO project was implemented with the support of the Swiss government.

UNESCO plays a proactive role in the protection of human rights in its areas of competence, notably through the implementation of the different standard-setting instruments adopted by the Organization and in pursuit of the goals of the UN Decade for Human Rights (1995-2004). For instance, in 2004, focus was put on a training seminar on the "Role of Judicial and non Judicial Institutions in the Implementation of International Human Rights Conventions in Central Asia". The United Nations Development Programme was involved in this seminar, together with the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the National Human Rights Commission in Kazakhstan, amongst others, and as an outcome to the positive regional impact, a similar seminar is envisaged to be held in Tajikistan.





Migrational flows are subject to international study, and in this area one of UNESCO's roles is to pay particular attention to the human rights of migrants. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has become a country subject to high levels of regional job-seeking migration.

Together with the International Organization for Migration, UNESCO has organized several research-based conferences with Almaty as the venue. These paved the way for future activities, such as the research project on Kazakhstan as a destination country for labour migrants, conducted in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Kazakhstan's interest in migration includes the historic aspect, as can be seen through an international conference it organized at UNESCO in June 2008 on the theme of the "First Great Migrations of Peoples".

Looking to the future, a group has been launched under the auspices of the Kyrgyz parliament to study the possibility of elaborating a regional policy regarding migration influx. An added piece of information regarding Kyrgyzstan's overall concern in the field of human rights, was the proposal it made

to proclaim the 20th of February as the UN **"World Day of Social Justice"**.

Urban development is another facet of the kaleidoscope of social and human sciences, as can be seen in a project in Kazakhstan involving urban community participation. Centred on the "Old city of Turkestan" this project is a multi-partner activity, carried out by the UNESCO Almaty and Beijing Offices, with the Old Turkestan Mayor's Office, the International Kazakh-Turkish University and the Sange Research Centre. The aim is to link the preservation of local monuments with an effort to kindle a renaissance of traditional culture, in an attempt to create jobs and reduce unemployment in the area.

Disseminating information and knowledge to the general public is also part of UNESCO's overall mission, and another tool for reflection on the processes of a changing society in Central Asia is the annual *UNESCO Philosophy Day in Central Asia*, which is usually held in mid November. The Annual Philosophy Day has proved to be a much awaited success, with activities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

A special event for Philosophy Day was organized in Tajikistan. In partnership with local bodies, UNESCO organized celebrations at the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe. An open discussion took place, and from the interactions between participants it transpires that the use of philosophy as a tool for individual analysis is attracting the interest of the intellectual spheres of the region.

Bukhara is considered to be one of the oldest urban centres in the world.



CULTURE



Mausoleum of Tekesh in Kunya Urgench, Turkmenistan

Like a kaleidoscope, "culture" has a profusion of overlapping, intermingling and changing facets. Some of these, highly visible by nature, attract considerable public interest, others much less. UNESCO's present mission concentrates on three far-reaching, intermeshing elements of the pattern: drafting and implementing standard-setting instruments, promoting pluralism and the dialogue between cultures, and enhancing the linkages between culture and development.

Cultural heritage

Among the facets that attract public attention is the protection of the cultural heritage, which has always been in the limelight. However, recently the need for an approach to heritage that is both holistic and integrated has transpired. The vast diversity of the forms of cultural heritage is now widely recognized, and the International Year of Cultural Heritage (2002), for which UNESCO was the lead agency, has certainly helped to deepen our understanding of this broader and dynamic conception of the heritage.

The five Central Asian countries, which form the subject of this brochure, were, until recently, relatively unfamiliar to the rest

Tash-Rabat, the ancient Silk Roads caravanserai, stands isolated in a high valley of Kyrgyzstan.



of the world. However, the region spanned by these countries, the locus of the ancient east-west trade routes which come under the collective term the "Silk Roads", was a cradle, not only of nomadic power, but also during long periods of its history of sedentary civilization, scholarship and dazzling culture. It was therefore particularly worthy of the keen interest taken by UNESCO during the 1992 "Steppe Route Expedition in Central Asia", which took place in the framework of the Project "**Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue**".

One of the major outcomes of the Steppe Route Expedition is the fact that UNESCO has concentrated its action in the past years on the conservation of the Central Asian Silk Roads heritage, in particular through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities aimed at training professionals and officials in heritage site conservation and management. The UNESCO Global Strategy Meeting for the Cultural Heritage of Central Asia hosted by the Ministry of Culture in Merv, Turkmenistan in 2000 was followed by two workshops in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2002 and 2005. These were to assist Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in identifying potential natural and mixed sites for World Heritage

The World Heritage List

includes ten Central Asian properties :

Kazakhstan:

- Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi;
- Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly;
- Saryarka-Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan

Turkmenistan:

- State Historical and Cultural Park "Ancient Merv";
- Kunya-Urgench;
- Parthian Fortresses of Nisa

Uzbekistan:

- Itchan Kala (Khiva);
- Historic Centre of Bukhara;
- Historic Centre of Shakhrisaybz;
- Samarkand
- Crossroads of Cultures

Serial nominations

Another outcome of the earlier Silk Roads project is the present aim to obtain a **“Silk Roads Serial and Transnational”** nomination, now recognized as one of the most promising ways of highlighting and assisting the wealth of cultural heritage sites in Central Asia. Research work has already started on the Chinese “oasis” segment of the Silk Roads, and similarly, the Central Asian countries have put the highest priority on the preparation of a serial nomination. A strategic approach, a concept paper and a work plan for the next four years were approved by the Central Asian countries and China during workshops held in Samarkand in 2006, in Dushanbe in 2007 and in Xi’an, China in 2008.

nomination to enhance national capacities in the conservation of World Heritage in Central Asia and to elaborate an action plan for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. As a result of these sessions, the Central Asian countries are now in a position to prepare the presentation of further nominations to the World Heritage List.

Since the latter part of 1990’s UNESCO and its Tashkent and Teheran Offices have supported the Turkmen Ministry of Culture to implement the World Heritage Convention, notably in the areas of capacity building, conservation, inventorying, and, very importantly, successful inscriptions. As a result, “Ancient Merv”, Kunya Urgench, and the Parthian Fortresses of Nisa have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Turkmen authorities place high value on the technical capacity of UNESCO’s consultants, who have engaged successful partnerships with CRATerre-ENSAG, an offshoot of the University of Grenoble School of Architecture in France. In combination with the IHP and MAB programmes, a Regional Workshop will take place in Ashgabat and in Dehistan Archaeological Park in 2008, addressing World Natural Heritage, within the context of biodiversity conservation.

Located 12 km from Kurgan Tyube in Tajikistan is the district named **Ajina-Tepe**, a flattish area covered with bumps and pits. One can imagine the surprise when the ruins of a 7th-8th century



A Kazakh yurt

Buddhist monastery were discovered in the thick undergrowths. The walls and vaults of the monastery were covered with paintings, but the most sensational find in Ajina-Tepe was a gigantic clay statue of the **“Buddha in Nirvana”** found in 1966 in one of the monastery corridors. Only the bottom half of the figure was intact, the scattered fragments of the upper part were found separately. Today this biggest sculpture of the Buddha found to date in modern Central Asia is exhibited at the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan in Dushanbe. The 2005-2008 preservation project is operated with funding from the Japan Funds-in-Trust and consists of conservation work at the monastery and the stupa structure. It also consists of the establishment of a master plan and training for Tajik conservation specialists in the conservation of freshly excavated sites. It is hoped that this composite project will lead to the consideration of the inscription of Ajina-Tepe on the World Heritage List.

Conservation work at the Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepe

Buddha in Nirvana





UNESCO is now assisting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to develop a self-sustainable system of cultural and eco-tourism. Over a period of five years, high-quality and competitive tourism services have been developed by training actors involved in the various stages of tourism, by setting up a system of community-based home-stay accommodation and by improving the production and sales of traditional crafts. Vulnerable populations, such as youth and women, were the primary beneficiary targets in these initiatives, which contribute to increasing the income of rural households. The positive boomerang effect of tangible socio-economic benefits is the fact that the population is becoming aware of the importance of conserving derelict monuments.



A similar serial nomination initiative is being prepared for **“Central Asian Petroglyph Sites”**. So far only the Tamgaly Petroglyphs in Kazakhstan have been

inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004. These were studied by an international team of specialists during the Integral Study of the Silk Roads, and became the object of a joint UNESCO/CNRS (French National Centre for Research) project. A little slow to start, the project was really boosted in 2005 with the adoption of a high priority action plan to obtain a Serial nomination, which will

be further detailed at a workshop to be held in Kyrgyzstan in 2008. Coordinated by UNESCO, the project, which involves strategy-aiming and modality workshops and regional meetings up to 2009-2010, has received the financial support of the Norway Funds-in-Trust.

Movable cultural objects and the museums in which they are conserved foster the integrated approach that is being sought. They constitute an essential tool in protecting and promoting cultural diversity, whilst playing a fundamental role in providing education opportunities for the general public. Nevertheless, many museums lack technical equipment and frequently, the staff lack the technical knowledge that meets international professional standards.

Kyrgyz eagle hunters are part of the traditional picture.



With this in mind, UNESCO is assisting major museums in Kyrgyzstan to preserve endangered ethnographic collections, through the renovation and re-equipment of storage areas, the documentation and digitalization of the collections of most valuable objects. The project, which stands at the crossroads of culture and communication, should be completed during 2008.

Intangible cultural heritage

“Cultures must be recognized as comprising the heritage of values, knowledge and skills upon which identities are based, and as embodying the creative visions and energies that empower people to enrich and renew those identities through interaction with other cultures, with a view to consolidating both peace and human development”.

The now accepted holistic notion of cultural heritage also encompasses living cultural traditions, many of which are transmitted orally and are in danger of disappearing. Efforts have been deployed, for instance, to safeguard oral traditions, by documenting, collecting and revitalizing methods of transmission, as well as through the promotion of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This Convention considers the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development, and has been ratified so far by Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Specialists were trained and institutions equipped in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for the documentation and transmission of Shashmaqom, an ancient but living form of Central Asian classical music said to date back to the Emirs of Bukhara, and performed in both countries.

The study of Central Asian epics was already a component of the former Silk Roads project, and a continuum can be seen in the present efforts to safeguard the Art of Akyns, a Kyrgyz living tradition of epic story telling. The transmission of the Art of Akyns from one generation to another is being encouraged through the establishment of a network of youth centres in various regions of



A Tajik dancer



The art of Akyns is a Kyrgyz living tradition of epic story telling

Kyrgyzstan. This will provide a framework for the “master-apprentice” transmission to be revived, contributing, for instance, to the safeguarding of the Manas epic, one of the world’s longest epic poems (the chanting can last several days) revolving around the Kyrgyz mythical hero. Both the Art of Akyns and Shashmaqom, financially supported by Japan, were proclaimed “**UNESCO Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity**” in 2003. Regarding Kazakhstan, UNESCO will be associating itself to the 16th century Kyz Zhibek epics through the celebration of the 500th anniversary of this poetic folk legend.

The Boysun traditional folklore of Uzbekistan has also been proclaimed as a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage in 2001. Boysun folklore is characterised by innumerable rituals as well as music and dance that have developed over the centuries and continue to flourish. Collecting, and archiving data for an inventory of this traditional folklore forms part of a ten-year plan for its safeguarding.

Turkmenistan is also renowned for its wealth of folklore. Recently this country has also been focussing on safeguarding and vitalizing intangible cultural heritage,



Shashmaqom, an ancient music tradition practiced in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

hence the organization by the Government in 2006 of an International Festival for Intangible Cultural Heritage and Folklore.

Celebrating anniversaries is another way of rekindling the memory of personalities, works or events. Since 1956 UNESCO has associated itself with the celebrations proposed by the Member States and approved by the General Conference, in order to give them wider significance. For instance, the 200th anniversary of the Kazakh poet, Makhambet Utemissov, was celebrated in UNESCO in 2003, as was the 2000th anniversary celebration of the historic city of Taras. Among recent Central Asian anniversaries with which UNESCO has also associated itself are two of particular interest to Uzbekistan: the 2750th anniversary of the foundation of the fabulous city of Samarkand in 2006 and the 2000th anniversary of the foundation of another Silk Road city, Margilon. In 2008, Tajikistan is celebrating the 1150th anniversary of the birth of the poet Abu Abdullah Rudaki, considered to be the founder of Persian classical literature and who was born in present-day Panjakent.



A Kazakh musician. UNESCO Festival on Cultural Diversity & Dialogue in Central Asia, Paris, 2005.

Cultural industries

Culture is manifested in music, dance, literature, various forms of art, architecture, theatre, film, "design" objects and a number of activities related to our lifestyle. Today however, culture is also identified in terms of consumption and consumer goods. The Central Asian countries are proud of their folk art, which is particularly manifest in easily carried utensils, jewellery, woven and felt material, embroidery, rugs and carpets. UNESCO has been re-invigorating the region's cultural industries through projects designed to revive the use of traditional techniques and improve the quality of craft productions, some of which were described in "Life skills and lifelong learning".



UNESCO helps to revitalize pottery and ceramic-making traditions in Uzbekistan.

For instance, the **UNESCO Seal of Excellence**, elaborated as a marketing and quality assurance label in order to motivate local artists and artisans, is now highly prized in Central Asia and its norms and criteria have become a recognized reference. The programme is operated with the help of the Central Asian Crafts Support Organization (CACSA) and nineteen Central Asian traditional crafts were attributed the Seal of Excellence in 2004. Furthermore, in an effort to ensure sustainability, outlets are being sought for the small and medium-size traditional crafts businesses that are forming.

From ancient times, peoples of Central Asia have used earth and water to make pottery, and during the hey-day of the Silk Roads the techniques involved in the colouring and glazing of ceramics, travelled across region,



in particular from ancient Persia to today's Uzbekistan. There were ceramic schools all over the country, tracing their roots back to ancient times. Pottery and ceramic-making in Uzbekistan, considered to be among the most important crafts, have been revitalized, with financial help from Japan, under the colourful project name "Blue of Samarkand", with the creation of a national potters association, the revival of traditional ceramic schools and the preparation of an inventory.

Cultural industries go hand in hand with **cultural tourism**, another growing cultural industry. Tapping into the magic evoked by the ancient "Silk Roads" cultural tourism is already a success in Uzbekistan, which houses so many buildings of great architectural beauty. To promote their traditional culture at UNESCO Headquarters, Central Asian countries often organize exhibitions of their handicrafts, accompanied by song and dance performances.

Cultural policies and intercultural dialogue

Leaning in particular on the principles set out in the Action Plan adopted by the *Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies*

for Development (Stockholm 1998), as well as the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, adopted by the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2005 (ratified by Tajikistan), UNESCO set out to develop "programmes aimed at fostering shared values".

The "**Festival on Cultural Diversity and Dialogue in Central Asia**" that took place in UNESCO Headquarters in 2005, is a prime example. This colourful event brought together the five core countries of Central Asia together with Mongolia, which shares much of their traditional nomadic past. The aim was to reveal the cultural pluralism that forms the wealth of the region, through multifarious activities such as displays of arts and crafts, concerts, films and fashion shows, and a round table debate. The Festival took place in a lively and friendly atmosphere, providing the opportunity for a constructive dialogue between cultures and between actors representing different segments of society. This was particularly evident during the Round Table on the theme "Central Asia – A Crossroad of Cultures and Civilizations". An outstanding event, the Festival has left its imprint as a marker in the field of cultural diversity for the Central Asian countries.

UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura inaugurated the Central Asian Festival in Paris in 2005.





The UNESCO Interreligious Programme, which is an essential component of “intercultural dialogue”, stresses the reciprocal influences between religions, spiritual and humanistic traditions, and emphasizes the need to challenge ignorance and prejudices and foster mutual respect. In recent years, several international conferences and round tables have been organized. Among them, a Round Table entitled the “Exchange and Sharing of Good Practices in Inter-Cultural Dialogue and for the Promotion of UNESCO’s Declaration on Cultural Diversity” was held at the same time as UNESCO Chairs Workshop on Interreligious Dialogue, in order to examine “how to live together” (Kazakhstan, 2007). Here UNESCO fully played its role as a catalyst for cooperation by involving a number of partners, such as the National Commissions of the Central Asian countries, the Municipality of Almaty, the Assembly of the People of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kazakh Institute of Oriental Studies, the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Central Asian Crafts Support Association (CACSA).

The cohesion of different actors is also a condition sine qua non for UNESCO Chairs to operate efficiently. Four Central Asian Chairs established as a result of the conferences organized in the region, are part of the Agreement on the Creation of the Network of UNESCO Chairs on “Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding” elaborated in 2006.

Kazakhstan: UNESCO Chair in Sciences and Spirituality, 2004, Institute for Oriental Studies;

Kyrgyzstan: UNESCO Chair in the Study of Culture and Religion, 1999, Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University;

Tajikistan: UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Dialogue in the Modern World, 2004, Russian-Tajik (Slavonic) University;

Uzbekistan: UNESCO Chair in the Comparative Study of World Religions, 2000, Tashkent Islamic University.

Women and networks

The creation of networks and the extension of their geographical coverage is part of UNESCO’s mandate, and we have already

One of UNESCO’s activities that was keenly awaited in the academic community was the multi-volume **History of Civilizations of Central Asia**. The sixth and last volume, entitled “Towards contemporary civilization: from the mid-nineteenth century to the present time” has just been published.



International standard-setting instruments

In Central Asia, the Organization has encouraged both the ratification and the implementation of key cultural conventions, linking this normative function to operational projects. Among the UNESCO cultural conventions ratified by Central Asian countries, but not yet mentioned, are the following:

- “Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict” (1954), ratified by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan;
- “Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property” (1970), ratified by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan;
- “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” (1972), ratified by all five Central Asian states.

spoken about the role played by **the Central Asian Crafts Support Association (CACSA)**.

Also, women are taking an active part in civil society in the region, and the Central Asian Women’s Cultural Network was launched as a follow-up to the Conference held in Tajikistan in 2003 on the “Role of Women in Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia”. This network addresses women interested in maintaining intercultural dialogue among the women of the region and gathers together in particular women artists, artisans and journalists. Other conferences, such as the one on the “Consolidation of Cultural Women’s Movement in Central Asia: Status and Prospects” in 2005 and training sessions were organized by the UNESCO Almaty Office.

Central Asian International Institutes

The former Integral Study of the Silk Roads project had vast ramifications and long-term implications. Many of these produced a multiplier effect as shown through most of the activities just

mentioned, and as can be seen in particular through the establishment of two Institutes.

The International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) which stems directly from the Silk Roads Steppe Route Expedition in Central Asia was established in 1995 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. It consists of ten Member States including the five core Central Asian states. Its activities are multifarious and deal with both historical subjects and contemporary societal issues. The second body is the **International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations (IISNC)**, established in 1998 in Ulaanbaatar as a result of the Silk Roads Nomads Expedition in Mongolia. With four Member States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Turkey), this Institute concentrates on researching into the history and lifestyle of nomads, and their relationship with contemporary society.

IICAS in Samarkand deals with historical and contemporary issues



IISNC in Ulaanbaatar studies the history and lifestyle of nomads



Communication and Information

Like most technological innovations, new information and communication technologies carry with them the potential to liberate, or exclude, various groups of society, and one of the most debated issues of today's information society concerns the yawning gap between those who "have" and those who "have not" proper access to information.

Through the actions carried out by the Sector for Communication and Information and its two intergovernmental programmes: **the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Information for All Programme (IFAP)**, UNESCO essentially aims to reduce the inequality that exists in order to promote the empowerment and participation of society. This strategy is in line with the tenth UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (Addis Ababa, 2007), which aimed at "the harnessing access to information and to communication technologies, the elaboration of legislation supporting the freedom and the pluralism of the press, and the preservation of important

documents, manuscripts and rare archives. The Organization also promotes networks and networking, from local to international levels.

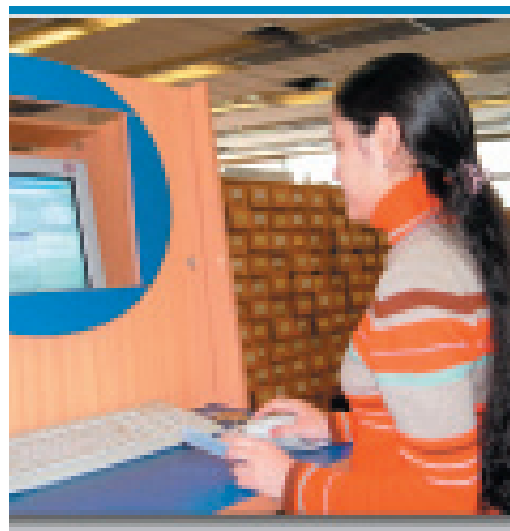
Capacity building and Information and Communication Technologies

The information cycle consists of creating, collecting, reporting and disseminating information, which then becomes accessible knowledge that contributes to the empowering of society. Communication and information activities were considered by the Central Asian countries to be difficult challenges at the beginning of their independence. In order to meet the challenges whilst at the same time overcoming the



"For UNESCO, the main objective in this perspective must be to build a knowledge society based on the sharing of knowledge and incorporating all the socio-cultural and ethical dimensions of sustainable development."

The harnessing access to information and to communication technologies, the elaboration of legislation supporting the freedom and the pluralism of the press, and the preservation of important documents, manuscripts and rare archives are UNESCO's priorities in Central Asia.



apprehensions, from 1998 onwards, UNESCO has made a sustained effort in capacity building in Central Asia. Opportunities for linking individuals and communities and for facilitating access to information and knowledge were created through the introduction of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), with particular attention being paid to training initiatives and to "networking".

For instance, in collaboration with UNESCO's Association of Computer Centres for Exploiting Sustainable Synergy (ACCESS-net), a number of Information and Communication Technology professionals of the five Central Asian countries were trained in advanced network and system technologies and in

digital image technologies through a variety of activities. More recently, in 2006, some ten young specialists from Central Asia were sent to the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology to follow a four-year course under the scholarship funded by the Republic of Korea.

As was shown in the chapter on Sciences, Turkmenistan is becoming increasingly aware of the advantages to be gained by participating in networks, and as a result, this country has been cooperating with UNESCO in the framework of ACCESS-net. The Turkmenistan Information Research and Service Centre "Sibis", situated in Ashgabat and which is an active member of the network ACCESS-net, has both contributed to and attended the





The sharing of information is particularly important among country people.

November 2001 Regional Workshop on IT Applications for Digital Silk Roads.

Who is especially affected by the “information gap”, and what is the role of ICTs in narrowing or closing it? One of UNESCO’s activities in Kazakhstan provides part of the answer.

One of the advantages of the use of ICT tools is the fact that they can provide rapid, tangible results, which explains why they are used in a wide range of situations. However, education probably remains their major sector and the training seminar “Distance Education in Rural Schools of Kazakhstan”, held in October 2007, is a prime example. Thirty-two heads of study rooms and resources specialists of the regional Teachers Advanced Training Institutes took part in this seminar, which was organized through the UNESCO Almaty Office in cooperation with the both national and local bodies.

Training activities aimed at improving the professional competence of the teachers within the “distance education” framework, and included mini-lectures, group activities, excursions, discussions and practical sessions. On the practical side, participants learnt to use portable UNESCO “flash-servers”, enabling them to elaborate distance teaching models tailored to their needs. In all, 256 teachers at rural schools throughout Kazakhstan, effectively learnt a number of new practical and

theoretical skills in computer science including the development of education portals.

UNESCO promotes **press freedom** and freedom of expression as a basic human right, and it highlights media independence and pluralism as fundamental to the process of democracy. The Organization’s work in this field was boosted by the proclamation in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly of a **World Press Freedom Day to be celebrated on May 3rd**. In Central Asia, the celebration of the World Press Freedom Day has been highly beneficial in the promotion of press freedom and the freedom of expression, which has enabled young people, particularly in ASP schools to be confronted with this issue. The result of their analysis took the form of a CD-ROM, which has already been up-dated several times.

In 2005, a special effort was made in direction of Tajikistan media, and a roundtable was organized in Dushanbe, attended by over forty Tajik journalists, media professionals amongst others. Discussions revolved around topics like freedom of expression, of mass media, and trends in Tajik media development in the recent years.

During the period of the Silk Roads, it was at the market-place, the very heart of the trading system, that information passed from mouth to mouth. Today, thanks to the measures taken by UNESCO to **improve the access to information**, public service broadcasting

It must be remembered of course that ICTs are only a part of a continuum of technologies, starting with school chalk and books and going right up to university level. An example of its use at higher education level can be found in Tajikistan, where under a 1999-2003 UNDP project “the Technological University of Tajikistan Computer Centre (TUTCC) for Informatics Skill Development and Information Services” was established in Dushanbe, in collaboration with the United Nations University. It has since been playing an important role as the first ICT training hub in the country.



The «Radiomost» is the first community radio station in Central Asia.

(PSB) reaches out to a far wider audience. PSB is broadcasting for the public, made, financed and controlled by the public. Through PSB, citizens are informed, educated and also entertained. Once again we see the multiple facets of UNESCO's work, since successful public service broadcasting also requires the right technical "tools". The UNESCO Almaty Office considered that the "eNRICH Knowledge Management Software" was the appropriate multipurpose tool for public service broadcasting due to its ability to process and deliver information to, and from all segments of the population, and to get round the problem of either non-existent or too costly Internet. To broaden its use the interface has been translated into Russian.

Another way to improve access to information is to encourage initiatives that help raise community awareness, and the Almaty Office started to develop **the first community radio** in Kyrgyzstan.

When the Arab Abbasid forces defeated those of Tang China at the Battle of Talas in 751, little did they imagine that this remote area situated at the border of Kyrgyzstan with Kazakhstan would be the place from which the very first community radio in Central Asia would start broadcasting in 2007! Talas



has been linked with "communication" from the start, since it was as a consequence of this battle that paper was transferred to the West, via the captured and resettlement in Central Asia of Chinese artisan paper-makers. Now, "Radiomost", ("Radiobridge" in Russian) was considered to be a "remarkable achievement". This community radio is run by a very young team, in which most people are under 21. Youth is certainly not an obstacle, and the team is full of ideas and energy. So armed with talent and dedication the young team stands a good chance of succeeding in transforming the Radiomost station into real community radio.

In Central Asia, the public is beginning to take a genuine interest in societal issues, and to encourage this, Uzbekistan has launched a very successful "**Silk Roads Soap Operas**" radio series. Leaning on the ancient Central Asian tradition of story telling of 'epics' (see the chapter on Culture), the stories are adapted to contemporary real-life situations, and transformed into soap operas based on subjects like education, human rights, human trafficking, drugs, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence etc. The public reacts to situations to which they can relate, so behaviour models can be transmitted through the soap operas, which are entertaining and easy to understand. The programme consists of two separate series aired twice a week, the Silk-Road Soap, aired, in Uzbek, through national channels, aiming at a mature, rural audience, and the City Soap,

broadcast on independent FM stations and aiming at a young, urban audience. Additional products consist of a web-site, storybooks, leaflets and other promotional materials designed to reach an even wider audience. Evaluations indicate that so far the series have an almost 10% audience in cities and 12% in rural areas. In addition, the listeners tend to talk to others about the content of the operas, thus creating a snowball effect. The UNESCO Tashkent Office worked in partnership with the National TV/Radio Broadcasting and local FM radio stations on this project, which has been financed by several organizations, as well as the Swiss government.

The digitalization of libraries is also proving to be a successful manner of improving the access to information, and is strongly advocated by UNESCO. As is fit for a new capital, Astana was the venue for the launching of an innovative and high-tech library, the "Human Rights Digital Library", in September 2006 in the premises of the city's National Academic Library. The creation of the digital library is part of the preparation

of the National Human Rights Action Plan in Kazakhstan, and a good example of a multiple-partnership activity, since a number of different bodies are involved. The library provides free access to a legal data-base that contains more than 1000 documents related to human rights issues, focusing essentially on rural populations and vulnerable groups. In addition, through the Greenstone Digital Library free software provided by UNESCO and the establishment of a national network, access to the Human Rights Commission's website will be available throughout the country.

The International Programme for the Development of Communication

(IPDC) is the only multilateral forum in the UN system designed to mobilize the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries or countries in transition. The Programme not only provides support for media projects but also seeks an accord to secure a healthy environment for the growth of free and pluralistic media in developing countries.

The market has always been a hub of communication in Central Asia.





Interviewing for City Soap Opera, Uzbekistan

One direct outcome from IPDC's efforts stems back to the late 90s, and consists of the successful establishment of a Media Resource Centre in Tashkent.

With IPDC's help, computer hardware and audio and video equipment was bought. This enabled the first media centre in Uzbekistan to be established, capable of providing access and training on digital video and audio equipment.

IPDC has since organized a series of national, regional and international training workshops and seminars.

The five Central Asian countries appear on the list of beneficiary countries of the IPDC, the efforts of which have had an important impact on a broad range of fields, many of which have been covered in this brochure.

Following the creation of the **Central Asian Network of Environmental Journalists**

in order to raise public awareness about local and regional environmental and ecological issues, a recent activity specifically designed for journalists was the "Resource Centre for Tajikistan Journalists", which operated from June 2006 to December 2007. The purpose was to increase the legal and professional knowledge of Tajik journalists, and the project was implemented jointly by three media organizations, the Union of Journalists of Tajikistan, the National Association of Independent Mass Media of Tajikistan and the Foundation for the Memory and protection of Tajikistan Journalists' Rights. An especially interesting aspect was the regionalization of the twenty-four two-day training sessions, since they took place not only in Dushanbe but also in four regional centres. The same outward-looking, decentralized strategy was applied to the five round tables that were held.

Memory of the World Programme

(MOW) Documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures. It is the mirror of the world and its memory. But this memory is fragile and we are all aware that every day irreplaceable parts disappear forever. UNESCO launched the MOW programme, calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world, and ensuring their wide dissemination. Under this programme, for instance in Tajikistan, a unique XIVth century manuscript containing the works of Ubayd Zakoni and Hafiz Sherozi was documented and classified, as were the Kazakh Manuscripts of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi and the documents of the Antinuclear Movement "Nevada-Semiplatinsk". In Uzbekistan, the Holy Koran Mushaf of Othman, (the earliest existing written version) and the collection of the Al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies have been inscribed. A workshop was held in Bishkek in 2004 specifically to train members of the MOW Committees from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the use of a software specifically designed by the UNESCO Almaty Office as a tool for nominating documentary heritage to the Memory of the World Register for Central Asia.

Journalists on the air



UNESCO Offices and National Commissions in Central Asia

The network of UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions brings the Organization closer to the authorities and the people of the countries concerned and enables a more effective delivery of programmes. Three UNESCO Offices and five National Commissions in Central Asia form part of this network.

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Five core countries of Central Asia -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan -- share much in terms of common history, culture and socio-political development. They all joined UNESCO after the break-up of the former Soviet Union, thus celebrating in 2007-2008 the 15th anniversary of their membership in the Organization. Over the years, UNESCO's cooperation with Central Asian Member States has become truly multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional.

UNESCO enjoys a high profile in the region and its assistance is greatly valued. This success is largely due to the unfailing support of Member States, their National Commissions and a vast network of civil society partners. The present brochure thus recounts the Organization's major achievements attained in recent years in close cooperation with the so-called UNESCO Community in Central Asia.

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