

ICRC School Programme in Uzbekistan

*And Alexander (the Great) said:
I will not let my army into the city,
Let them spend the night in the forest.
For if they enter the city,
They may harm the people.*

From "Iskandar's Wall" by Alisher Navoi (1441-1501)

Start: 1996

Course book: *Individual and Society* (target group: 11th-grade pupils aged 17 in civic education classes)

Content: the course book draws parallels between local cultural and historical values and traditions and the basic humanitarian principles articulated in IHL

Status: the course book is obligatory in that its main topics have been included in school curricula as well as national education standards. 80% of the course books are used in secondary schools (in 9 out of 34 civic education lessons) and 20% at lyceums and colleges (18 out of 40 lessons)

ICRC staff: 3 national staff including 1 regional programme coordinator based in Tashkent

Estimated number of pupils reached 1999 - end of 2002/03 school year: 1,250,000

Estimated number of teachers reached: 27,000

In 1999 and in 2000, Uzbekistan's southern and eastern regions suffered incursions by Uzbek armed opposition groups operating from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and rebel-held areas in Tajikistan. While casualties remained relatively low, these incursions have led to a general feeling of insecurity, and an increased readiness by the government to crack down heavily on alleged opposition members. These factors, combined with the government's extremely cautious approach to the privatization of State-owned enterprises and free convertibility of the national currency, have discouraged potential investors.

Achievements of the ICRC school programme

- Uzbekistan's Ministries of Public and of Higher Education have made IHL topics compulsory in the final grades of secondary schools, colleges and lyceums, and in 2001 extended IHL teaching to the country's Tajik schools and all 5 specialized military colleges. The programme now covers the whole 11th-grade school population
- as borne out by an external evaluation, the programme is well known and appreciated by pupils, teachers and parents as a genuine contribution to the development of young Uzbek citizens' outlook on the world.

Context

Uzbekistan has a population of some 25 million. Uzbeks make up 80%, followed by Russian, Tajik, Korean, Karakalpak and other minorities. During the Soviet era, intensive production of cotton and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies. Now the country seeks to lessen its dependence on agriculture by intensifying the extraction of its mineral and petroleum reserves.



Programme development

In 1997, the Ministry of Public Education and the ICRC opted for the 11th-grade civics course "Individual and Society" as the most appropriate for the introduction of a course book on IHL themes, considering pupils aged 16-17 to be mature enough to understand some of the complexity of the issues. Following a first agreement between the ICRC, the Ministry of Public Education and the national Red Crescent Society, an Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak version of the course book were produced. A Tajik version followed in 2001. The overall circulation of more than 400,000 course books reflects Uzbekistan's multilingual context: 350,000 copies in Uzbek; 34,000 copies in Russian; 14,000 copies in Karakalpak; and 13,000 copies in Tajik.

After a test run at 180 schools in 1999, the ICRC signed an implementation agreement, this time also including the Ministry of Higher Education in charge of colleges and lyceums. The agreement provides for both Ministries of Education to use the course book for at least four consecutive school years, starting in 1999/2000.

In October 2000, knowledge of IHL and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was integrated into the national secondary education standards, and thus became an obligatory subject in all secondary school establishments, including academic lyceums and professional colleges. In 2001/2002 the programme was extended to Uzbekistan's five military lyceums. In addition, Uzbekistan's three leading pedagogical universities in Tashkent, Bukhara and Fergana initiated a course for future teachers based on the course book.

Teacher training

Teacher training is mainly conducted by ICRC-trained trainers. These trainers are themselves experienced teachers as well as methodology specialists. The training sessions focus on the content of the course book (basic principles and values underlying IHL) and the use of interactive methodology. Since the programme started, over 2,000 teacher trainers, teachers and school



Youngsters in Bukhara, Uzbekistan

directors have been trained by the ICRC team directly, while an estimated 6,000 teachers have been trained by the trainers.

Future teachers of the "Individual and Society" course and the compulsory pre-draft military classes are trained at the country's three leading pedagogical universities. After running some test seminars in 2001/2002, the ICRC concluded agreements with the education authorities providing for the inclusion of these courses in the programmes of pedagogical universities (pre-service training). Similar agreements were concluded regarding the training of experienced teachers who attend in-service training at advanced teacher training institutes every five years. In 2001/02, the ICRC extended training to teachers at Uzbekistan's five military lyceums.

Cooperation with the education authorities and the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan

In 1997, the ICRC, the Ministry of Education and the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan signed a first cooperation agreement defining the tasks of each party during the textbook's test run. After the test phase, a new agreement was concluded in 2001 aiming to:

- ensure the inclusion of IHL in State education standards and the course curriculum, thereby making the course book a compulsory tool for the course "Individual and Society"
- ensure that IHL teaching by means of the course book is integrated into pre-service and in-service teacher training
- secure the invaluable support of the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan (assistance in seminars, media work, networking with the authorities).

Promotional activities

- Yearly four-stage competition on humanitarian issues, based on the "Individual and Society" course book, held for all 11th-grade students at secondary schools, colleges and lyceums, and, since 2001, also military lyceums; organized by the ICRC in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and the Uzbek Red Crescent Society
- Quiz competitions on the basics of IHL and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, conducted through the national radio and newspapers
- Distribution of ICRC publications on IHL and related issues to the main public libraries and to education institutes.

Challenges and prospects

- In view of the conflict potential in the region, it is particularly important that youngsters learn to be aware of the consequences of their actions and to behave responsibly.
- The ICRC-sponsored course book is the only mandatory source of information on social sciences. In December 2000, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the national standards of secondary education and the curriculum of the course "Individual and Society". The education standards explicitly mention IHL and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In 2003 the ICRC is planning to:

- train secondary school "Individual and Society" teachers at advanced teacher training institutes
- train future teachers studying at pedagogical universities
- organize the annual nationwide contest for pupils on the basics of IHL (in close cooperation with the Ministries of Education and the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan)
- evaluate how the course book is used in the various types of schools, with a view to eventually handing the programme over to the Ministries of Education
- find a donor to finance printing the Uzbek version of the course book in Latin script¹.

¹ In 1993 the Uzbek authorities decided to switch from the Cyrillic to the Latin script. The generation of pupils who have only learned to read and write Uzbek in Latin script will reach grade 11 in 2004/2005; it will therefore become necessary to reedit the Uzbek version of the course book in Latin script (some 400,000 copies)