

FORMAT

(This is not comprehensive or final, but simply off the top of my head)

Authors of the report: Shukhrat Ganiev and Sukhrobjon Ismoilov.

Summary of the report

Cotton remains a major agricultural crop in Uzbekistan and, most rural communities, including the children within them, have become pawns in government policies which stress high yields of cotton to constitute huge gains in the national budget.

Uzbekistan is the second largest exporter of cotton in the world. It is one of five cotton-producing countries in the world, along with China, India, the US and Pakistan. Forty-three percent of Uzbek cotton is exported to Asia and nineteen percent to Europe. All parts of cotton production, from planting to selling, is state controlled. Under this control, the government artificially forces prices to be as cheap as possible – employing approximately 450,000 children all over the country to keep costs down.

Local governments and educational institutions help the central government push children at secondary schools, colleges, lyceums, institutes and universities to cotton pick.

Cotton production in Uzbekistan is based on exploitation of the population. Millions of poverty-stricken rural residents work in cotton fields for scanty payment or even free of charge. Forced child labour and other types of abuses are considered commonplace. High profits then get divvied up between a small group of state elites with powerful political connections.

Such an economic system is viable only under political repression, normally triggering the mobilization of mass labor working below market prices. The political regime in Uzbekistan is regarded as one of the most repressive in the world. No democratic elections are held. Opposition activists and human rights defenders are persecuted. Lack of public mass media lets most abuses go unexposed. All levels of the governments, including local governments, are involved in these abuses because accountability and responsible governance do not exist. The cotton magnates in Uzbekistan are interested in maintaining this corrupt and non-democratic political regime.

The cotton industry revolves around using the cheapest labor possible, and in most cases, this means employing children. In Uzbekistan, school-aged children are regularly involved in forced cotton picking. They spend up to two months out of the school year in cotton fields. Educational institutions and local governments condone students missing classes in order to participate in cotton picking. Living and work conditions for children involved in cotton picking are often cruel and inhuman, with most suffering degrading treatment at the hands of their overseers. Each year children involved in forced cotton picking become ill or die.

Transforming the cotton industry in Uzbekistan will not be simple. Structural reforms could have stimulated the growth of the cotton productivity, being beneficial for the cotton industry, farmers and ordinary people alike. However, economic and political elites oppose this. Land reform is blocked in Uzbekistan. Uzbek farmers do not own the land they use; they do not even have the right to choose the crops they want to produce and the buyer they want to sell their products to.

In international markets, Uzbek cotton is sold by leading European and US corporations; its production is financed by Western banks, and the final product is sold further under famous

brands in Western countries. No international corporations or clothing suppliers pay enough attention to the conditions under which the cotton is produced. Moreover, no international organizations, or international financial institutions have taken enough efforts to fight against such abuses.

Cotton monoculture is more disastrous for the future of Uzbekistan than the tons of heroine which are regularly transported throughout the Central-Asian region. Even though the international community has invested millions of dollars in anti-narcotics programs it has done far too little to fight against the negative effects of the Uzbek cotton industry. Achieving real changes in the cotton sector will take time, but true reform of this sector could provide more stability in this strategic country than the international community would believe.

The goal of this report is to lay out the basis for more long-term programs oriented to purposefully and consistently fighting against state abuse in the cotton industry in Uzbekistan, defending the rights of children to a happy childhood, high-grade education and rest.

Section 1: A Full description of the product in question

Cotton represents a low-growing plant which blossoms, within its flowers there appear “boxes” – or fruits which open up, showing fiber containing seeds. The seeds are picked out in the form of “raw cotton”. Cotton picking, in most developed countries, is carried out by machines, but Uzbekistan cotton is picked manually, thus maintain better quality. This process is very labor-consuming and demands a large number of seasonal workers. After harvesting the cotton fiber, it should be separated from seeds by means of the process known as “clearing of cotton”. Approximately 350 kg of cotton fiber can be processed from one ton of raw cotton, which in turn, is spun into yarns and sold in the international market in the form of raw product. The seeds of cotton, which remain after separation from the fiber, can be used for extraction of food oil or forage for cattle.

Section 2: Scope of the Child Labor/Forced Labor Problem.

Uzbekistan allows forced child labor mainly in the cotton industry and in the cleaning of local educational facilities and homes.

Forced child labor in cotton-picking in Uzbekistan is cruel, inhuman and often degrading by nature. Such practice has continuously violated certain norms of national legislation well before adoption of the new Law “On guarantees of the rights of children” passed in January 2008 (for example, article 241 of the Labor code and article 8 of Law “On basis of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan”).

The Law “On guarantees of the rights of children” which was enacted at the beginning of January 2008, guarantees the protection of minors from forced forms of labor. For instance, part 4 of article 10 of Law (Guarantees of freedom and personal inviolability of a child) reads: “...*the State ensures inviolability of the person, dwelling, secret of the correspondence of a child and provides protection of a child from all forms of exploitation, including physical, mental and sexual violence, torture or other forms of cruel, harsh and degrading treatment, sexual harassment, involving into a criminal activity and prostitution*”.

And article 20 of the Law (Guarantees of the right of a child to labor) reads: “...*every child is entitled to the right to work, free choice of type of activity and profession, fair conditions of labour conforming his age, condition of health and professional level of preparation according*”.

to the order established by law. Employment is allowed from the age of 16. Persons who reached 15 years can be employed with a written consent of one of the parents or persons substituting parents. For preparing children to labour in free hours upon reaching 14 years and with a written consent of one of the parents or persons substituting parents it is allowed to employ students of secondary schools, academic lyceums and professional colleges for carrying out easy types of labour which are not hazardous for health and development of minors and which do not interrupt the process of education...”

Existing practices in the cotton industry fully contradict the above mentioned requirements of the Law.

Children forced to pick cotton under inhuman conditions and with interruption from education process. Each year from mid September to mid or late November, secondary school and academic lyceum pupils (approximately from 6-7th grades and up, minimum age 13-14 years old, even though there are reports that children as young as 8-9 years old may work in the cotton fields), college and university students are involved in cotton picking. Some children are also required for sowing in spring in addition to harvesting in autumn which may lead them to miss school for up to 16 weeks.

The official rate of payment for one kilo of cotton, according to Fall 2007 data, is 64 Uzbek sums (approximately \$ 0.05 US cents). Children forcedly involved in cotton picking are not paid for their labor. Children are often told that payment for picked cotton is withheld for food which is given to them during their stay in the cotton fields. If a cotton picker manages to pick one hundred kilos of cotton a day non-stop during one month (one hundred kilos of cotton a day is the top rate for the best cotton pickers) he could earn \$ 133 US dollars a month.

Labor conditions amounting to inhuman treatment. The working and living conditions of children involved in cotton picking and the way this process is organized makes exploitation of child labor in cotton picking equal to inhuman treatment.

Each child is obliged to pick 50 kilos of cotton every day if it is the first harvest. For the second harvest, the daily obligation of cotton picking is 30 kilos. This is an unreasonable quota for a child to accomplish daily.

Many children become sick due to the harsh conditions of work, pesticides and chemical substances, which exacerbate acquired diseases (Hepatitis A, B or TB) to incurable stages. In addition, limited access to medical services often makes serious medical conditions dire. A medical assistant may be located at every camp where children work. But this person oftentimes is not qualified to render first-hand medical treatment to children and, in practice, the medical assistant rarely visits camps. Children are not provided with the necessary medicine or in proper dosages. There is no system of regular medical check up of the children in the cotton fields. If a child gets ill in the cotton field he is not allowed to inform his family and go home until his health dramatically deteriorates. Because of irregular nutrition and low calorie foods, most children in rural regions of Uzbekistan suffer from low amounts of haemoglobins. Harsh conditions in the cotton fields and low calorie foods there also add to this vulnerable state. In late October and November, children in the cotton fields usually catch cold and become ill. Their supervisors and teachers do not let them go home or to the hospital to receive necessary medical treatment. Even children excluded from carrying any more than three kilos, according to a medical expert's conclusion, or children who have previously had Hepatitis are not allowed to

skip cotton picking.¹

The authors of this report interviewed an Uzbek agronomist about the application of chemical substances in cotton fields and their effect on children in those cotton fields. According to the agronomist of one of the farmer's associations in Rishton district of Ferghana, the chemicals used in cotton fields are harmless because they contain only small percentages of sulfur. *"I don't think that the chemicals are harmful to children, but anyway we receive orders from the top"*, - said the interviewed agronomist.

Accidents regularly occur because of the lack of safety procedures. No protection and prevention mechanisms are used to safeguard the children from falling into different accidents and technical emergency situations. Teachers are forced to stay with the children in the cotton fields but they cannot guarantee the safety of the children from various technical accidents. Often the supervisory role of the teachers becomes abusive.

For instance, in the cotton-picking season of 2007 in the cotton-field belonging to [REDACTED] farmer's cooperative in [REDACTED] collective farm of Nishan district (Kashkadarya region), a tractor driven by [REDACTED] ran over a college student of the technical college of Chiraochi district of Kashkadarya region. The college student slept in the cotton-field and did not hear the tractor approaching him. He died as a result of the accident.²

On September 25th 2004 a mini-bus with children from a lyceum of Djizak city traveling to the cotton-field turned over because the driver suddenly suffered from a heart attack and died while driving. Seventeen children from the bus were hospitalized with small trauma and psychological shocks. There were no victims among the children.

During the harvesting period, children sleep in class rooms of the schools in the villages where they are located. Every child has to take his own bed with him, otherwise they must sleep on the cold floor. There is no heat where the children sleep. Every classroom usually houses 30 girls or

¹ The authors of this report carried out the monitoring of the following cases of cruel and inhuman treatment with children who became ill in the cotton fields in Bukhara region in 2007:

- a) [REDACTED], born in 1993, a student of Tourism College in Bukhara city of Bukhara region. After a series of threats from the administration of the college she was forced to go to cotton fields right after appendicitis surgery. She was not given proper time to recover after the surgery and fainted in the cotton field. She was hospitalized with a post-surgery infection. The medical case record was opened on November 5th 2007 in clinic # 3 of Bukhara city. [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED] of Bukhara city. The complaints of the parents to proper authorities of Bukhara region have been not been answered.
- b) [REDACTED], born in 1992, a student of Economic planning College of Bukhara city. She was in the hospital getting medical treatment for sharp gastritis. Despite protests from doctors she had to leave the hospital for the cotton field under the threats of the college administration. After not allowing for rest, her medical check up later showed that her sharp gastritis had progressed to chronic gastritis with liver complications. The medical case record was opened in clinic [REDACTED] Bukhara city on 23rd of December 2007. [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED] of Bukhara city.
- c) [REDACTED], born in 1992, a student of Economic planning College of Bukhara city. Under the threat of expulsion from the college administration despite recently acquiring hepatitis, he was forced to cotton pick. He fainted in the cotton field and was hospitalized from intoxication from defoliants. After the medical examination he was recognized as a person with disability status. [REDACTED] lives in A. Guzhduvani street 15, Gizhduvan city of Bukhara region. On December 12 2007 K. [REDACTED] received an official status of a person with disability of 2nd group according to the official medical expert's conclusion.
- d) [REDACTED], born in 1991, a school kid of secondary school [REDACTED] of Bukhara district. He was forcedly involved in cotton picking in a field processed with herbicides. Two months after picking cotton, he was hospitalized with a sharp kidney insufficiency, which according to the medical examination, has been exacerbated by chemical cancerogenic substances like dust.

² According to the report by "Ezgulik" Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan disseminated on January 30th 2008.

boys. Boys and girls are kept separately. The waking time for children in the cotton field is 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, and bed time is 9 or 10 o'clock at night.

Children use cold water to wash themselves and their clothes. In many places, children do not have access to clean drinking water and use water from open channels. Sometimes children have to go to houses of local people to take showers. Having access to a shower with hot water was 500 Uzbek sums (approximately \$ 0.5 US) in 2007.

In an interview, one of the school girls [REDACTED], 14 years old, from Yakkabag district of Kashkadarya region, told us that she does not like the living conditions in the cotton-field. "We don't even have enough drinking water here. I have been picking cotton for more than ten days now and haven't yet taken a shower; I am not even mentioning a bath". She was picking cotton in Kasan district of Kashkadarya region, 120 kilometers far from her home.

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The food children are given in the cotton fields is very poor, even though they are given food three times a day. Results of our monitoring show that the menu of the meals is usually made up from the following: for breakfast – tea without sugar and just bread; for lunch – hot meal (usually sour, a borsch or macaroni), bread and tea without sugar; for dinner – the same as for lunch. The meal given to children is very low-calorie, it aggravates malnutrition and creates pseudo-satisfaction. Children are cut off from any entertainment outlets in the cotton fields. They do not have access to TV-sets, radio or other devices. They do not have access to books. However, children are not prohibited from bringing those items with themselves.

The only way to be exempt from cotton picking is by obtaining a written allowance from the district or city hospital's or doctors' council. People who do not want their children to go work in the cotton fields often buy such written allowances from the doctors through bribery. According to interviews with school children and college students in 2007, the minimum for such bribes ranged from US\$80 to US\$100.³ In some cases, teachers force children to provide written pledges in which every child indicates that they are going to pick cotton by their own free will, that they are not forced by anybody and just want to help their country.⁴

Appeals by concerned organizations against school administrations and child labor are ignored by Public Procurator's office and courts.

Uzbekistan has not ratified Conventions of the International Labor Organization # 38 (1973) on minimum age for employment and # 182 (1999) on prohibition and immediate measures on elimination of the worst forms of the child labor.

We would like to summarize the following general aspects of the problem of forced child labor in cotton picking in Uzbekistan:

- a) Not using machine picking of Uzbek cotton is not related to the absence of cotton-picking machines and other technical resources. It is done on purpose because cotton picked manually is more appreciated for its quality by the buyers. As an example, according to a head of Kashkadarya regional Department of agriculture and water facilities, Ravshan Kamilov, there are 104 cotton picking combines in the region. This means that in one season only 14.6 hectares of the cotton-fields can be harvested by cotton-picking combines. Annually an average 160 hectares of fields in Kashkadarya region are planted with cotton. According to Kamilov, each ton of cotton picked by a combine costs US\$41, while each ton of cotton picked manually costs US\$36. The above

³ Interviews of the authors of the present report in Samarkand and Karakalpakstan, December 2007.

⁴ Interviews with school children and college students in Djizzak region, October 2007.

mentioned facts indicate the following problems. First, Uzbekistan lacks cotton-picking combines. Second, picking cotton by machine is more expensive than by hand. Third, cotton seeds are not properly selected in order to save time and labor. Developed cotton producing countries select cotton seeds which ripen at one time, thus allowing them to pick the bulk of the cotton harvest at one time.

- b) How forced child labor affects the health of children in the cotton industry should be studied more in depth. Especially the application of chemicals in the cotton fields. According to interviews with independent medical experts, intoxication received from the chemicals in the cotton fields can negatively affect children's health even 2-3 years after the intoxication. Sometimes this leads to Hepatitis A and B.
- c) Involvement of children in all cycles of cotton production should be stressed: land processing and preparation (March), planting (March and May), weeding and cultivation (June and July), stamping (July and August) and picking (August – November). Not only at issue is the disruption of education, but also disruption of personal development and summer holidays / rest.
- d) Mass discrimination of rural children: During the last 8-10 years only children in rural areas are forced to work in cotton fields. Children in big cities are not forced to pick cotton. Level and quality of knowledge and personal development between rural children and urban children have always differed in Uzbekistan. However, such discriminatory policy of forcing only rural children increases this gap in level of knowledge and development between the rural and urban youth in Uzbekistan.
- e) Corruption and falsification of cotton harvesting reports: Often agitation and calls to ban in cotton picking and child labor is all word and no action. Sometimes children may buy cotton from local farmers and submit it as his daily quota.

NGO's work for the elimination of forced child labor in cotton picking in Uzbekistan needs to start from comprehensive research and study of the current situation.

Section 3: Description of the Supply Chain for the Product

Today the proportion of the countries which buy Uzbek cotton is the following (according to the latest available data on sales in 2006):

1. Russia – from 34 to 38%
2. Germany – from 16 to 20%
3. Bangladesh – from 16 to 20%
4. United Arab Emirates – from 8 to 12%
5. Kazakhstan – from 5 to 10%.

We should keep in mind that buying and delivery are carried out by private companies for further delivery to the US and EU.

The cotton industry in Uzbekistan is part of the larger world trade of cotton production, which continues despite growing competition from synthetic textiles. For example in 2004-2005, the Central Asian region produced 6.5% of the world volume of cotton and 15.4% of its world export.⁵ The international cotton market is not stable and strongly dependent on a harvest effected by weather conditions and demand influenced by the caprices of foreign customers.⁶

⁵ The US Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agriculture Service "Cotton: world markets and trade", February 10th 2005, See. www.fas.usda.gov/cotton/prospect/2005/02/table05a.pdf

⁶ International cotton market is subject to fluctuations in different years; for instance, 1 kilo of cotton fibre cost \$ 2,02 (\$ 0,92 for 1 pound of cotton fibre) in 1994-1995 of harvesting season, the price index has decreased falling to \$ 0,92

The global market does not affect the life of farmers in Uzbekistan much because they find themselves at the very beginning of the supply chain, which is not influenced by factors of supply and demand. The compensation they receive for their labor is so scanty that the fluctuations in cotton world prices affect their level of life very little.

Apart from Russia and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan sells its cotton to western textile producers who are moving more and more towards Asia. Several international wholesale dealers act as intermediaries in this business. For example “██████████” company based in Switzerland, ██████████ based in England, ██████████ and ██████████ based in the US. Processed in textile factories in China, India and South-East Asia, Uzbek cotton finds its way to popular stores of retail trade in Europe and North America in the form on clothing.

Uzbekistan markedly supersedes other Central Asian countries in cotton production. Though after autonomy (1991), lands were given up to grow wheat to achieve independence from importing wheat. However, in sheer square hectares of cotton, Uzbekistan continues to be fifth in the world (almost 1.33 million hectares in 2004). In 2004, 3.5 million tons of raw cotton was harvested in Uzbekistan.⁷

Uzbekistan also is fifth place in the production of cotton fiber. Cotton fiber is a result of processing the raw cotton by so called “cotton clearance” companies. Annually, Uzbekistan produces one million metric tons of the cotton fiber and is second place after the US in the production of cotton fiber (850 thousand tons in 2004). Cotton fiber is the main export of Uzbekistan and made up 22 % of the GDP in 2002.⁸ Only a small amount of the cotton fiber is processed inside the country, as the textile industry is very weak. The government has attempted to develop the national textile industry with the help of foreign investments; however, an adverse business climate has scared away the foreign investors.

In 1993, Uzbekistan replaced old Soviet-type collective farms with cooperative (“*shirkat*”) farms. Almost all farmers who had previously worked for collective farms received their shares in the newly created cooperative farms. However, most cooperative farms proved to be unprofitable because of the constant interference of the local government in their administration and lack of freedom to choose the crops or agricultural goods they wanted to produce. In 2006-2008, under a government decision, almost all cooperative farms were reorganized into private farms owned by private persons and entities. Private farms are organized within the cooperative farms. The average land size that a private farm owns is 24 hectares. The cooperative farms provide and sell turnaround means to private farms (seeds, fertilizers and service of agricultural machines) and then buy the harvest from them. The cooperative farms then sell the harvest they have bought from the private farmers to the state. Productivity of the private farmers proved to be higher than the productivity of cooperative farms but they are not free from the interference from local governments. The local government reserves the right to take the land of the private

for 1 kilo of cotton fibre (or \$ 0,42 for 1 pound of cotton fibre) in 2000-2001. during the last years the market has revived and the price for 1 kilo of cotton fibre has raised to \$ 1,52 (or \$ 0,69 for 1 pound of cotton fibre) in 2003-2004. In 2004 the price fell again. ; in February of 2005 “A” index was on the level of \$ 1,17 for one kilo of cotton fibre (or \$0,53 for 1 pound of cotton fibre). Changes in “A” Cotlook Index are received at www.cotlook.com/cdis/more_cotlook_indices.php on February 22nd 2005. All figures mentioned in this report are in the US dollars (\$).

⁷ The US Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agriculture Service Report GAIN US4008, November 12th, February 2004; “Cotton results in Uzbekistan”, *Pravda Vostoka*, January 15th 2004. The biggest amount of cotton is grown in Kashkadaryo region (more than 448 thousand tons), then Bukhara region (more than 375 thousand tons), and Surkhandaryo region (more than 323 thousand tons). Other main area of growing cotton is Ferghana Valley where Andijon region leads (more than 308 thousand tons) and Khorezm region in western Uzbekistan (more than 280 thousand tons).

⁸ Center for Effective Economic Policy, *Uzbekistan economy: statistic and analytic analysis, 2002.*

farmer back if the farmer fails to fulfill the state set plan of production of raw cotton or wheat. In most cases the private farmer has to plant cotton and wheat in up to 98 % of his land. Refusing to do so can result in cutting of the water supply or seizure of the land by the government. Private farmers use approximately 90 % of the agricultural land in Uzbekistan.

The other 10 % is used by so called peasant (“*dehkan*”) facilities, the average land size for which is usually 0.2 hectares. Peasant facilities rent land from the state for 10 to 50 year terms.

Producing cotton is not profitable for the farmers. In order to surpass the unprofitable point under low procurement prices, private farmers have to crop 2.7 tons of the raw cotton from each hectare of the land. However the average productivity is 2.1 tons from each hectare. The government is still holding down the artificial non-market prices of raw cotton.

More than 90 % of the cotton is bought by “██████████”, a state-owned entity which is responsible for clearing raw cotton and controlling its quality. The remaining part of the raw cotton is bought by private wholesale traders. Then ██████████ sells the cotton to a confirmed list of companies which are authorized to lead export-import operations. Theoretically those companies are private companies, though they are usually owned and run by persons with close connections to high profile political figures in Uzbekistan. Those companies receive authorization to lead export operations with cotton from the State Agency of external economic relations led by a former security service official ██████████. Foreign buyers of Uzbek cotton buy the cotton from one of those authorized companies.

It is impossible to know how the income from the cotton trade is spent in Uzbekistan.

Section 4: Government Enforcement of Child/Forced Labor Prohibitions

Responsibility of the State. The Uzbek government is responsible for not following international norms on child labor. The government usually argues that children volunteer for cotton picking because cotton is a national wealth. The Uzbek government says that forced child labor in cotton picking in Uzbekistan existed 15-20 years before, during Soviet times, and it is no longer practiced.

The government also argues that “rumors about forced child labor in cotton picking in Uzbekistan are spread by foreign countries which are competing in the cotton industry. It is part of a propaganda campaign against Uzbekistan and an attempt at putting political and economic pressure on the country”.

The Uzbek government has recently published a statement through its Embassy in London, Great Britain, mentioning that Uzbekistan is a member of the UN, OSCE and ILO and fulfils all its international obligations including obligation to protect child labour.

Forced child labor in conditions hazardous and harmful for health and personal security of a child violate article 241 of the Labor code and article 8 of Law “On basis of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan”. Such practice also violates Law “On guarantees of the rights of children”.

Law “On guarantees of the rights of children” which was enacted at the beginning of January 2008 secures the following guarantees of protection of minors from forced forms of labor. For instance, part 4 of article 10 of Law (Guarantees of freedom and personal inviolability of a child) reads: “...*the State ensures inviolability of the person, dwelling, secret of the correspondence of*

a child and provides protection of a child from all forms of exploitation, including physical, mental and sexual violence, torture or other forms of cruel, harsh and degrading treatment, sexual harassment, involving into a criminal activity and prostitution”.

And article 20 of the Law (Guarantees of the right of a child to labor) reads: “...every child is entitled to the right to work, free choice of type of activity and profession, fair conditions of labour conforming his age, condition of health and professional level of preparation according to the order established by law. Employment is allowed from the age of 16. Persons who reached 15 years can be employed with a written consent of one of the parents or persons substituting parents. For preparing children to labour in free hours upon reaching 14 years and with a written consent of one of the parents or persons substituting parents it is allowed to employ students of secondary schools, academic lyceums and professional colleges for carrying out easy types of labour which are not hazardous for health and development of minors and which do not interrupt the process of education...”

Uzbekistan has not ratified Conventions of the International Labour Organization # 38 (1973) on minimal age for employment and # 182 (1999) on prohibition and immediate measures on elimination of the worst forms of the child labour.

Section 5: Organizations' History/Background and Research Methodology for the report

This research was prepared by Shukhrat Ganiev and Sukhrobjon Ismoilov. Shukhrat Ganiev is a leader of the Humanitarian Legal Center of Bukhara. Sukhrobjon Ismoilov is a leader of “Veritas” Youth Human Rights Movement of Uzbekistan. Both Shukhrat Ganiev and Sukhrobjon Ismoilov are members of the Uzbekistani Rapid Response Group for Prevention of Torture.

The Rapid Response Group is a coalition of representatives from eight prominent Uzbek human rights groups united to combat torture and similar ill-treatment in Uzbekistan. The collective professional competency of the group—the RRG is composed of member formally trained in journalism, medicine, law and human rights defense—represents an ideal combination for joint work in documenting, analyzing and advocating against torture. RRG member organizations maintain both an official and unregistered presence in each of Uzbekistan’s four large population centers; moreover, the RRG as an institution incorporates the human and infrastructural resources of its seven respective organizational parts.

These organizations and their representative leaders composing the RRG include:

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| 1. Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan, Fergana branch | Abdusalom Ergashev |
| 2. Humanitarian Legal Center of Bukhara | Shukhrat Ganiev |
| 3. Medical Legal Center of Bukhara | Vokhid Karimov |
| 4. “Democracy and Rights” Human Rights Group | Nikolai Kungurov |
| 5. Human Rights Initiatives Center of Samarkand | Komil Ashurov |
| 6. “Najot” Human Rights Group of Khorezm region | Hayitboy Yakubov |
| 7. “Veritas” Youth Human Rights Movement | Sukhrobjon Ismoilov |

8. Independent human rights activist

[REDACTED]

The RRG membership took shape in January of 2007. The new membership structure, together, in part, with the below institutional development, has yield significant results. During the period, RRG members have conducted an independent public review/investigation on 12 selected cases of alleged torture, following each intervention up with advocacy before the government law enforcement agencies and the international community on the behalf of the victim. The group had completed a shadow report to the Uzbek government's 3rd periodic report before the 36th session of the UN Committee against Torture in November, 2007. To date, the RRG members have provided legal representation to more than 34 torture victims in Uzbekistan. During one half year of progressively intense cooperation, the Rapid Response Group has jointly developed the core institutional trappings of an advanced organizational entity. In joint meetings, the RRG has composed and come to an agreement on clearly identified operative roles and responsibilities for each member, an organizational contact data base, a collective media strategy, as well as a strategy for collective personal protection. In April of 2007 each RRG member signed a group charter defining the mission and multiple contingencies and operational practices for mutual collaboration and a memorandum of mutual understanding and cooperation.

Starting from September 2007 the RRG also started monitoring and advocating for the rights of women and the minor through studying the problems of external labor migration, human trafficking, violence against women and children and forced child labor in Uzbekistan. The RRG is the first Uzbek human rights group which started developing analytic reports and expert commentaries on different problematic issues concerning human rights and pointing to the solutions of the above mentioned problems.

The research methodologies for the present research include:

- Monitoring in the cotton fields in Kashkadaryo, Surkhandaryo, Djizak, Ferghana and Samarkand regions and Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic of Uzbekistan;
- Focus group discussions with children involved in forced child labor, teachers, agronomists and doctors;
- Interviews with children involved in forced child labor in cotton picking, their parents, teachers and agronomists;
- Research on national law concerning protection of child from forced labor;
- Internet research for additional materials related to forced child labor in cotton picking in Uzbekistan.

Please see attached pictures related to forced child labor. Those pictures were received from different Internet sources. For security reasons the research authors decided not to take cameras with them to the field monitoring trips.

Section 6: Contact Info

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Activist involved in child labor advocacy:

1. Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan, Fergana branch	Abdusalom Ergashev
2. Humanitarian Legal Center of Bukhara	Shukhrat Ganiev
3. Medical Legal Center of Bukhara	Vokhid Karimov
4. “Democracy and Rights” Human Rights Group	Nikolai Kungurov
5. Human Rights Initiatives Center of Samarkand	Komil Ashurov
6. “Najot” Human Rights Group of Khorezm region	Hayitboy Yakubov
7. “Veritas” Youth Human Rights Movement	Sukhrobjon Ismoilov
8. Independent human rights activist	Abdugapur Dadaboev

Relevant government and national agencies:

- President of Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganiyevich Karimov, ul. Uzbekistanskaya 43, Rezidentsia prezidenta, 700163 Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, Fax: +998 71 133 7258, E-mail: presidents_office@press-service.uz
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Elyor Majidovich Ganiev, Respublika Uzbekistan; 700029 g. Tashkent; pl. Mustakillik, 5; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RU, S.S., Uzbekistan, Fax: + 998 71 139 15 17
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