UGF Monitoring Team Observations:

**Syrdarya region:**
- 9th of October - a high-school geography teacher described her situation. She is a single mother of four children, since her husband died in a car accident, and receives a monthly salary of 350,000 soums ($165 USD). During the harvest, she has to complete a shift of 15 days picking cotton. She has no one to look after her children while away, yet she cannot afford the payment of 150,000 soums to her administrator to avoid picking cotton. As an alternative, she hired a local construction worker to replace her in the cotton fields for a lower fee. Nevertheless, her administrator scolds and insults her in front of her colleagues.
- 5th of October - a teacher reported that she paid her school administrator 300,000 soums ($142 USD) at the start of the cotton harvest in order to avoid picking cotton. The teacher had saved the money specifically for this purpose and noted, “I don’t care if he uses the money to hire someone for the harvest or keeps it. My concern was to avoid the cotton harvest and continue working in the school.”

**Andijan region:**
- 9th of October - most public-sector institutions mobilized sent a shift of employees to the cotton fields. Each institution is keeping the minimum number of staff necessary to remain open. Public transportation and minibuses were ordered to transport the public-sector workers to the cotton fields.
- October - the regional governor harshly scolded a public-sector administrator for management of the mobilization for the cotton harvest, and the administrator died after the meeting, reportedly of a heart attack. At the next meeting, ambulances were kept outside.
- 7th of October - high schools sent a large number of third-year students (ages 17 and 18) to the cotton fields.
Media Reports:

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty „Ozodlik“ received the following reports on the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan from its listeners and readers:

**Those who can’t fulfil the plan should buy cotton!**
8.10.2013

A reader from Dustlik district of Djizzakh provided the following explanation of the system of payments by students to teachers, which places a significant burden on the students:

"... You pick cotton. The daily quota is 70 kilo. When it comes to pay, first of all, you have to fulfil the quota to get paid. Second, they deduct for food and accommodation, and then you get whatever is left. Also, teachers who weigh the cotton lie straight into your eyes: if you picked 20 kilograms of cotton, they weigh and register it as 16-17 kilos.

Why would they deduct a few kilos? If they steal 3 kilos from each of the 200 students, they get 600 kilos per day. Then they record that these 600 kilos were picked by the students who didn’t come to pick cotton. They have to register some cotton for them, since they got money from those students. So they register this cotton for those students who paid their way out of picking cotton.

They give a list of students who worked in the fields and didn’t fulfil their quotas to the rector, but no one says anything to the students who paid to avoid picking cotton. Those who work and can’t fulfil the daily target are forced to buy enough cotton to make up the difference; otherwise, they won’t get paid for any of the cotton they pick."

"4,000 soums for food, 3,000-7,000 soums for accommodation is deducted on a daily basis."

Another reader from Djizzakh region reported to Radio Liberty that a considerable portion of the money from cotton picked is going to the pockets of teachers and school administrators.

"...Whether you eat or not, they take 4,000 soums per day for food. They take between 3,000 and 7,000 soums each day for accommodation. We used to pay every 10 days. Some people didn’t have money and ran away without paying. That’s why they began deducting food and accommodation from the earnings for the cotton picked. Those who don’t meet the target don’t get paid either. They buy cotton to cover their shortages. It is somewhat different in each place. We have worked the cotton harvest for two years and paid for our accommodation. If you pick 100 kilos every day, you might see some money, and that is if the rat teacher leaves some for you. They make 3-4 million during the cotton harvest, particularly the rector.

If you demand your rights a little bit, they threaten you with expulsion. After paying 5 million soums for school, of course it hurts to lose it. Two guys came to pick cotton and ran away after a week, they couldn’t get through the days. The school brought the expulsion order on the same day. So they had to come back again the next day..."

http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25104210.html

**In Tashkent hired labourers are forcefully sent to pick cotton**
5.10.2013

In Uzbekistan, an Independent Trade Union of Hired Labourers, an unofficial organisation of activists, told Radio Liberty that on Saturday morning police officers raided Tashkent Koylik market and forcefully took over 30 day labourers to pick cotton. The police told the day labourers that the reason was their lack of residence permits to live in the capital (propiska).

Husniddin, a 32-year old day labourer from Syrdarya went to Koylik market in Tashkent on Saturday morning with the hope of earning some money. There he was surrounded by police officers and taken to pick cotton:
We went to Koylik market to earn a living. There were 30 others with me. The police loaded us on a bus and took us to the fields. They said: 'you all are doing nothing without residence permits. Let's go pick cotton.'

http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25127584.html

Is teacher more useful at school or in a cotton field?
1.10.2013

In Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov congratulated teachers and mentors on „Teacher’s Day.“ In his congratulatory speech, Mr. Karimov didn’t say anything about teachers’ working in the fields during the cotton harvest instead of teaching students in the schools.

A former teacher from Namangan, Gulomjon Kholmatov, has a son and daughter-in-law who are now teachers. They are celebrating their profession’s holiday for teachers in cotton field.

"My son is a teacher, and, at the moment, he is in the cotton fields. This year there were rumours that educational institutions wouldn't be taken to pick cotton, but teachers and some groups of students from educational places were all taken to pick cotton," said Mr. Kholmatov.

Mr. Kholmatov's son teaches high school, and now he goes to pick cotton everyday. His daughter-in-law teaches in a primary school and was sent for a long period to pick cotton and stay near the fields. As a former teacher, Mr. Kholmatov says that involving teachers in jobs other than teaching negatively affects the quality of the education significantly.

"It takes time to transfer a lot of knowledge. Teachers should explain the puzzles of science. If a teacher is not at his workplace, when should he do that?" says Gulomjon.

In Djizzakh, the former teacher and current human rights defender Ziyodulla Razzokov was fired from his school for recording and publicizing the mobilization for the cotton harvest. Ziyodilla Razzokov reports that teachers are being taken in shifts from his former school and from other schools of Djizzakh region. He said the use of teachers in the cotton harvest has burdened the teachers who remain in the schools.

„For instance, if I have to teach until the afternoon and have scheduled planning time in the afternoon, they assign me with the additional workload of a colleague who has been sent to pick cotton. They pick cotton and stay near the fields for 10 days as employees of the district branch of the national education department. And every Sunday everyone goes to pick cotton as public help."

According to this former teacher, they don’t pay attention to the subjects in school. For example, if a mathematics teacher is sent to pick cotton, a physics teacher might be ordered to also teach math.

Millions and millions of the national income are spent to train teachers. But today teachers are massively mobilised for other work, such as cotton harvesting and constructing the president’s model houses.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2013/10/131001_cy_uzbek_teacher_day.shtml

In Karakalpakstan schoolchildren were taken to pick cotton
12.10.2013

Schoolchildren were mobilised to pick cotton in Turtkol and Konlikol districts of Karakalpak Republic. Radio Liberty's sources also reported that older children were sent to pick cotton. The Minister of Education for Karakalpakstan denied the reports.

A farmer reported to Radio Liberty that schoolchildren of grades 8-9 of school #9 in Odurdiev village were taken directly to pick cotton on Saturday after classes:
There was a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan that schoolchildren wouldn’t be involved in cotton. But today 8th and 9th grades (ages 14-15) of school#9 were taken to pick cotton straight from the school. I saw it with my own eyes. They are picking cotton in the field of a farmer named Boltaboy Khomidov,“ said the farmer from Turtkol district.

On October 11th, Radio Liberty received a similar report from a resident of Konlikol district of Karakalpakstan. They reported that 7th-9th-grade students (ages 13-15) were taken to pick cotton:

„In Konlikol district most of the schools took their 7th-9th-grade students to pick cotton. I’ve been watching them go for 3-4 days now. Everyday they go to pick cotton with their packed food and aprons,“ said the Konlikol resident.

Another Konlikol resident, who works in the district office for gas distribution, said that his 8th-grade son was taken to pick cotton:

„He went to school today, and he was sent to pick cotton. My son is in the 8th grade,“ said the father of Konlikol.

http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25135028.html

**Daytime markets shutdown in Uzbekistan, police chasing vendors**

4.10.2013

Markets were ordered to close during the daytime in Syrdarya Region of Uzbekistan, and police are stopping vendors and traders from opening their stores by blocking the market entrances. This measure was introduced to prevent cotton-pickers from leaving their duties on cotton fields, which were imposed on them during the annual cotton-picking season.

Fergana reported earlier that Tashkent Regional authorities prohibited dining and trading facilities from operating during the daytime. Moreover, the local population is strictly warned against having weddings or any other social events.

There is, however, a category of citizens not engaged in cotton-picking—police officers. They are tasked with ensuring at all costs that people remain on cotton fields and contribute.

“The road to the central market in Yangiyer, Syrdarya Region, is lined with dozens of police officers, and the government pays them well,” said a female Tashkent resident. “My husband and I were amazed by the fact that several police officers some 200-300 meters away from the market were lazily regulating traffic, detouring them. We asked why we could not use the road as we usually do. We heard a brief and strange answer: 'Politics!' and were given a thumbs up. If only all that aggressive force could be sent off to the cotton fields, they would have been much more useful.”

Meanwhile, market vendors and restaurant owners are facing colossal financial losses, and their problems are about to increase with tax payments looming. No customers come in the evenings, and even TV broadcasts have been altered to prevent the population from watching TV at daytime.