



■ The Association for Education Development (AED) in Kyrgyzstan organised an interaction with young students on SDG 4 and the role of the youth in the education agenda.

## Executive Summary

# Civil Society Spotlight Report for HLPF 2019

### COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



<b>TOTAL POPULATION:</b>	6.389 million (National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic, 2019)
<b>POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:</b>	2.085 million (32.6%) (National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic, 2019)
<b>GNI PER CAPITA:</b>	US\$ 1,130 (World Bank, 2017)
<b>INCOME GROUP:</b>	Middle Income Status (World Bank, 2018)
<b>HDI VALUE AND RANK:</b>	0.672, 122 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)
<b>POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES (% OF POPULATION):</b>	25.6% (World Bank, 2017)
<b>OUT OF SCHOOL RATE:</b>	5.54% (UNESCO, 2019)
<b>OUT OF SCHOOL:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6,773 children- 3,912 female and 2,861 male (UNESCO, 2017)</li> <li>• 988 adolescents (UNESCO, 2017)</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION EXPENDITURE:</b>	7.21% of the GDP and 18.64% of the total budget (UNESCO, 2017)

## Process of SDG implementation in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, like all other members of the United Nations, has pledged to implement and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. For the successful achievement of this formidable task, it is important to localise the goals so that they meet the needs of all citizens of the country. Thus, in order to adopt the SDGs to the national conditions, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic transformed the Coordination Committee on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the expansion of its composition, functions, and status to the Coordination Committee on the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of the SDGs in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030.<sup>1</sup> The committee is managed by the Prime Minister, and its activities are provided by the Department of Economics and Investments of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>2</sup> The Coordination Committee includes representatives of the legislative branch, government agencies, UN agencies (UNDP, UN Women, WHO, UN-FAO, UNICEF), and non-governmental organisations. However, civil society organisations (CSOs) are not sufficiently reflected in the committee.

A prerequisite for the successful implementation of the SDGs is the identification of relevant indicators and a competent monitoring and evaluation system. The key role in this process is taken by the National Statistical Committee (NSC). Presently, the SDGs have been adopted to the conditions of Kyrgyzstan, and national indicators-analogues and additional indicators have been developed. The main information is reflected on the website of the National Statistical Committee. However, information on the SDGs is presented only in Russian, which significantly limits the possibility of disseminating information among the residents of Kyrgyzstan.

Following the analysis of the SDG indicators for the availability of national data necessary for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the SDGs, the National Statistical Committee

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic of December 22, 2015 № 867 "About the Coordination Committee for the adaptation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development goals up to 2030 in the Kyrgyz Republic" <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/98265/20?mode=tekst>

<sup>2</sup> Order of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic of March 28, 2016 No. 144 (On approval of the composition of the Coordination Committee for the adaptation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development goals up to 2030 in the Kyrgyz Republic) <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/215086>



reported that of the 232 global indicators, 30 are not applicable to Kyrgyzstan, 26 indicators are not possible even with great effort, 80 are realisable with great efforts, and only 62 are easy to do and 34 are currently available.<sup>3</sup> The national data flow system for the SDG monitoring system has not been established yet, but according to the Chairman of the National Statistical Committee Akylbek Sultanov, it became known that questions according to the SDG indicators will be included in the next population census (Spring 2020).<sup>4</sup>

The main document of sustainable development in Kyrgyzstan is the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018–2040 (Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic dated November 1, 2018) and the Programme until 2023. These regulations take into account the SDGs, but much work still needs to be done to integrate the SDG indicators into national and sectoral strategic programmes.

Individual CSOs implement projects of various types within the framework of the SDGs. However, there is currently no civil society platform or an association of NGOs to promote the SDGs in Kyrgyzstan effectively.

In summary, it is worth noting that the implementation process of the SDGs at the state level in 2018 was almost frozen due to the frequent changes in the government, notably the appointment of a new prime minister on the 26th of August 2017; the partial renewal of presidential elections on the 15th of October 2017; and the partial updating of the entire government. On 20 April 2018, a new prime minister was appointed, and the entire government was partially renewed once again.

## Key problems in education system in Kyrgyzstan (in the SDG frames)

### 4.1. Free, equal and high-quality primary and secondary education

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic enshrines the equal rights of citizens to receive education; free of charge and compulsory basic education (9 classes of school education) and free secondary education (11 classes of school education).

Despite the difficulties of the transition period and the economic crisis that also affected Kyrgyzstan, the country was able to maintain its achievements in the field of compulsory education.

Equal access to education is part of the strategic policy of the country to achieve de facto gender equality. The gender imbalance is practically absent up to grade 9, while the difference between school enrolment in urban (115.6%) and rural areas (91.7%) is almost 25 per cent. This is primarily due to internal migration and confirms the problem of regional inequality. Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, and Osh, the second largest city, are better developed in terms of employment opportunities, energy, communications, and existing social infrastructures. Rural areas, especially in the southern part of the country, are much poorer.

There is a noticeable tendency to significantly reduce enrolment in the transition to the non-mandatory element of secondary education. In fact, almost half of the students did not continue their education in grades 10 to 11. Boys leave school after grade 9 more often than girls, the difference being more than 10 per cent with the coverage among boys at 49.8 per cent, and 60.1 per cent among girls. This phenomenon is associated with an increase in the number of adolescents who are forced to get a profession at an earlier age due to material interest. Some young people go to study in educational organisations of primary and secondary vocational education or on short-term courses that prepare them for entering the labour market as soon as possible.

### 4.2. Preschool education

Despite the great efforts of the state and support from non-governmental and international organisations, more than 60 per cent of children aged 3 to 6 years do not have access to preschool education (in rural areas more than 80%), and only 11.7 per cent of children from the poorest households attend kindergarten. At the same time, it is impossible to indicate the exact number or percentage of children with disabilities (CWD) covered by preschool education.

The low coverage of preschool education adversely affects not only the development of the child but also the parents, more often the mother, who are deprived of employment opportunities.

To increase the transparency of the admission of children to kindergartens in Kyrgyzstan, an electronic queue programme is being implemented.

Thanks to the introduction of the 480-hour preschool preparation programme, the proportion of first-graders entering a school with preschool or preschool training experience has increased to 80 per cent. However, every fifth first grader comes to school without experience, and cannot start his education on a par with other children.

### 4.3. Equal access to technical/vocational and higher education

The legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic guarantees free primary, secondary, and higher vocational, as well as postgraduate vocational education in state educational organisations on a competitive basis within the state order and educational standards, if a citizen receives this level of education for the first time.

The total enrolment rate of young people is only 62.2 per cent, i.e. about 37.8 per cent of young people do not study in schools, vocational schools or colleges.

The share of girls among those who enrol in all primary vocational education programmes is about 30 per cent; and in the short-term courses, their share is only 16 per cent. This is due to the fact that boys tend to acquire skills quickly and enter the labour market, while girls are more oriented towards education. At the level of secondary vocational education, the share of girls in 2017 reached 56.8 per cent, and at the level of higher education, it was 53.2 per cent.

The location of educational institutions shows that access to higher and secondary vocational education is mainly in cities. Historically, 66 per cent of universities and 37 per cent of secondary special educational institutions are located in Bishkek, whereas 58 per cent of Professional Lyceums are located in villages, and 42 per cent in cities, with 44 per cent of them in Bishkek. This indicates that for the rural youth, primary vocational education is more accessible, while other levels of vocational education can be obtained if they travel to the nearest cities or the capital, depending on their financial capabilities.

The principal problem of vocational education in the Kyrgyz Republic remains a discrepancy to the needs of the labour market. As a result, employers ignore the system as potential investors due to its low status and image.

### 4.4. Relevant skills for decent work

At the present time, there is a disproportionately higher youth unemployment rate than in the aggregate as a whole. Total unemployment in 2017 was 6.9 per cent. Youth unemployment in 2015 was at 15 per cent.

The reasons for these indicators are the lack of adequate experience or qualifications. Young people find it difficult to land decent work and are more exposed to the risk of losing their jobs. The unsatisfactory state of compliance of the educational system with the needs of the labour market can also be noted.

Respondents in the framework of the Youth Wellbeing and Development Index in the Kyrgyz Republic (YWDI) survey

<sup>3</sup> <http://stat.kg/media/files/fc4058b3-da0e-4363-8e91-f303caf5e3b7.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> The census of the population of Kyrgyzstan will be held in March 2020. 11.07.2018

<https://knews.kg/2018/07/11/perepis-naseleniya-kyrgyzstana-provedut-v-marte-2020-goda/>



noted the lack of appropriate education (36.22%), as well as inaccessible and expensive loans (20.4%) as some of the reasons that prevent young people from opening and successfully running a business.

In general, the government's labour market policy includes all traditional measures, such as the regulation of the minimum salary and unemployment benefits. It also includes active policy strategies, such as community service, vocational training programmes, and micro-credits for the unemployed. However, these measures are not truly effective.

#### **4.5. Gender equality and inclusion**

Gender equality in education was achieved in Kyrgyzstan many years ago and is perceived as one of the most important achievements of society. This is key to strengthening the position of women in the labour market. However, women's higher education is still not reflected in the expansion of their economic empowerment, with the subsequent risk that parents and students will detract from the importance of higher education and take their children out of school, especially during periods of economic crisis.

Most children with disabilities do not go to kindergartens and schools as inclusive education is not yet fully implemented in schools. In general, the following problems of inclusive education in Kyrgyzstan can be identified:

- There is no connection between ministries. The Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Development, and Ministry of Health have different data about children with disabilities.
- There is no law on "Inclusive education."
- Schools have not created an inclusive environment; there are no nationally accepted indicators of an "inclusive school."
- There are not enough specialists in the field of special-needs education, speech therapists, psychologists, and social teachers.
- The institute of tutoring and other types of pedagogical support (assistant, assistant teacher, etc.) have not been introduced.
- There are no flexible standards for assessing students with disabilities.
- Low public awareness of childhood disabilities leads to the isolation of these children and the stereotype of "uneducable."

#### **4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.**

According to the NSC KR (2009), the general literacy rate of people aged 15 years and over was 99.25 per cent, and young people of ages 15 to 24 years old was 99.75 per cent.

Given the high literacy rates of the population, there is another problem of serious concern. Despite the generally high rates of enrolment of children in secondary education, there remains a certain proportion of children who do not attend general education organisations. According to official data, in 2017, 2,613 children (1,464 boys and 1,149 girls) did not attend school. Most of the children who did not start classes live in rural areas (72%). Despite the fact that in Kyrgyzstan, according to official data, the coverage of children with basic general education (7-15 years old) at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year was 100 per cent, and there was also a slight dropout rate in primary school children (an indicator of the percentage of students enrolled 97.3 per cent in the first grade and those who graduated to the fifth grade), non-attendance of children's studies is becoming more and more common. For example, according to an informal assessment of human rights organisations in Kyrgyzstan, from 39,000 to 100,000 children do not receive an education, of which most children have disabilities.

#### **4.7. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable**

#### **development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.**

In 2017, the National Institute for Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic (NISS of the Kyrgyz Republic), together with the United Nations Children's Fund in Kyrgyzstan (UNICEF), conducted a sociological survey among young people on the topic "Reproductive health." The data obtained suggests that young people in Kyrgyzstan do not have sufficient knowledge in the field of preserving and enhancing reproductive health and sexual behavior, and almost half of the respondents (46%) do not worry about their reproductive health. This proves the relevance of initiatives and programmes to increase the knowledge of young people about reproductive health.

Due to low household incomes, a small amount of money is allocated from the family budget for cultural services for young people (about 1.47% of total expenses).

In general, within the framework of this task, it is proposed to pay attention to the education of children, youth, and adults on issues of sustainable development, "green economy," human rights, the formation of critical thinking and media literacy, and the development of culture.

#### **4. a. Effective learning environments**

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2018, there were 2,262 schools in Kyrgyzstan with a population of 1,223,000 children. The design capacity of functioning schools is 774,120 seats. There are not enough schools in Bishkek. The design capacity of all municipal schools is 76 thousand places, but there are twice as many students in them - about 156 thousand.

The reconstruction of existing buildings is also required as 60 per cent of schools in the republic were built before 1980. The infrastructure is also completely unsuitable for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Measures taken to build new school buildings did not significantly contribute to increasing the number of student places and improving the learning environment for the majority of the students. As before, classes in state schools are conducted in several shifts, and all schools and kindergartens are overcrowded, which leads to an increased incidence of pupils.

The Kyrgyz Republic has not been able to fully provide the population with clean drinking water. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the share of the population with sustainable access to clean drinking water has deteriorated relative to 2012 (92%), and amounted to 89.1 per cent. The worst indicators are in the Batken region where only 73.3 per cent of the population has access to water.

Over the past decades, the condition of latrines that were mostly built during the Soviet era has deteriorated. As water supply systems became unsuitable for use, many schools returned to using outdoor toilets without running water, for which there are no official rules in state sanitation. As a rule, latrines are located three to five minute walk from the school building. Schoolchildren experience particular difficulties in their use when it becomes extremely cold inside and the floors are slippery as they become covered with ice. Additionally, it should be noted that it is much more difficult for CWD to use outdoor toilets and it is impossible for wheelchair-users and crutch-users.

Information support for school education, such as the provision of textbooks, manuals, computers, access to the Internet, are vastly insufficient. The most pressing issue is the provision of schools with textbooks – from the development process to printing and distribution among schools.

Kyrgyzstan annually publishes textbooks written in Braille and large fonts for two existing residential institutions for blind and hearing-impaired children.

According to the 2015 International Public Security Survey in Kyrgyzstan, 6.6 per cent of respondents aged between 16 to 24 reported that they had been victims of racketeering over the past five years.

#### **4.b. Teachers and educators**

There is currently a shortage of staff in schools. This could be attributed to the fact that the status of teaching profession is low, and wages are lower than the average in Kyrgyzstan. In 2017, the average salary of an employee in the field of education was 11,095 soms (US\$161).

As part of a study conducted by the Education Coalition in Kyrgyzstan, it was revealed that graduates of pedagogical specialties do not meet the requirements of employers (schools). Applicants are ill-prepared as those with low scores of nationwide testing come to pedagogical areas. Other factors include the low standards of training that fail to meet the requirements of the labour market and the insufficient amount of practical training for students. Retaining young teachers also proves to be a challenge.

### **Conclusion**

The issues in the field of education and the implementation of SDG 4 could not be addressed in isolation from the issues of social welfare, the level of economic development and the labour market, access to health care, and equality indicators in the country.

Overall, the three cross-cutting problems of the education system in Kyrgyzstan are as follows:

#### **Content (standards, curricula, and teacher qualifications)**

Today, education standards fail to meet the requirements of the modern world. New and higher standards, especially for higher education, should be set. It must be noted that not all educational programmes are created using a competence-based approach. It is hence important to ensure the consistency of educational programmes at different levels of education in order to prevent unnecessary duplication in the programmes of the same educational elements. Of equal concern is the problem in the quality of new textbooks. It is also important to train teachers so that they can use new programmes and standards in their work. Otherwise, even with the developed standards and curricula, the situation will not change.

#### **Financing**

Another cause for concern is the lack of funding for the education system. Over 85 per cent of expenses cover current needs, investment is minimal. This aggravates problems in the education system, such as the content and quality of education, the availability of education for various segments of the population, the development of links with the labour market and others. Given the limited budget, it is proposed to pay attention to its optimisation, the search for alternative sources of financing, public-private partnership, social entrepreneurship and the development of school farms. It is also important to increase the transparency of the distribution of the budget and funds of international organisations and trustees.

#### **Management both at the national level and at the level of individual educational organisations**

As for the school management, there is often a situation where a director becomes a person with extensive experience in teaching, but without management experience. Despite the fact that various training is conducted for beginners, the information obtained is not enough. It is important to start training future managers for several years before appointing them as school principals. It is also necessary to expand and revise the programmes of training, retraining, and advanced training in the direction of "Management in Education."

It is impossible to talk about systemic, sustainable results without extending the practice of innovations to the national level by managing the educational system, educational space, and educational environment.

To achieve quality education at all levels, it is important to consolidate the actions of all structures of the educational space; ensure inter-professional cooperation of educational institutions with professionals in various fields; develop a strong network of educational institutions; integrate science, industry, and education and create a unified information and communication environment in the country. Once all of these measures are implemented will effective management be ensured.

Ultimately, the central problem of the education system in Kyrgyzstan is poor quality at all levels despite significant public spending on education towards other areas.

This problem can be eliminated only if an integrated approach is implemented, including the optimisation of educational standards, and financing and management processes, as well as the development of a safe, accessible, and enabling educational environment. • *Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 2019*

The report was prepared by the Association for Education Development in Kyrgyzstan based on the experience of the following organisations: DVV International, The National Institute for Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic (NISS KR), Kyrgyz Adult Education Association, Forum of Educational Initiative, Institute for Youth Development, BIOM, League of Innovative Development, "Muras", PF "Nash Vek", Pokolenie Best, Crisis Center "Sezim", International Center "Interbilim", PF "UNISON", PA "Center of child protection", PF "International Debate Education Association" (IDEA CA), Republican Training Center for Media Communications. Data from UNDP, UN Women, WHO, UN (FAO), UNICEF, UNECE, ESCAP, ILO were used.



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The Association for Education Development in Kyrgyzstan is an informal association of individuals and legal entities that have joined forces to develop affordable and quality education in the Kyrgyz Republic. To date, the coalition includes 22 participants from the non-governmental organisations sector, developing educational programmes for different groups of people in different regions of the country.



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