



ACTE members and trainers in a training session on the methods for conducting policy analysis from a gender perspective (2024)

2024 CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON SDG 4

I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

The country continues to experience high annual growth of more than 2.2% of the main productive force of society - the population, of which almost 58% are people of working age. More than 70% of the country's population growth is due to the increase in population in rural areas. The GDP per capita growth rate is more than twice as fast as population growth, which creates conditions for an increase in living standards. As a result, poverty has been steadily declining - from 31% in 2015 to 21.2% in 2023. Over the past three years, the economic growth rate has remained high, with an average annual growth of 8.3%. The greatest contribution to the growth of the republic's economy is made by agriculture, industry, construction, and trade. The expectations of civil society are associated with a greater social impact of growth and a decrease in social inequality.

Economic development and population growth lead to a constant increase in energy consumption. However, Tajikistan's energy sector is extremely vulnerable to climate change and extreme climate events. The Republic of Tajikistan is a lower-middle-income country that, on the one hand, has one of the lowest greenhouse gas emissions in Central Asia, and on the other hand, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Agriculture makes a significant contribution to GDP and employment in the country: it accounts for 24.3% of GDP and employs more than 60% of the country's population (results for 2023). It is therefore vulnerable to climate change-related impacts.

Expectations are associated with the modernisation of types of employment and the creation of new jobs in technological but labour-intensive sectors of the economy, accompanied by productive employment.

Almost 20% of those employed are people with vocational education. However, there is still a small gender gap in the availability of vocational education, especially in rural areas, between employed men and women. To maintain high education levels, policy actions must be aimed at meeting the high expectations of highly educated workers regarding wages and job quality. It is important to ensure the promotion of the growth of the educational level of employed people in all regions of the country, especially in rural regions.

II. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 4

Taking into account demographic trends, there is an increase in the number of students at all levels of education, which indicates an increase in the capacity of the country's education system. If in 2015, 2.1 million people were studying in the educational system of the republic, then in 2023 there will already have been 2.7 million people. It is expected that, by 2025, the number of students will increase to at least 3.2 million people, which will increase the burden on the education system and highlight the importance of increasing the financial, infrastructural, and personnel support for the education system.

The most pressing tasks of the educational system of the Republic of Tajikistan are associated with a significant increase in the population's access to preschool and vocational education, as well as the quality of education. The preschool enrolment rate for children aged 3 to 6 years increased from 12.3% in 2015 to 15.6% in 2022.

Available data on preschool institutions indicate the importance of improving infrastructure, with 48%

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES	
Population:	9,952,787 (2022)
GNI per Capita (PPP\$)	6,380 (2023)
Income Group	Lower-Middle Income
HDI: Value/Rank	0.679/ 126th out of 193 (2022)
Education Expenditure (% GDP)	1.20% (2022)
Upper Secondary Completion Rate Female / Male	77.5 (2022) / 69.7 / 84.8
2024 SDG Score/ Rank	68.09 / 89th out of 166
SDG 4 Trend	■ Significant challenges remain
Climate-related disasters:	
Total No. of disasters*	3 (2020-22)
Regional Mean/ Median	9.3 / 4
Risk Management Index:	
Climate-driven Hazard & Exposure	5 (2022) Regional Mean: 4.6
Lack of coping capacity	4.9 (2022) Regional Mean: 4.3
Vulnerability	3.8 (2022) Regional Mean: 3.4

*Drought, Extreme temperature, Flood, Landslide, Storm, Wildfire

of urban preschool institutions having a permanent centralised cold water supply versus 17% of rural preschool institutions. Functioning central sewerage is available in only 7% of kindergartens and early development centres located in rural areas and in 41% of kindergartens/early development centres in cities.

The number of children who have completed pre-school preparation is growing every year. Although the percentage of completion of primary education is growing and will most likely be achieved - 100% level of completion of primary school education, unfortunately, there are no assessments to determine the minimum level of skills - a standard level of basic knowledge and skills in the relevant area (mathematics, reading, etc.), which can be measured through research in primary grades.

Similarly, the percentage of completion of incomplete secondary education is also growing and a 100% level of completion of incomplete secondary school education is also likely to be achieved. However, there are no assessments yet to determine progress in mastering the exact and natural sciences, which should also complement progress in introducing skills' assessment practices in the near future.

Available school data shows that only 55% of schools across the country have access to a functioning water supply and 44% of schools have access to improved sanitation facilities (UNICEF, Situation Analysis on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Tajikistan]. The accessibility and quality of education in remote rural settlements of the country, along with other factors, also depend on the energy supply of these institutions. Actions towards sustainable energy supply to remote rural schools are associated with the advance procurement of fuel for heating, maintaining the heating system in working order, and purchasing generators for energy supply with the assistance of local executive authorities.



In the country as a whole, a program is being implemented called the Program for the Introduction of Information and Communication Technologies in General Educational Institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2024-2028. It is expected that by 2030 there will be an increase in the provision of schools with computers and high-speed Internet connections.

Taking into account the task that has been set to ensure 100% coverage of children aged 7 to 17 years with formal education by 2025 and, according to forecast calculations, the number of children at this age will be 2.4 million people, then by the 2025/2026 school year it will be necessary to additionally create 0.2 million educational places (with proper infrastructure) (Medium-term development program of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021 - 2025).

The number of students in the vocational education system is growing - if in 2015 there were 318 students per 10,000 people, then in 2022 their number was almost 321.9 people.

With the increasing advancement of digital technologies, the demand for specialists in the field of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) will increase, accordingly, increasing the capacity of the higher education system in this direction is extremely important. While the growth rate of graduates in this field lags behind the growth rate of graduates in all specialities, as a result, their share in the output volume is decreasing.

Against the backdrop of a significant gender imbalance in the field of specialisation in STEM so far in the Action Plan for 2020-2025, in the Strategy for the study and development of mathematical, exact and natural disciplines in the field of education and science the period until 2030 again uses a gender-neutral approach. Ensuring equal access by gender to STEM training is becoming extremely important.

Environmental education is part of the general education system and one of the main activities of the education system: in accordance with the State Compulsory Education Standard, issues of environmental education, including climate and its changes on the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan, are integrated into training programs, targeted work is being carried out to attract schoolchildren to scientific activities in the field of ecology.

The mechanism of education and public awareness in the process of environmental education will be strengthened, the necessary competencies in the field of environmental education will be enhanced, and the contribution of the education system to ensuring sustainable development will be increased.

III. CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE SDG 4 IMPLEMENTATION, FOLLOW-UP, AND MONITORING

The greatest participation and engagement of civil society is associated with the following mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating achievements and prospects:

The submission by the Republic of Tajikistan of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Tajikistan, which were presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the UN headquarters in New York in 2017 and 2023. In 2024, civil society is actively involved in the preparation of the first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) "Dushanbe: A Smart and Sustainable Future" (to be presented in Cairo, in the fall). The participation and contribution of civil society are more related to alternative identification and discussion of achievements, challenges, and prospects in the implementation of SDG 4.

Civil society also ensured the participation in monitoring assessments of the implementation of program activities in the implementation of SDG 4 within the framework of interdepartmental working groups on the platform of the National Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, as well as assistance in the development of the format for monitoring assessments, which is integrated into the general system of decision-making and interdepartmental information exchange at the country level.

Civil society are actively participating in the processes of localising SDG 4 in the following areas:

- ✓ **Increasing the integration of the SDGs into program activities at the level of cities and regions of the country, within the framework of which efforts are aimed at increasing activity in strengthening the capacity of local statistical reporting, assisting in strengthening the interaction of local authorities with line ministries and committees;**
- ✓ **Increasing involvement in the formation of budget priorities and holding public hearings at the local level, in which the assessment and the setting of tasks and results are carried out taking into account progress on SDG 4 indicators. This is associated with activity in the preparation of civil budgets and assessing the degree of openness of budgets in the context of cities and regions of the country.**
- ✓ **Promoting the strengthening of information platforms at the level of cities and regions of the country to cover the process of implementing the SDGs, including the dissemination and reflection of a range of recommendations for improving progress and solving local problems in the implementation of SDG 4.**

As part of ensuring that climate change is taken into account in the process of implementing SDG 4, the range of activities is also related to the growing contribution of civil society in the formation of environmental culture and education.

For example, there is an NGO network on climate change "TajCN," which is an informal association for the free exchange of information and dialogue on environmental protection, climate change, and energy issues. The network includes almost 100 users and promotes the interests of civil society in the field of climate change at the national policy level, establishing a platform for the exchange of information and positions, taking into account the implementation of SDG 4 targets. Engagement in capacity building is accompanied, for example, by the following measures:

- **In the energy industry: participation in the process of developing courses for officials of energy companies on the methodology for assessing climate risks and vulnerabilities;**
- **In the water sector: participation in the process of building the capacity of water user associations;**
- **In agriculture: participation in the process of disseminating knowledge about crop diversity and plant breeding, facilitating farmers' access to information, best practices and new technologies, informing about the possibilities of using drought-resistant seeds and methods of their cultivation, as well as disseminating knowledge about plant protection from frost.**



The outlook is growth-oriented, with an increase in the systemic activity of civil society in the processes of sustainable participation in the implementation of specific measures to increase capacity in the field of climate change disasters (taking into account the state and prospects for the development of education systems):

- strengthening media coverage of climate change issues and disaster risk management;
- improvement of educational and methodological materials, introduction of innovative teaching methods in the process of advanced training of government officials, farmers, entrepreneurs, and households on issues of adaptation to climate change;
- formation of a system of target results, including gender-sensitive indicators, to achieve national, sectoral and regional adaptation goals; and
- development of methodological recommendations for assessing climate risks.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The country's population by 2030 will be at least 11.5 million people. More and more people will need to be fed and conditions for life created. Continued demographic growth will increase the number of children and youth.

For Tajikistan, taking into account demographic dynamics, and new challenges (for example, climate change), there is a need to stimulate and encourage effective partnerships between government organisations, public and private sectors, as well as between civil society organisations, drawing on the experience and strategies for using the resources of all stakeholders.

The solution to the problem is related to how to make the process of development of the education system more resistant to climate change. And for this it is important:

● **To take action as climate change is already threatening efforts to achieve the SDGs, including SDG 4.** In this context, within the framework of the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, actions are outlined to ensure safe facilities and means of education (i.e. ensuring that the infrastructure of educational institutions is resilient to natural disasters); disaster risk management in educational institutions; and training in risk reduction and resilience enhancement.

● **To act together and join efforts at the national and local levels, with the active participation of civil society, to implement measures aimed at both adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its consequences.** In this direction, localising national strategic priorities and SDG 4

in the context of climate adaptation for resilience implies adapting general measures to specific conditions, challenges and opportunities. It is important to intensify cooperation between stakeholders, including education authorities, architects, engineers, builders and other education professionals to ensure:

- safe site selection, design, construction, and maintenance
- preparedness and early warning, hazard mapping, mock drills and development of disaster risk management plans and standard operating procedures for each educational institution
- improving risk reduction and resilience learning through developing educational tools for safety and preparedness; integrating climate-sensitive disaster risk education into formal and informal curricula; teacher training; and other measures suitable for extracurricular and other discussions.

Strengthen measures and scale up solutions to ensure a sustainable future that will help reduce losses due to changes in natural and climatic conditions (for example, losses in educational infrastructure) through preventive, mitigation, and adaptation strategies, the widespread use of mechanisms for forecasting climate processes, and the formation of an environmental culture among the population and economic entities.

For civil society to participate more actively in decision-making, it is important to participate through conducting public monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4, developing analytical and communication skills, and cooperating with the media. This will serve to increase citizens' awareness of climate change issues, and promote successful practices of adaptation and climate risk management, including in the education system.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan, youth are young people from 14 to 30 years old, constituting about 28% of the country's population (almost 2.8 million people). Young people will form the backbone of the working population by 2030, contributing to the development of the country. Developing a strategic long-term vision for youth development will help harness the existing demographic dividend effectively. Efforts in the country are aimed at carrying out socio-economic reforms, and comprehensive measures are being implemented to promote youth rights.

Research conducted in the country shows that youth perceive education as a very important tool for realising their goals. The proportion of youth and adults aged 15 to 24 years participating in formal or non-formal education or training is increasing. The gender gap in youth enrolment in the educational process is consistently narrowing.

Diagram 1. The proportion of youth aged 15-24 years participating in formal and non-formal education and training, % (SDG 4.3.1)



Source: Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Tajikistan 2020 – Educational level of the population of the Republic of Tajikistan. Volume 4, Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (2023)

The unemployment rate in the country is about 8%, and the unemployment rate among the population aged 15 to 24 is significantly higher than among the rest of the population. The actual unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 24 years is 14%.

Diagram 2. Unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 years in the Republic of Tajikistan



Source: Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Tajikistan 2020 – Educational level of the population of the Republic of Tajikistan. Volume 4, Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan (2023)

Among the unemployed people, registered within the employment service, a significant portion (50.2%) are recent graduates of secondary schools and vocational educational institutions, which is a high value in comparison with the share of young people in the working-age population (44.6%). The vast majority of unemployed youth live in rural areas. In the new growth model, agriculture and rural areas must become the base points of efficiency and productivity.

Solving problems of inequality and promoting the realisation of the educational rights of young people, especially women in rural areas, must be accompanied by efforts in the field of infrastructure, communications with parents, and the formation of a culture of involvement in the decision-making system - at the level of school, family, and community.

In addition, to address problems related to both education and youth employment, especially in rural areas, it is important to increase the effectiveness of sectoral actions and social support measures, including improving access to high-quality education, ensuring that equitable flexible learning and training pathways and alternative learning programs are developed and strengthened, and first employment after completion of training, supporting the employment of socially vulnerable groups and promoting labour mobility.

Going forward, measures to build and develop relevant competencies, for example, through carefully designed active employment promotion programs and targeted investments in public employment services, especially in rural areas, will play a critical role in ensuring that young people realise their potential. *