



UNITED NATIONS  
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

# UNITED NATIONS 2022 UPDATED COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS FOR THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



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# Acronyms

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<b>ADP</b>	Additional Drug Package
<b>BRI</b>	Belt and Road Initiative
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CAREC</b>	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
<b>CSO(s)</b>	Civil society organization(s)
<b>DPCC</b>	Development Partners Coordination Council
<b>EAEU</b>	Eurasian Economic Union
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EDF</b>	Eurasian Development Fund
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>GHG</b>	greenhouse gas
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>IFIs</b>	International financial institutions
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INFF</b>	Integrated National Financing Framework
<b>LLDCs</b>	Land-locked developing countries
<b>MDBs</b>	Multilateral development banks
<b>MSL</b>	Minimum subsistence level
<b>MSMEs</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>NCDs</b>	Non-communicable diseases
<b>NCPT</b>	National Center for the Prevention of Torture
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determined Contribution
<b>NGO(s)</b>	Non-Governmental organization(s)
<b>NSC</b>	National Statistical Committee
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OOP</b>	Out-of-pocket payments
<b>PwD</b>	Persons with disabilities
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>SGBP</b>	State Guaranteed Benefit Package
<b>SDG(s)</b>	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SOEs</b>	State-owned enterprises
<b>SPECA</b>	UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
<b>TRACECA</b>	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and vocational education training
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene

# Preface

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This updated Common Country Analysis (CCA) provides further analytical foundations for the UN Country Team's programming to effectively implement the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) for 2023-2027. It constitutes the UN system's independent, integrated, forward-looking and data-driven analysis of the context for sustainable development in the Kyrgyz Republic. I am confident it will further guide the UN family's ongoing and planned assistance of the Government and the people of the Kyrgyz Republic in light of recent developments and current challenges facing the country in achieving its national development objectives and its commitments to various international conventions and obligations.

This updated CCA is the result of the collaborative efforts of the UN Country Team in the Kyrgyz Republic. I would like to thank the many UN colleagues who were involved in the preparation of this report.

Antje Grawe  
*UN Resident Coordinator in the Kyrgyz Republic*

# Executive Summary

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The 2022 updated CCA has been prepared at a time when the Kyrgyz Republic continues to face existing and potentially new development challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The analysis presented in this report indicates that despite the major strides and accomplishments made by the country in the last few decades, these external developments have exposed or exacerbated existing structural, institutional and policy challenges and their impact on social vulnerabilities facing a large portion of the Kyrgyz population alongside ongoing social and political tensions.

As this report and the earlier 2021 CCA discussed, the Kyrgyz Republic confronts a number of obstacles that are impeding the country's development trajectory. These include:

- diversifying the economy and attracting foreign investment;
- reducing corruption and improving the delivery and quality of a wide range of Government services, notably in the health and education sectors;
- expanding the reach of social safeguards and protections; and
- addressing the rising threats to the environment in both rural and urban areas based on green growth.
- peaceful resolution of conflict, particularly those on the border; and
- the protection of human rights

The chapters of this report lay out the characteristics of key challenges and how they were impacted by COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. A key message of both reports is that the growing numbers of poor and vulnerable have the potential of becoming a "lost generation" who fall further behind, particularly children, youth and women who have been left out of available economic opportunities and existing social services and safety-nets. With respect to the economy, Kyrgyzstan recorded a growth of 7 percent and avoid recession despite the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the escalation of violence at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in September 2022 and the war in Ukraine. This notwithstanding, the country has been experiencing worsening poverty trends and growing inequalities.

This current report diverges from the 2021 CCA by giving considerably more attention to the political context that poses a risk to earlier gains in the areas of social cohesion, civic space, human rights and the rule of law, and thereby to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In 2022, decisions taken by the Government and laws passed by Parliament had a restrictive effect on civic space and curtailed the rights of citizens for peaceful assembly, freedom of speech and association, as well as the rights and protections afforded to women, national minorities, the disabled, and other marginalized groups.

The escalation of violence at the border with Tajikistan in September 2022, which resulted in unprecedented levels of casualties and destruction contributed to an increase in vulnerabilities, adding further challenges to economic development, social cohesion and peace.

From the perspective of the UN Country Team and its commitment to the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), this report underscores the importance of the UN system addressing two parallel

and overlapping challenges: The first relates to the current constellation of Government institutions and programmes that are not meeting the needs of far too many people, whether in the area of job creation, access to affordable health care and quality education, food security, social protection for those left behind, or mitigating environmental factors that put people at risk. How the Government effectively tackles these vulnerabilities will be a fundamental concern in the near- and medium-term, at the same time that the Government should aim at addressing the macroeconomic goals of putting the economy on a sustainable growth trajectory.

The second area of concern are challenges to democratic governance, human rights, civic space and social cohesion. Despite improvements in many Government functions, there are structural institutional and governance inefficiencies, lack of capacity, high turnover in Government institutions and corruption, all of which impact the delivery of Government services, further eroding public confidence in the State. At the same time, considerable efforts are still needed to improve the legal system and the rule of law so that all citizens feel that the laws and protections afforded them by the State and the judicial system are serving their best interests, including such concerns as addressing gender inequality and discrimination faced by many ethnic and social groups. Efforts to centralize Government powers and decision-making in the presidency have weakened the balance of state powers and risk to undermine effective oversight and accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, 2022 has seen measures taken by the Government aimed at curtailing basic rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of speech, freedom of the media as well as freedom of assembly and association. All of these factors, taken together, have contributed to a shrinking civic and democratic space that characterized the Kyrgyz Republic in 2022.

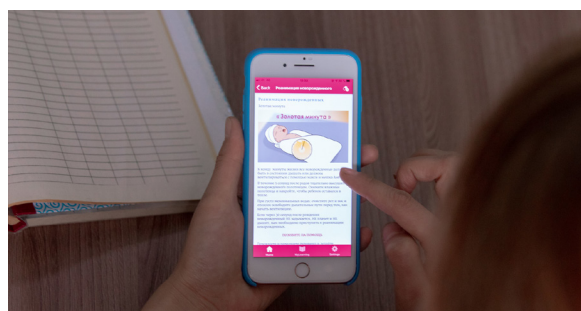
Against this backdrop, the UN system in Kyrgyzstan sees its principal task as effectively supporting Kyrgyzstan, in close partnership with the Government and other State institutions, civil society, private sector, academia, women and youth in meeting these critical development challenges through the lens of the new UNSDCF. The objective will be to use the UN's collective experience and comparative advantages in a coordinated and targeted manner that leverages the resources available in the most cost-effective manner. In so doing, the UN system will apply an inclusive, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to its support of Kyrgyzstan's development aspirations which takes into consideration the diverse needs of the people, with a special focus on minorities and vulnerable groups in line with the principle of Leaving No One Behind.

# 1. Introduction

This updated CCA for 2022 has been written to consolidate the views of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with the goal of offering the most up-to-date analytical framework by which the UN system can support the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to achieve its development priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its normative commitments. This CCA builds on the 2021 CCA and seeks to include the most recent data available, reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of the war in Ukraine, as well as other political and socio-economic developments.

This CCA provides the evidence base and analytical foundations for the UNCT's programming to support the Government and Kyrgyz society in implementing the new UNSDCF for the period of 2023–2027. It constitutes the UN system's independent and data-driven analysis of the context for sustainable development in the Kyrgyz Republic.

This report is organized into eight chapters and several annexes that examine different elements of the agreed framework by which the UN system will support the Kyrgyz Republic in the foreseeable future. Chapter 2 presents the overall development context in the Kyrgyz Republic as seen from multiple perspectives. Chapter 3 offers a brief overview the Government's national vision for sustainable development. Chapter 4 summarizes the country's progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Chapter 4 presents an updated overview of different social groups who are most at risk of being left behind. Chapter 5 turns to an examination of the global, trans-boundary and regional issues that impact the Kyrgyz Republic's development trajectory. Chapter 6 offers a multidimensional risk analysis of areas and challenges which could pose problems for the Government and for the UN system in achieving its development cooperation objectives. Chapter 7 offers some reflections on the strategic requirements for more effectively addressing the development challenges confronting the country. Finally, chapter 8 gives some thoughts on the implications of the developments in 2022 in terms of UN programming under the new SDCF.



## 2. The Kyrgyz Republic's development context

This chapter provides a general overview of the current state, progress made, and development challenges confronting the Kyrgyz Republic. The chapter provides a summary across a range of sectors and policy issues that form part of the policy dialogue between the UN system and counterparts in the Kyrgyz Government and society. This analysis is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of the issues but rather a short synopsis of what are ongoing policy and programmatic challenges and issues. The chapter looks at these issues from different perspectives: political, peace and conflict, economic, social, environmental and demographic, as well as commitments to international norms and standards.

### 2.1 Political context, governance, and institutions

#### Key political events

The Kyrgyz Republic has undergone a difficult transition process characterized by complex social, economic, and political changes since gaining independence in 1991. Corruption and nepotism were key factors leading to public discontent resulting in upheavals and changes of Government in 2005, 2010, and again in 2020. In 2020, the fragile democratic governance structure and rule of law were seriously undermined by crisis events that were the result of the wide public distrust in the Office of the President, the Government and the Parliament (Jogorku Kenesh). Ill-managed COVID-19 health emergency and the pandemic-prompted socio-economic downturn prepared the fertile ground for social discontent. In October 2020, rigged Parliamentary elections sparked off mass protests of people that ended up with the street violence and eventually led to the cancellation of elections results, dissolution of the Government and the resignation of the President. Sadyr Japarov, widely regarded as a political prisoner was released from the jail by the protesters and the parliament swiftly nominated him to lead the executive branch during the transition until the presidential elections.

Sadyr Japarov was elected President in January 2021 with 79 percent of the vote.<sup>1</sup> A referendum on Constitutional amendments was held following the Presidential election, adopting a new Constitution which provides for increased Presidential powers over the Executive, Judiciary and Parliament, undoing previous reforms that had been intended to promote political pluralism. The President is directly elected and can serve up to two five-year terms. The Head of Government - the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, is appointed by the President, and effectively serves as the Head of the President's Administration. The new Constitution also reduces the number of Members of Parliament (MPs) from 120 to 90, weakens the role of political parties and the decision-making powers of Parliament. The prevailing role of the presidency and the executive has been evident as the Parliament that was elected according to the new Constitution on 28 November 2021 has been rapidly and often in three readings at once adopting contentious laws proposed by the Presidential Administration and the Cabinet of Ministries.<sup>2</sup> The new Constitution also envisions the creation of the People's Kurultai, an advisory council to the President which might undermine the role of Parliament in relation to law and policy-making processes. The Kurultai met for the first time at the end of November 2022, gathering 1,072 delegates from all the regions of the country,<sup>3</sup> however, as the Constitutional Law for its establishment was rejected by the Parliament in 2022, the Kurultai's functions and the procedures of delegates' election still need to be fully defined and agreed.

<sup>1</sup> Central Commission on Elections and Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic. See: <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/4353/>

<sup>2</sup> For example, the law on opening a casino, the law on approval of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border deal. See: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/32155341.html>

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. Available at: <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/112215>



The Kyrgyz Republic saw two major escalations of violence at the border with Tajikistan, on 29 April – 1 May 2021 and on 14-17 September 2022. The latter, which occurred during the reporting period of this updated CCA, resulted in 269 casualties including 63 killed, more than 140,000 internally displaced persons as well as more than six hundred houses and a dozen of social facilities destroyed. Over a dozen skirmishes, resulting in deaths and injuries among the civilian population and the military had before occurred between these two major escalations. Despite a ceasefire agreement signed between the two countries on 19 September 2022, the situation on the border remains fragile with both countries maintaining troops at the border. The intensification of border tensions has caused a profound fear, anxiety and distrust among the affected communities as well as widespread rhetoric of enmity in the wider society. As a ripple effect, the conflict put additional strain on social cohesion within the country. Yet, efforts have been underway at political and diplomatic levels to resolve the border dispute. Country delegations on border delimitation met six times since the latest deadly escalation both on Kyrgyz and Tajik territory and agreed to declare neutral a contested 275-meter-long stretch along a strategic road connecting Kyrgyz Leilek and Batken districts and the Tajik Khojai Alo-Vorukh villages; and delimited 17 kilometers of an unspecified section of the border adding to the 90 kilometers reported during 2022.

In contrast, tensions on the border with Uzbekistan have been significantly reduced. Whilst 85 per cent of the total 1378 kilometres of the border had already been agreed by the President of Kyrgyzstan Atambayev and President Mirziyayev of Uzbekistan in 2017, on 29 and 30 November 2022, the President of Kyrgyzstan and the President of Uzbekistan, respectively, signed a border agreement on another 302 kilometres, including on the most disputed sections after it was ratified by the Parliaments of the two countries.<sup>4</sup> Reportedly, only one section remains disputed. Full details of the border deal and the agreement document have not yet been shared with the public. Elements of the border deal, however, prompted protests in the settlements nearby areas agreed for transfer to Uzbekistan as well as in Bishkek, in particular over the transfer of the water reservoir Kempir-Abad. The critics of the deal accused the Government of giving away historically Kyrgyz lands.<sup>5</sup>

Curtailed fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of association, was a prominent feature of the political context in the country. Journalists, bloggers, opponents of the Government, and civic activists voicing critical and independent views have been subjected to surveillance, had their homes searched, and have been persecuted, harassed, and intimidated.<sup>6</sup> Civic activists have been charged with grave crimes on incitement of hatred,<sup>7</sup> of disobedience, mass riots, and calls for violence<sup>8</sup> for their social media posts on issues of public concern. Remanding the accused in custody for long periods prior to their trials has become an almost routine response by the authorities. In one instance, the authorities resorted to an unprecedented mass arrest of 26 civic activists, politicians and journalists over the criticism and protests against the transfer of the aforementioned Kempir-Abad reservoir as a part of a border deal with Uzbekistan.

<sup>4</sup> [https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883\\_podpisan\\_zakon\\_o\\_ratifikacii\\_dogovora\\_meghdu\\_kirgizstanom\\_i\\_uzbekistanom\\_ob\\_otdelnih\\_uchastkah\\_kirgizsko\\_uzbekskoy\\_gosudarstvennoy\\_granici\\_podpisannogo\\_3\\_noyabrya\\_2022\\_goda\\_v\\_gorode\\_bishkek](https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883_podpisan_zakon_o_ratifikacii_dogovora_meghdu_kirgizstanom_i_uzbekistanom_ob_otdelnih_uchastkah_kirgizsko_uzbekskoy_gosudarstvennoy_granici_podpisannogo_3_noyabrya_2022_goda_v_gorode_bishkek)  
<https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/5745>.

<sup>5</sup> The Kempir-Aabad reservoir was built during Soviet times between 1969 – 1983 at the expense of Uzbekistan to irrigate the cotton fields of this country. About 2 million hectares of fields in Uzbekistan are irrigated with water from this reservoir, and residents of nearby settlements receive drinking water. The dam of the reservoir reaches a height of 105 meters and passes right along it the line of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. There are two Uzbek hydroelectric power plants with a capacity of 190 megawatts in the Kyrgyz part of the dam. One of them was put into operation in 1985, and the second - in 2010.

As per Kyrgyz authorities, the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border deal envisages that 19,699 hectares of land (considered disputed before) in different border settlements of Osh and Jalalabad remain with Kyrgyzstan, and the Kempir-Abad passes to Uzbekistan together with 4,485 hectares of land underneath. According to the agreement, the water resources of the Kempirabad reservoir will be managed by a joint commission of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, consisting of 24 people - 12 from each side. From the Kyrgyz side, it will be headed by the Director of the Water Resources Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic, and from Uzbekistan, the Minister of Water Resources will be in charge. Under the terms of the agreement, the Uzbek side will provide reservoir security and maintenance, and the volume of water discharged will be agreed with Kyrgyzstan. In addition, Uzbekistan commits not to exceed the water level above the 900th horizontal. This does not apply to such emergencies as flooding, natural disasters and force majeure events. In the case of natural disasters, the water level in the reservoir can exceed the 900th horizontal. Representatives of the above-mentioned commission from Kyrgyzstan will be allowed into the facility by the Uzbek side after they present their passports.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/01/kyrgyzstan-spate-criminal-cases-against-journalists>.

<sup>7</sup> Article 330 of the Criminal Code - "Incitement to racial, ethnic, national, religious and inter-regional hatred or discord".

<sup>8</sup> The Criminal Code, Article 278, part 3 covers "Calls for active disobedience to the lawful demands of representatives of the authorities and for mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens".

Furthermore, civic space continued to be shrinking including through the adoption of certain laws, such as the amendments to the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations adopted by the Parliament on 17 June 2021 that imposed additional and discriminatory reporting requirements for NGOs.<sup>9</sup> The Presidential Administration also initiated restrictive bills on non-commercial organizations and on mass media. Pertinently, the draft Law on NGOs stipulates strong state regulation over the establishment and operations of civil society organizations (CSOs), especially those representing international NGOs. In addition, several amendments to the Law on Non-commercial Organizations and other legislative changes proposed in the Parliament on the heels of the initiative set forth by the Presidential Administration have introduced a label of ‘foreign representative,’ to NGOs receiving foreign financial assistance and “performing political activities.” The draft Law on mass media would substantially curtail freedom of media and freedom of expression. It is currently under discussion in a working group set up by the Presidential Administration in response to wide-spread criticism. Equally, the draft law on NGOs is undergoing a review in a similar working group.

### Political party system and the Parliament

Political parties have so far had only played a marginal role in the political system of the Kyrgyz Republic. However, political parties remain diverse and competitive but are also marked by the further centralizing of power. There are over 200 registered parties, each running on a programme advocating for the general well-being and development of the country, and for championing the whole of society’s aspirations.<sup>10</sup> Several political parties are well established and have sustained a relatively stable social base across several rounds of national and local elections. A few parties have narrower political agendas and electoral bases, such as an environmental party and the agrarian party. Under the parliamentary democracy framework, the power of Parliament was significant, and all parliamentary elections have been fiercely contested. However, the system is marked rather by coalitions of persons with resources and influence than by ideas. Typically, such parties are created just before the elections which then attain decisive portions of parliamentary seats while their constituency vote for everything but the party platform.<sup>11</sup> However, elected by party lists in a proportional system, the Parliament has been dogged by the instability of ruling coalitions, turnover of leadership within party factions, and the tendency of both factions and individual members of Parliament to switch positions on issues and engage in political bargains with no overarching principles. Challenges in policymaking and oversight is further affected by weak and ineffective coordination between the Jogorku Kenesh and the Government, resulting in low public trust in the Parliament.

The electoral system underwent a revision in 2021 resulting in amendments in August 2021. The law provides for elections of deputies to the Parliament according to a new, mixed (parallel) electoral system.<sup>12</sup> A total of 36 deputies are to be elected using a majority-based system in single-mandate constituencies. Another 54 deputies are to be elected according to the preferential system, which preserves the previous gains on ensuring quotas within the party lists, stipulating that every third person on the lists of candidates<sup>13</sup> should be of a different gender.<sup>14</sup> As per the newly adopted legislation, no more than 70 percent of candidates are to be of the same sex.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See: <http://kenesh.kg/ru/article/show/8189/2021-zhildin-17-iyunundagi-4659-vi-kirgiz-respublikasinin-ayrim-miyzam-aktilarina-kommertsiyalik-emes-uyumdar-zhonundo-yuridikalik-zhaktardi-filialdardi-okulchuluktordu-mamlekettik-kattoo-zhonundo-kirgiz-respublikasinin-miyzamdarin-a-ozgortuulordu-kirgizuu-tuuraluu-kirgiz-respublikasinin-miyzamin-kabil-aluu-zhonundo>.

<sup>10</sup> List of political parties, Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, [http://old.minjust.gov.kg/?page\\_id=6551](http://old.minjust.gov.kg/?page_id=6551).

<sup>11</sup> <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-presidents-allies-dominate-parliamentary-race>

<sup>12</sup> Draft Constitutional Law on revisions of the Constitutional Law on elections of the President and deputies of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. See: <http://kenesh.kg/ru/article/show/6737/na-obshtestvennoe-obsuzhdenie-s-6-maya-2020-goda-vinositsya-proekt-konstitutsionnogo-zakona-kirgizskoy-respubliki-o-vnesenii-izmeneniy-v-konstitutsionnyy-zakon-kirgizskoy-respubliki-o-viborah-prezidenta-kirgizskoy-respubliki-i-deputatov-zhogorku-kenesha-kirgizskoy-respubliki>

<sup>13</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended Kyrgyzstan to “require political parties to include an equal number of women and men candidates on their electoral lists, with the women’s and men’s names appearing on alternating rows (the zipper system)”.

<sup>14</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended that the Kyrgyz Republic “should strengthen measures to ensure the full and equal participation of women in political and public life, including in executive, judicial and legislative bodies at the national, regional and local levels, particularly in decision-making positions”. In November 2022, UN Human Rights Committee recommended that the Kyrgyz Republic “establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of temporary special measures and assess their impact on achieving substantive equality between women and men”.

<sup>15</sup> <https://shailoo.gov.kg/media/aidana/2021/09/03/tsvtdx.pdf>

Parliamentary elections under the amended electoral law took place for the first time on 28 November 2021 with 21 parties standing for the race<sup>16</sup>. However, the low voter turnout as well as the high number of incomplete or damaged voter ballots (9.63 percent of all voters) were features of the November 2021 Parliamentary elections.

With the 34.61 percent turnout, six political parties entered the Parliament: Ata-Jurt Kyrgyzstan (15 seats), Ishenim (12 seats), Yntymak (9 seats), Alians (7 seats), Butun Kyrgyzstan (6 seats), Yiman Nuru (5 seats), and 36 MPs seats were filled in first-past-the-post single-mandate constituencies. The share of women Parliamentarians increased from 16.6 percent (20 out of 120 MPs)<sup>17</sup> to 21.1 percent (19 out of 90 MPs from the party lists),<sup>18</sup> despite the absence of a women's quota for majoritarian seats. This represents a notable improvement showing the country's commitment to increase the share of women in elected and Government institutions (although the 30 percent target for women MPs has not yet been met).

Parliamentary elections were competitive, and no extensive use of the administrative resources has been noted.<sup>19</sup> Elections were, however, marred by a technical glitch on the CEC website, causing five parties not to accept the election results of elections and triggering minor protests.

## Government and the public sector

The governance institutions have well-developed formal mechanisms of operation, but significant gaps remain in organizational, financial and technical capacities. Inclusive and accountable policy-making capabilities are insufficient. A disconnect exists between planning for sectorial reforms and budgeting, resulting in insufficient resources for priority programmes. Inter-ministerial, horizontal coordination and cooperation are, in many cases, rather weak and inefficient, with many core functions overlapping across Government institutions and in need of improving human resources capacities due to frequent Government reshuffling and staff turnover. Since his appointment, President Sadyr Japarov has started the reorganization of governance structures, the Cabinet, and ministerial appointments.

The governance challenges are even more evident at lower (regional and district) levels of Government and self-Government. An underlying cause is that political, administrative and financial decentralization has been evolving unevenly since independence. For example, political decentralization has given a certain level of autonomy and power, but the administrative, financial and economic decentralization functions were inadequate to fulfill the given mandates effectively.

The role of civil society, workers and employers' organizations in decision making processes is decreasing. The National Tripartite Commission on Labour, Social and Economic Issues has not held a single meeting since the beginning of 2020. The effectiveness of governance could be strengthened if social dialogue and partnership between the Government, workers and employers' organizations, and representatives of civil society is strengthened as stipulated in the Law № 154 on Social Partnership.

The expansion of women's political participation in decision-making processes in state and municipal services is seen as one of the main indicators of the observance of equality of human rights and opportunities. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the gender parity of women's representation has not been achieved at the level of State and municipal authorities and has been declining over the past years. In 2019 in comparison to 2010, the representation of women decreased in public service from 39.9 percent to 39.2 percent, and at the municipal service level from 35.8 percent to 34.1 percent.

<sup>16</sup> <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/5752/>

<sup>17</sup> Number of women MPs changed over time; 20 women MPs were holding their posts in the Parliament at least between September 2018 to March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> <http://kenesh.kg/ru/article/show/667/zhenshtini-deputati-vii-soziva-zhogorku-kenesha-kirgizskoy-respubliki>; <https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/news/6048/>

<sup>19</sup> See e.g., OSCE final report on elections: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/f/519087.pdf>.

In 2020, the highest representation of women among civil servants was noted in Chui (48.5 percent) and Issyk-Kul (46.5 percent).<sup>20</sup> In 2021, the country marked notable progress towards enhancement of women political participation at the municipal level. A significant growth from 10 to 38 percent of women's representation in local councils (keneshes) was achieved as a result of the systematic advocacy for the realization of the gender quota requirement<sup>21</sup> implemented by development partners under the strategic leadership of the Central Election Commission (CEC).<sup>22</sup> However, women only make up 10 per cent in Cabinet, holding two positions (Minister of Health and Minister of Environment).

## Legal system and rule of law

The legal system of the Kyrgyz Republic was developed within the framework of Soviet law and has, in the post-independence period, been undergoing incremental reforms. The basic source of the rule of law in the Kyrgyz Republic is legislation. The legal framework consists of the Constitution, Constitutional laws, Codes, Laws, Presidential Decrees, Resolutions of Jogorku Kenesh and Cabinet of Ministries, Acts of the National Bank and of the Central Commission for elections and referenda as well as normative legal acts by state authorities with delegated powers to legislate, and normative legal acts of representative bodies by local self-Government authorities.

According to the Kyrgyz Constitution, universally recognized principles and norms of international law, in addition to international treaties entered into force in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic are an integral part of the legal system of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In 2021-2022, the Kyrgyz Republic faced considerable setbacks in democratic governance and rule of law. According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index for 2022, Kyrgyzstan has the lowest score since 2015, while the country was also downgraded by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index from a "hybrid" to an "authoritarian regime".<sup>23</sup> In particular, significant deterioration has been reported in factors measuring "constraints on Government powers" and "absence of corruption", including in relation to delivery of criminal justice across the entire system, citizens' discrimination, due process of law, fair trial rights, and the lack of judicial independence.<sup>24</sup> Also, after a period of steady annual improvement in the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2013–2019), in 2021, the country dropped by four points ranking 27 and 144/180 globally, with a Global Corruption Barometer reading of 24 percent. The country has seen a slight increase in the rank in 2022 to 140/180 and the same score of 27 as in the previous year<sup>25</sup>

The implementation of the ongoing legal and criminal justice reform, including the legal aid sector, is considered to be fragile, fragmented, resources-demanding, not properly monitored and undermined by concerns related to sustainability and low level of public engagement and civic participation. The adoption at the end of 2021 of new versions of the

<sup>20</sup> UN Women (2021). Gender Equality in Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>21</sup> Temporary special measures (gender quota) stipulating the provision of no more than 70% of one sex in the lists of political parties in the law "The Law on Elections of deputies of local councils" (July 14, 2019)

<sup>22</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended that the Kyrgyz Republic "strengthen understanding among relevant State officials, parliamentarians, policymakers, employers and the general public of the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures."

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/> Likewise, the Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2021 reports that the Kyrgyz Republic's status declined from Partly Free to Not Free ranking 28/100 (compared to 39/100 in 2020), with serious deterioration in civil and political rights (4/40) and civil liberties (24/100). According to the Transparency International annual Corruption Perception Index 2021, Kyrgyzstan dropped by 4 points in 2021 scoring 27 and 144/180 globally, including a Global Corruption Barometer of 24% (% of public services' users who paid a bribe in the previous 12 months). The 2021 Freedom House's Freedom on the Net Report also highlights that Internet freedom in Kyrgyzstan continued to decline during the coverage period, as the fallout from the political unrest following the October 2020 parliamentary elections brought on significant legal and constitutional changes. The country is now considered "Partly Free" with an overall score of 53/100 (in 2020 56/200).

<sup>24</sup> The Government has also validated the current limitations of the national justice system, acknowledging, under the recently adopted "National Development Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2026" (October 2021), that "the judicial system of the country continues to face both old and new problems, which require radical solutions, and the system itself requires significant changes aimed at improving the quality of justice, the authority of courts and public confidence in judges. There is a decrease in the level of professionalism in the performance of tasks to ensure public order, safety, protection of life, health of citizens and their property, including the reduction that has become possible due to non-compliance by law enforcement officers with ethical standards of conduct".

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021>

Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes and the Code of Offences, under the direction of the Office of the General Prosecutor, was seriously criticized by civil society as provisions are not aligned with international standards, curtailing civil rights and overall undermining access to justice and due process of law.

In parallel to the constitution-review process during 2021–2022, the Government carried out a comprehensive legal revision process, the so-called 'legal inventory' which aimed to revise 356 laws within a short period of time. The inventory sought to promote alignment with the Constitution, and to assess compliance with a number of established criteria, including effective implementation of the law, cost-effectiveness, and impact on the business environment.<sup>26</sup> The inventory also planned to abolish laws if they meet disqualifying criteria such as low cost-effectiveness and the impact on businesses and legal consistency. Overall, the international community and civil society expressed concerns about the hasty nature of the process due to the unrealistic time frames, limited space for effective and inclusive consultations with the public, and risks that legislative initiatives stemming from this process may result in the elaboration or amendment of laws to the detriment of human rights protection. The Government also revised many other pieces of legislation, including the Tax Code and fiscal legislation. The proposal to reduce the time for public discussions of draft laws and law amendments and to remove their regulatory impact analysis was one of the latest initiatives by the Ministry of Justice that came under strong criticism of expert and the civil society putting the quality of law making at risk as well as for attempting to prevent public participation.<sup>27</sup> The IFIs have voiced concerns about planned revisions to the national procurement laws.

### Other legislative issues

On 15 April 2022, President Japarov signed the bill "On Public Procurement". Now, any company with the state's share of more than 50% has a waiver from holding transparent procurement process on the state procurement website. The Government claims the law aims to simplify and streamline the public procurement. Experts and the civil society however believe the changes are likely to lead to a greater obscurity of public spending. The volume of procurement by such companies (50% of state share or more) amounts to 25.3 bn soms a year (or \$300 million), or 59.7% of all public procurement<sup>28</sup>. The exclusion from the open procurement also reduces the capability of watchdog and anti-corruption organizations to trace potentially fraudulent schemes.

On 30 June 2021, Parliament adopted a new Trade Union Law, which introduces a trade union monopoly system that has been criticized by the ILO as being in contravention of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 concerning freedoms of association.<sup>29</sup> On 24 August 2021, the President again vetoed the draft law due to incompatibility with international human rights standards.<sup>30</sup> In addition, in September 2021, Parliament approved the Child Code, despite the disagreement by UN and civil society advocacy.<sup>31</sup> As of December 2022, passage of the Child Code is still pending signature by the President.

On 25 May 2022, Parliament adopted a number of laws aimed at regulating the activities of national security bodies. These include: "On National Security Bodies", "On Counterintelligence Activities", "On External Intelligence Service", and "On Countering Terrorism", allowing Government agencies to tap individuals' phone calls and correspondence,

<sup>26</sup> Presidential Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic of February 8, 2021 unitary enterprise No. 26 About carrying out inventory count of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. Available at: <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=130138>

<sup>27</sup> In November 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee recommended Kyrgyzstan to "review the draft Law on Normative Legal Acts with a view to ensure the possibility of open and meaningful engagement of all relevant actors, including civil society, in the law-making process.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.akchabar.kg/ru/article/business/obshhestvennost-bet-trevogu-novyj-zakon-o-gozzakupkah-otkryva/>

<sup>29</sup> ILO Convention 87 concerns the freedom of association and the right to organize. Convention 98 concerns the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining.

<sup>30</sup> In May 2021, the draft law "On Trade Unions" was vetoed by the President due to violations of the international standards and returned to the Parliament for the revision.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/unicef-and-ohchr-joint-statement-child-code>

thereby undermining the right to privacy. Furthermore, in case of emergency, the national counterintelligence service can enter any place of residence without a court ruling. In October 2022, the Human Rights Committee raised its grave concerns about possible violations of international human rights standards, including the ICCPR and called upon the Government to review the adopted legislation.<sup>32</sup>

Changes in the Law on Refugees made in 2020 and the introduction of inadmissibility criteria, which are not in line with international law, have negatively impacted the refugee protection environment and led to questions about the state's compliance with its international obligations. Moreover, refugees still do not have access to many of the rights accorded to them by the 1951 Convention, such as social security, health care, and Convention Travel Documents.

## Gender equality

Over the past decade, the Kyrgyz Republic has made important progress with legislation to end gender-based violence,<sup>33</sup> abduction of women for forced marriage, and other important gender issues, however, many challenges remain. Based on World Economic Forum data which benchmark progress towards gender parity and compare countries' gender gaps across four dimensions (economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership,) the Kyrgyz Republic ranked 86<sup>34</sup> in 2022 which is an improvement from 108th ranking in 2020, which makes Kyrgyzstan one of the three most-improved country in the region. This is attributed to, inter alia, an increase of women in senior positions (legislators, senior officials and managers).<sup>35</sup> With a current value of 0.434, the Kyrgyz Republic also ranked 82 out of 162 countries in 2022 in the Gender Inequality Index<sup>36</sup> which measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development. Persistent and deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes and practices around the roles and responsibilities of both men and women<sup>37</sup>, however, continue to impede enforcement of existing laws and prevent women and girls from fully realizing their rights in political and economic domains, limiting effective access to justice and protection against gender-based violence.<sup>38</sup>

In September 2020, during the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Kyrgyz Republic supported recommendations "to take all necessary action, including through awareness-raising campaigns and training, to effectively implement legislation on violence against women and girls and ensure that all reports of violence are thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators are brought to justice" and "to create mandatory training programmes for judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials on the application of criminal law dealing with violence against women".

According to the CEDAW recommendations, the following key challenges remain: ending discrimination against women on all grounds, creating an educational and social environment that is stereotype-and-violence-free, eliminating root causes of gender and pay inequality and pay gaps, modifying social and cultural patterns, ensuring high-quality health-care services for women and girls including with respect to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive

<sup>32</sup> See para 20 (b) of the HRCttee COBs on Kyrgyzstan (2022), [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KGZ/CCPR\\_C\\_KGZ\\_CO\\_3\\_50615\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KGZ/CCPR_C_KGZ_CO_3_50615_E.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended the Government to "ensure that all cases of gender-based violence are effectively investigated and prosecuted, that perpetrators are adequately punished and that victims are not mandatorily referred to reconciliation procedures".

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/1-2-global-results/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/1-5-performance-by-region>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/1-5-performance-by-region>

<sup>37</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended the country to "provide capacity-building to women politicians and candidates on political campaigning, leadership and negotiation skills, and raise awareness, in concert with the media, among politicians, the media, religious and community leaders and the general public, on the importance of the full, independent and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life to guarantee the implementation of the Convention

<sup>38</sup> In November 2021, UN CEDAW recommended the Government to "review its the electoral legislation to reach parity of women and men in political life and to that effect take targeted measures, including temporary special measures, such as increased quotas, to strengthen the representation of women at all levels of government, in the Zhogorku Kenesh and in local councils, in the judiciary and in academia, in particular at decision-making levels."

rights, increasing women's participation in peace building, and strengthening political representation of women in decision-making bodies. CEDAW's Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report on the Kyrgyz Republic noted with concern: "...'(b) Gender-based violence and hate speech against women candidates during elections and political rallies"; and called on the Government to "(d) Take effective measures to protect women candidates from gender-based violence and hate speech, including online, during elections".<sup>39</sup> CEDAW also highlighted that national educational programmes have to address the criminal nature of abduction of women for forced marriage and child marriage as well as the negative repercussions of these practices.

It is also worth recalling that in the past five years, public views on social norms and relationships have become further polarized, with very negative repercussions on the status of women and girls in the country. The tendency to perceive gender equality and the empowerment of women as an "alien" and pro-western concept is growing. The supporters of this idea rely on the premise of a "traditionally" subordinate role of women in society, referring to cultural traditions and norms that historically define and confine women's roles exclusively to the family and household. The pressure to marry and immediately bear children remains very strong, with the majority of married women requiring permission to use contraception from family members. This public attitude has more dangerous implications, as it is expected to lead to the continuation of harmful and discriminatory practices, such as child and forced marriage, kidnapping, and abduction for the purpose of forced marriage and polygamy.

## **Civic space**

The Kyrgyz Republic has a strong and vibrant civil society, with nearly 22,000 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating openly, receiving funds from national and international resources.<sup>40</sup> CSOs, with their close links to communities, are uniquely placed to tackle social, political and economic vulnerabilities and to create an environment in which people are empowered to shape their own communities.

The space for civil society and independent voices in the country has, however, significantly shrunk over the past two years, against the backdrop of a general decline in fundamental freedoms.

Since 2021, civil society activists, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, political opponents, and other critical voices have been subjected to increasing intimidation and harassment. There are regular incidents of online threats and hate speech targeting human rights defenders, civic activists, and journalists critical of the Government. Often, these threats originate from the so-called "social media trolls factories" (reportedly, funded by persons close to the current political elite) where hired individuals use fake accounts to spread messages favourable to the authorities as well as to attack Government opponents.

Widely reported cases of harassment have remained without any response from the authorities and the climate of impunity prevails. It is of particular concern that a growing number of civic activists and political opponents have been subjected to surveillance, had their homes searched, been detained, and interrogated by law enforcement authorities, and criminally prosecuted in reprisal for their journalistic and civic activities. Those targeted in 2021 include vocal human rights lawyers who voiced their protest against the new Constitution, as well as civic and political activists and journalists who revealed corruption or raised sensitive issues of public interest, including the use of natural resources.

2022 was also marred by numerous cases that posed serious threats to civic space, freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression. Several journalists and bloggers have recently come under criminal investigation because

<sup>39</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan, November 2021, page 8.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/v-respublike-velichilos-chislo-obshestvennyh-organizacij/>

of social media posts that were critical of Government positions or policies. The use of criminal charges against them is widely seen as an attempt to stifle legitimate freedom of speech. Two individuals have been accused of disseminating “false” information, with criminal charges brought under the broadly worded Criminal Code’s Article 330 which penalizes “Incitement to racial, ethnic, national, religious and inter-regional hatred or discord”, with sanctions. The long-standing concern with this article is that it does not clearly define what type of conduct constitutes “incitement.” Due to the legal ambiguity of the crime, it is often misused in the case of politically motivated criminal cases.

Another worrying trend identified is charging civic activists with grave crimes under the Criminal Code’s Article 278 part 3, which “[underscores] . . . active disobedience to the lawful demands of representatives of the authorities and for mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens” for their social media posts. Three emblematic cases have been filed under this Article where the accused have been remanded in custody for long periods prior to their trials. These arrests and criminal investigations have been vocally criticized by opposition politicians and human rights defenders as a form of state persecution for online freedom of expression and for peaceful criticism of decisions and policies of the current authorities.<sup>41</sup>

These criminal cases against activists and journalists are seen by civil society as a means to silence their dissenting views.<sup>42</sup>

In November 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee called upon the Government to stop its practice of putting pressure on human rights defenders, lawyers, politicians, journalists, and others for expressing their opinions, particularly those critical of the Government, including the criminal prosecution of bloggers and journalists.

Civil society and the international community have also raised concerns about other legal initiatives and recently adopted or proposed legislation that impacts the media, access to information, freedom of expression, internet regulations and civil society organizations. These concerns include the Law on Protection against Unreliable (False) Information which paved the way to restrict the enjoyment of freedom of expression and the right to access to information in contradiction to the existing international human rights commitments of the Government.

By December 2022, the Law on False Information adopted in August 2021 had been used three times against independent media outlets, as a means to silence views critical of the authorities through extrajudicial bans imposed by the Ministry of Culture. Attempts by the media community to challenge this controversial law in the Constitutional Court were unsuccessful. In November 2022, a group of opposition MPs initiated amendments to the Law in order to introduce elements of due process – it remains to be seen whether the Parliament will approve these suggested improvements.

The pending draft Law “On the Mass Media” is another legislative initiative that may lead to the curtailment of freedom of the media in the country. The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), in its November 2022 Concluding Observations, recommended that the Government “refrain from the use of criminal prosecution as a tool to suppress critical reporting on matters of public interest; to strengthen the protection of bloggers, journalists, human rights defenders and Government critics against any kind of threat, pressure, intimidation or attack and ensure that all cases of undue interference committed against bloggers, journalists, Government critics and other activists are thoroughly and independently investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned and that victims are provided with effective remedies; to

<sup>41</sup> See for example: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31991072.html> and <https://kloop.kg/blog/2022/08/17/nelzya-sazhat-za-kritiku-deputat-bekeshev-nadeetsya-chto-prezident-skazhet-otpustit-aktivista-zhekshenalieva/>

<sup>42</sup> See <https://t.me/aprilkg/18979>



review the Law on the Protection from Unreliable Information and ensure effective safeguards and judicial overview of all decisions on blocking media resources; and to review the national legal and institutional framework that may unduly restrict media freedom, including the Law on the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation of the Kyrgyz Republic and the draft Law “On the Mass Media”, to ensure their compliance with the provisions of article 19 of the Covenant and the HRC’s General Comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression”.

Throughout 2021–2022, civil society actors reported on both shrinking civic space and channels of communication with the authorities, in particular during law-making procedures. Several pieces of legislation imposing restrictions on NGOs were initiated in 2022, following the amendments to the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations adopted by Parliament in June 2021, requesting additional reporting requirements for NGOs<sup>43</sup>. A new draft Law on NGOs tabled by the Presidential Administration and a draft Law initiated by a Member of Parliament from the Ata Jurt Party “On Foreign Representatives” were both deemed by the OSCE/ODIHR, which was requested by the Ombudsperson’s Office to produce a preliminary Legal Opinion, to be contradictory to the constitutional and international human rights standards on freedom of association. Both drafts contain discriminatory and legally vague provisions that may create conditions for arbitrary restrictions and tightening state regulation and interference into the work of NGOs by vesting state authorities with vast discretionary powers to carry out supervision and control over NGOs’ activities, expenditures and funding, including foreign NGOs. The draft laws also suggest legally vague and burdensome registration procedures and arbitrary rules on forced liquidation of NGOs.

At the end of December 2022, the Presidential Administration agreed to form a working group with civil society’s participation to review its draft law. The Member of Parliament withdrew her draft. Should the draft law be adopted without major changes, there will be negative repercussions on civic space and NGO activities in the country, including to deliver on development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In November 2022, after review of the third national periodic report on the ICCPR implementation, the UN Human Rights Committee recommended that the Government should “revise the provisions of the Law on Non-Profit Organizations to bring it into full compliance with the provisions of articles 19, 22 and 25 of the Covenant.” The Committee stated that the country “should ensure that any legislation governing public associations and NGOs does not lead in practice to undue control over or interference in the activities of NGOs.” After the third UPR review in 2020, the Government supported the recommendation to refrain from adoption of the Law “On Foreign Agents”.

During 23-27 October 2022, 27 activists, human rights defenders, bloggers, and politicians were detained in Bishkek and placed under arrest for 48 hours. They had publicly disagreed with the draft border agreement with Uzbekistan that foresaw the transfer of a water reservoir, Kempir-Abad, to Uzbekistan as part of a border demarcation deal (see above).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See: <http://kenesh.kg/ru/article/show/8189/2021-zhildin-17-iyunundagi-4659-vi-kirgiz-respublikasinin-ayrim-miyzam-aktilarina-kommertsialik-emes-uyumdar-zhonundo-yuridikalik-zhaktardi-filialdardi-okulchuluktordu-mamlekettik-kattoo-zhonundo-kirgiz-respublikasinin-miyzamarina-ozgortuulordu-kirgizuu-tuuraluu-kirgiz-respublikasinin-miyzamin-kabil-aluu-zhonundo>

<sup>44</sup> The Kempir-Aabad reservoir was built during Soviet times between 1969 – 1983 at the expense of Uzbekistan to irrigate the cotton fields of this country. About 2 million hectares of fields in Uzbekistan are irrigated with water from this reservoir, and residents of nearby settlements receive drinking water. The dam of the reservoir reaches a height of 105 meters and passes right along the line of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. There are two Uzbek hydroelectric power plants with a capacity of 190 megawatts in the Kyrgyz part of the dam. One of them was put into operation in 1985, and the second - in 2010.

As per Kyrgyz authorities, the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border deal envisages that 19,699 hectares of land (considered disputed before) in different border settlements of Osh and Jalalabad remain with Kyrgyzstan, and the Kempir-Abad passes to Uzbekistan together with 4,485 hectares of land underneath. According to the agreement, the water resources of the Kempirabad reservoir will be managed by a joint commission of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, consisting of 24 people - 12 from each side. From the Kyrgyz side, it will be headed by the Director of the Water Resources Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic, and from Uzbekistan, the Minister of Water Resources will be in charge. Under the terms of the agreement, the Uzbek side will provide reservoir security and maintenance, and the volume of water discharged will be agreed with Kyrgyzstan. In addition, Uzbekistan commits not to exceed the water level above the 900th horizontal. This does not apply to such emergencies as flooding, natural disasters and force majeure events. In the case of natural disasters, the water level in the reservoir can exceed the 900th horizontal. Representatives of the above-mentioned commission from Kyrgyzstan will be allowed into the facility by the Uzbek side after they present their passports. (<https://rus.azattyk.org/a/32111875.html>)

Most of those detained were part of an informal group “Committee to protect Kempir Abad” set up on 22 October. According to a statement by the Ombudsperson’s Institute, before their arrests, authorities conducted warrantless searches of the activists’ houses and seized personal property after forcing entry into their homes and attempting to prevent video documentation of the arrests. All of the detainees were charged with preparation for, and organization of, mass unrest with the use of violence – a crime that entails imprisonment from seven to 10 years. At the time of writing, 25 remained in pre-trial detention.

## 2.2 Peace and conflict analysis

Although largely peaceful, the Kyrgyz Republic has witnessed major upheavals and conflicts over the last 30 years. These have included violent change of power in 2005, 2010 and 2020, incursion of terrorist fighters in 1999, and inter-ethnic conflicts in 1990 and 2010, in which some 470 people died.<sup>45</sup>

The situation at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border has been deteriorating steadily since 2019 with the decades-long, stand-alone regular clashes between civilians mostly over natural resources having turned into outright military confrontation between the two countries including with the use of heavy weapons, causing casualties including deaths, destruction of public and private property and temporary internal displacements at large scale.

Two major escalations of armed violence have occurred at the border with Tajikistan in the last less than two years, namely one from 29 April to 1 May 2021 and a second from 14–17 September 2022, which resulted in 63 casualties and 205 injured, as well as hundreds of thousands of people being internally displaced and hundreds of houses and dozens of social facilities being destroyed on the Kyrgyz side. Additionally, in between these two major escalations, over a dozen skirmishes occurred, resulting in one killed and 24 injured among the civilian population and the military. Although a ceasefire agreement signed by the security services of the two countries on 19 September 2022 has so far held, the situation on the border remains precarious with the two countries maintaining troops there. Kyrgyzstan’s Parliamentary Committee on International Affairs approved in the first reading a draft law that allows “in special cases” to disseminate weapons to residents of the border communities. In the meantime, the population in the border areas remains highly alert and anxious of a repetition of these outbreaks of violence which resulted in the complete destruction of livelihoods of thousands, expressing just one wish for the future: Peace. Confidence in good-neighborly relations has eroded substantially not only among those living in the affected areas, but also in society writ-large. Yet, efforts have been underway at political and diplomatic levels to resolve the border dispute. Country delegations on border delimitation met four times since the latest deadly escalation both on Kyrgyz and Tajik territory and agreed to declare neutral a contested 275-meter-long stretch along a strategic road connecting Kyrgyz Leilek and Batken districts and the Tajik Khojai Alo-Vorukh villages; and 2) delimited 17 kilometers of an unspecified section of the border adding to the 90 kilometers reported during 2022.

The two aforementioned escalations on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border have gone beyond disputes over natural resources and entered a political and military dimension, with a risk for escalation to an inter-state armed conflict. Furthermore, the rhetoric of enmity risks to take root in society and in traditional and social media, potentially complicating prospects for peaceful conflict resolution. The ripple effect of this conflict is spreading widely in society, exacerbating pre-existing conflict drivers, potentially undermining the sustainability of UN assistance efforts in the recent past. There are clear indications that the conflict is putting additional strain on social cohesion within Kyrgyzstan. This is aggravated by the closure of the border from the Kyrgyz side which hampers cross-border contacts of the populations.

<sup>45</sup> Report of the independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.

Public protests have been a common feature, with no less than 312 protest rallies in Bishkek in 2022, despite the tendency of the authorities to restrict the right for freedom of assemblies through bans and detentions. Yet, with the introduction of a ban on peaceful assemblies in Bishkek in March 2022, an important avenue for individuals to voice their opinions and to air their grievances has been curbed.<sup>46</sup>

## Drivers

While the adverse effects of COVID-19 followed by those resulting from the ongoing war in Ukraine were especially felt in economic and social terms, the drivers of conflicts in the Kyrgyz Republic remain largely similar to what has been observed previously, to now include the simmering impacts of the border conflict with Tajikistan. Other contributing drivers include the following:

**Polarization.** Restrictions of civic space have reinforced the distrust among parts of the society towards the Government which, on the other hand, distrusts civil society for its growing criticism. Furthermore, the gap between “conservative” and “liberal” groups, as well as the gap between the legal framework and the practices followed by people is widening within the country. Similarly, in a context of the growing role of traditional, nationalistic values, multiple cleavages appear that divide people around the role of the State, the role of ethnicity and religion in the state, political affiliations, regional and clan loyalties, and other factors. The increasing tension between followers of different schools of thought of Islam is also noted. Conservative and nationalist groups accuse the liberal civil society of venality and of acting against the interests of the country. Growing conservative groups pose risks, among others, to the advancement of women rights, and clashes over values are likely to continue. The situation is also expected to exacerbate harmful gender stereotypes and expand the prism around conservative gender norms that hinder gender equality, reflecting the polarization over national values based on conservative and masculine images of the society.

**Ethnic and language discrimination.** Ethnic minorities make up 26.5 percent of the population, with nearly 15 percent of Uzbeks living in the southern part of the country. The narrative around ethnic inclusion, ensuring their economic, cultural and civic rights and opportunities are areas of concern. Human rights observers and minorities argue that the State does not provide opportunities for equal participation in senior public employment whilst State officials emphasize that the civil service is open to all people who meet the official criteria for public service. Human rights defenders also criticize the Government for not implementing the recommendations of the International Commission of Inquiry on the 2010 events. They further argue that State responses to those events have been skewed against minority ethnic groups as if they were solely to blame for those events. It is hoped that the introduction of Kyrgyz Zharany - the concept of civic citizenship and civic identity – will provide a framework for addressing grievances about real or perceived exclusion and injustices.

The latest escalation on the border with Tajikistan sparked hate speech in social media, especially targeting ethnic Tajiks indicating a high risk of vulnerability of the social cohesion in the face of inter-State tensions in the region. Social media posts in the wake of the conflict demanded removal of Ravshan Sabirov, an ethnic Tajik from his post of Director of National Investment Agency. Ethnic Tajik residents of the Uch Korgon village (in Batken Province, Kyrgyzstan) expressed concerns for their safety and security triggered by social media calls to evicting them and to replace them with ethnic Kyrgyz.

**Religion and religious policies.** While the Constitution and State policy are clear that the Kyrgyz Republic is a secular state, comments by some leading state officials promote a return to Islamic values, creating confusion over

<sup>46</sup> <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/kyrgyzstan-acled-conflict-data>

the boundaries between the secular state and religion. The efforts by Islamic religious leaders during the discussion on the draft Constitution to take out the secular principles from the Constitution only served to deepen the confusion. While the National Commission on Religious Affairs serves to regulate the conduct and practice of religious institutions, the lack of clarity on many issues, together with the lack of broad public discussions with all interested stakeholders, have contributed to disquiet in some sections of society about emerging state attitudes toward religion and the role of religion in governance. Such issues include the debate around headscarves for girls in schools, the growing number of religious schools that do not follow the state-approved curriculum; the official tolerance for the conflation of civil rights of groups such as women with western values, police tolerance of violent actions against peaceful events promoting gender equality and countering GBV, and a general rise in traditionalist views and sentiments and active promotion of these views by state media. All this contributes to the polarization and growing values division in the country. Experts also note competition between various religious groups and affiliations.

**Violent extremism.** With exception of the 1999 Batken events<sup>47</sup> and three terrorist acts in 2010, 2015 and 2016,<sup>48</sup> the country has not witnessed any active terrorist attacks, although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported on multiple foiled attacks in recent years.<sup>49</sup> A suicide attack on the Embassy of China did occur in August 2022, which led to the death of one person and three wounded. There were some 863 Kyrgyz citizens (188 were women) who joined ISIS in 2013-2018, but this group has been effectively diminished and their organized return to destabilize the situation is unlikely.<sup>50</sup> The repatriation and reintegration of families of foreign terrorist fighters is an additional challenge for the Government. The first cohort of children was successfully repatriated in March 2021 and since then reintegrated into families. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement, on 16 March 2021, 79 child nationals of the Kyrgyz Republic were repatriated from Iraq in the framework of the Meerim (Mercy) humanitarian operation.<sup>51</sup> The repatriation of women is fraught with risks and challenges, which are not only due to the State's limited possibilities in repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of this category of individuals, but also the roles played by some women in terror groups. Despite the Government's efforts, the risk of violent extremism remains at least moderately high due to a number of economic and social issues as well as recent developments in Afghanistan.

**Disputes over natural resources in border areas.** There were 177 border incidents between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan between 2015 and 2019.<sup>52</sup> In 2020 and 2021 the overall number decreased relatively (due in part to COVID-19); however, the intensity and duration of conflicts has been exacerbated since 2019. As noted earlier, two severe military border clashes occurred with Tajikistan on 29 April – 1 May of 2021 and in 14–17 September 2022. In both incidences, the parties used heavy weaponry, including artillery, tanks and airpower, that resulted in 99 people dead, 395 wounded,<sup>53</sup> and tens of thousands temporarily displaced on the Kyrgyz side. Conflicts around natural resources (land, water, pastures) have multiple root causes including incomplete demarcation of national boundaries, demographic imbalances, interconnectedness of infrastructure (which was built mainly in Soviet times without regard to borders), inadequate water management and distribution, patchwork settlements, stricter enforcement of border regimes, climate change and others. Poverty further exacerbates conditions that prompt tensions. The Kyrgyz Government has made efforts to finalize border delimitation issues, but the process has proven to be protracted. Also, women representation continues to be mostly absent in the peace-building processes, although the Government recognizes that women participation is vital in peace-building and has ratified several international principles such as

<sup>47</sup> Incursion of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan fighters, who wanted to pass through Kyrgyzstan to attack Uzbekistan. [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5\\_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%8B%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%91%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%8B%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F)

<sup>48</sup> See: <https://knews.kg/2017/08/31/terakty-v-bishkeke-skolko-popytok-destabilizirovat-situatsiyu-predprinyato-terroristami-v-poslednie-gody/>

<sup>49</sup> 17 incidences in 2016 (<http://kabar.kg/news/17-teraktov-predotvratili-v-kyrgyzstane-v-2016-godu/>), 2 in 2020. See: (<https://svodka.akipress.org/news:1670622?from=svodka&place=newstopic>)

<sup>50</sup> See: [https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/UN%20PBF\\_UNW\\_ECA\\_KYRG%20chapter%20FINAL%20%281%29.pdf](https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/UN%20PBF_UNW_ECA_KYRG%20chapter%20FINAL%20%281%29.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> See: <https://prevention.kg/?p=9956>

<sup>52</sup> TRACTION - Database of incidents development within the Cross-border cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development project.

<sup>53</sup> 2022 Emergency Response Plan Kyrgyzstan, 2022, page 5 and the <https://kloop.kg/blog/2021/04/29/konflikt-na-granitse-36-kyrgyzstantsev-pogibli-189-postradali/> with reference to the data of Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325.<sup>54</sup> In all likelihood, conflicts on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border will continue to occur on a larger scale in the absence of viable mechanism for preventing a relapse, exacerbated by the countries' continued militarization. As the rift between the two societies is visibly widening, prospects for peaceful conflict resolution become more difficult.

Tensions on the border with Uzbekistan have been significantly lower. About 85 per cent of the total 1,378 kilometers of the border were agreed by the President Atambayev and President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan in 2017. On 29 November 2022, the Government announced an agreement with Uzbekistan on 302 more kilometers of borders including on the most disputed sections after it was ratified by the Parliaments of the two countries and signed by the two Presidents.<sup>55</sup> It is said that only one section remains disputed.<sup>56</sup> Full details of the border agreement have not been shared with the public. This border deal sparked domestic tensions as critics argued that Kyrgyz "ancestral" lands were given away, and that the lands exchanged for the reservoir are in Uzbekistan's favor. As discussed above, most notably the transfer of the Kempir-Abad reservoir prompted protest rallies in the nearby settlements and in Bishkek. Law enforcements detained 27 civic activists and politicians who were vocal opponents of the border deal.<sup>57</sup>

***Protest activities of various groups due to perceived injustices and economic policies of the State.*** More episodic conflicts have occurred in recent years due to a range of different issues. These include electoral irregularities, corruption, tariff increases, disputes over land and natural resources, economic impoverishment, and grievances over judicial decisions. In fact, there are hundreds of protest actions in the Kyrgyz Republic every year, including 269 protests in 2020, and more than 120 in January-May 2021. Some of them, like those against the Parliamentary elections in October 2020, led to the change of the Government and subsequent introduction of a new constitution. Protest activities against foreign companies, especially in extractive industries as well as against Chinese investments, are also an important feature of grievances in the country. Mines are especially targeted during these periods of protest. While peaceful protests are a feature of democracy, in the Kyrgyz context, they are often reactions to perceived inability or unwillingness of State institutions to respond. The risk includes the increasing perception that it is only through protests that State institutions are forced to respond to public grievances, and therefore potentially encouraging the resort to extra-legal means in resolving public grievances.

## 2.3 Economic context

### Overview

Since the 2021 CCA was written, the Kyrgyz economy has undergone significant changes. While the economy in 2021 was still dealing with the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the economy in 2022 was impacted by the war in Ukraine. Despite initial concerns, the Kyrgyz economy has so far proven more resilient than initially projected to the spillovers of the war in Ukraine. Real GDP grew by 7.7 per cent during January-July 2022, year-on-year, supported by gold production, industry, agriculture, construction and services, as well as the unexpected migration of capital and labor from Russia. Consumption was supported by remittances and investment spurred by high public outlays, while net exports contributed negatively to growth. At the same time, inflation increased to 15.4 percent in October 2022 (y/y), mainly due to high global food and fuel prices, but core inflation also rose to double digits.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> UN Women (2021). Report on United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1325 and its Implementation in Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>55</sup> [https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883\\_podpisan\\_zakon\\_o\\_ratifikacii\\_dogovora\\_meghdu\\_kirgizstanom\\_i\\_uzbekistanom\\_ob\\_otdelnih\\_uchastkah\\_kirgizsko\\_uzbekskoy\\_gosudarstvennoy\\_granici\\_podpisanogo\\_3\\_noyabrya\\_2022\\_goda\\_v\\_gorode\\_bishkek](https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883_podpisan_zakon_o_ratifikacii_dogovora_meghdu_kirgizstanom_i_uzbekistanom_ob_otdelnih_uchastkah_kirgizsko_uzbekskoy_gosudarstvennoy_granici_podpisanogo_3_noyabrya_2022_goda_v_gorode_bishkek)  
<https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/5745>

<sup>56</sup> Cheshme (Cheshma) section on the border Kadamzhay district of Kyrgyzstan and Sokh district of Uzbekistan. The notable conflict with dozens of severely wounded people took place in Sokh on 31 May 2020 (Uzbek enclave in Kyrgyzstan, inhabited mainly by Tajiks)

<sup>57</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/471565\\_shavkat\\_mirziyev\\_podpisan\\_zakon\\_o\\_ratifikacii\\_dogovora\\_po\\_gosgranicam\\_s\\_kyrgyzstanom.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/471565_shavkat_mirziyev_podpisan_zakon_o_ratifikacii_dogovora_po_gosgranicam_s_kyrgyzstanom.html)

<sup>58</sup> Economic data for this section of the report is taken primarily for the IMF's Article IV Consultations held with the Government in November 2022 (<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2022/12/02/kyrgyz-republic-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2022-article-iv-consultation-mission>) and the World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook published in October 2022. See: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099545510122240921/pdf/IDU0143100ab0cdf043e909f6a0c02ca163cbab.pdf>

In the first nine months of 2022, imports increased by nearly 80 percent, partly because of higher oil prices, but also due to an increase in transit trade while gold exports were negligible as most of the domestic gold production was purchased by the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic. Net inflows of money transfers from abroad declined by 12.8 percent through September, and international reserves fell to below four months of prospective imports. Domestic demand was supported by remittance inflows (7.5 percent growth in USD terms) from Russia, aided by a strong Russian ruble. The budget ran a surplus of 1.4 percent of GDP, slightly better than in 2021. Total revenues increased to 45.9 percent of GDP from 38.6 percent a year ago, driven by higher tax receipts. At the same time, spending increased to 44.5 percent of GDP from 37.2 percent in 2021 driven mainly by capital outlays. The surplus, along with the appreciation of the Som, helped reduce public debt to below 50 percent of GDP in July 2022, although the level of public debt was revised upward by Q4 2022.

## Key economic indicators

The table below shows some of the key economic indicators for the period 2019–2022 as well as forecasts for 2023 and 2024. These World Bank data vary slightly from recent IMF data, but imply some of the same conclusions about the state of the Kyrgyz economy. Of note are the negative current account balance and the low levels of net foreign direct investment during the timeframe presented. In addition, the fiscal balance remains negative for the same time period, while inflation comes down from a high of some 15 percent in 2022 to eight percent in 2023 and six percent in 2024. Debt as a percentage of GDP remains at over 50 percent. The implications of some of these trends are discussed in more detail below.

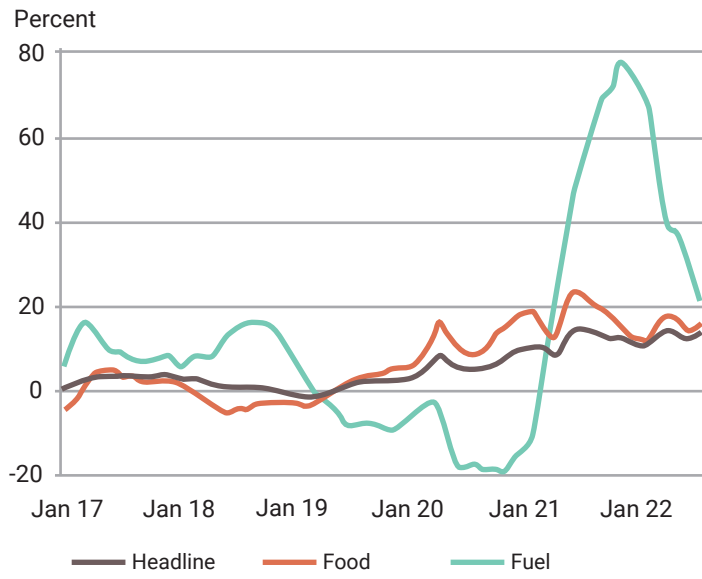
**Table 1. Key economic indicators, 2019-2024**

	2019	2020	2021	2022e	2023f	2024f
Real GDP growth (at constant market prices)	4.6	-8.4	3.6	4.0	4.0	4.5
<i>Private consumption</i>	0.8	-8.3	13.5	3.6	4.0	4.3
<i>Government consumption</i>	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.6
<i>Gross fixed capital investment</i>	7.1	-16.2	-3.6	14.7	14.0	11.3
<i>Exports – goods and services</i>	16.2	-27.3	24.5	12.1	12.0	12.5
<i>Imports – goods and services</i>	6.1	-28.0	39.1	14.0	14.3	12.1
Real GDP growth (at constant factor prices)	3.6	-8.4	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.5
<i>Agriculture</i>	2.5	0.9	-5.0	4.4	2.0	2.5
<i>Industry</i>	6.6	-7.0	7.2	10.0	8.7	8.0
<i>Services</i>	3.2	-16.5	10.4	0.7	3.5	4.4
Inflation (Consumer Price Index)	1.1	6.3	11.9	15.2	8.0	6.0
Current account balance (% GDP)	-12.1	4.8	-8.7	-12.7	-11.8	-10.2
Net foreign direct investment (% GDP)	3.8	-7.5	7.0	1.9	2.7	2.6
Fiscal balance (% GDP)	0.5	-4.2	0.3	-0.3	-3.0	-2.8
Debt (% GDP)	51.6	67.7	60.3	55.2	52.3	50.9

Source: World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook, October 2022

With respect to inflation, the following figure shows the trend in the inflation rate from January 2017 through late 2022, disaggregated by component – headline (total inflation from the CPI), and fuel and fuel inflation. As the graphic demonstrates, fuel inflation was the most volatile component of inflation beginning in 2021 and continuing into 2022.

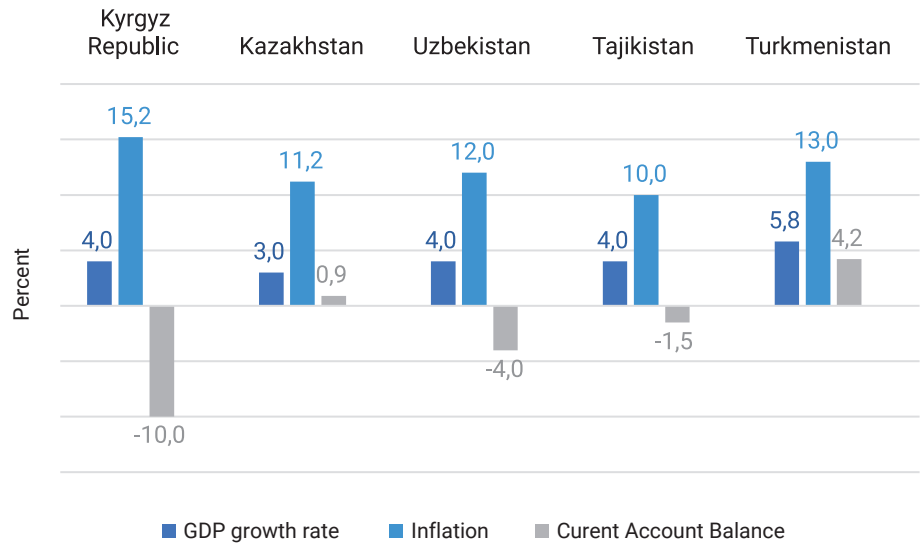
**Figure 1. Headline, food and fuel inflation**



Source: World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook, October 2022

Finally, for purposes of comparison, the figure below shows three key economic indicators in 2022 for the Kyrgyz Republic with four of its neighboring countries: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This comparison by the Asian Development Bank suggests that all five countries faced notable inflationary pressures and similar growth rates that weathered the impact of the Ukraine crisis, but the Kyrgyz Republic had a much higher negative current account balance than the other comparator countries. This has important downstream implication for the Government, if not remedied.

**Figure 2. Comparison of key economic indicators in 2022 for the Kyrgyz Republic and neighboring countries**



Source: Asian Development Bank, found at: <https://www.adb.org/countries/kyrgyz-republic/economy>

## Disaggregating economic performance

As noted above, growth accelerated steadily over the first half of 2022, in part thanks to a rigorous rebound from the economic contraction caused by COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>59</sup> The industrial output showed a solid increase of 11.4 percent in the first six months of 2022 according to the January-May 2022 data release.<sup>60</sup> Among the industrial sectors, a stable increase has been registered in the mining sector where the growth is 29.7 percent. The food processing and oil production sectors also experienced a solid recovery expanding by 10.5 percent and 16.8 percent respectively. Given the strong dependence of the industrial sector on natural resource processing activities, the sector's contribution to economic growth has been fluctuating. Yet, most of the industrial growth in recent years can be explained by growth in natural resource processing activities.

Although the manufacturing value added (MVA) as the proportion of GDP remains in line with the figures of the other countries of the region (15.3 per cent in 2021), the sector is underperforming in terms of real manufacturing value added (MVA) per capita in comparison with other countries, notably Kazakhstan and other lower-middle income countries.<sup>61</sup> This gap can be explained by the sector's low productivity, characterized by mostly low-technology firms, low levels of innovation, and the use of outdated and inefficient production technologies, as well as limited access to domestic and external funding sources. The managerial and technological practices and skills are also often insufficient.

## Risks to the economy in the near term

**Ongoing impact of the war in Ukraine.** While the Kyrgyz Republic largely avoided many of the expected repercussions of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the outlook for the near term is highly uncertain. Even if food and energy prices moderate in 2023, the possible slowdown in the Russian economy may see a decline in remittance inflows and a reverse migration of Kyrgyz workers returning from Russia. Subsequently, such a return of Kyrgyz workers will place added burdens on already strained social services and, in all likelihood, increase poverty levels as families lose income and un- or under-employment rises. This issue is discussed in later sections of the report.

**Fiscal deficits.** The Government's deficit, including lending to energy sector, was estimated to widen to 5.2 percent of GDP in 2022 from 0.8 percent in 2021 and to remain slightly under 5 percent of GDP in the medium term. The Government's tax administration efforts substantially improved revenue collection in 2022, but expenditures increased much more due to the significant increase during the year in public wages, pensions and public investment. From 2023 onwards the full year impact of the wage and pension increases will keep the deficit elevated despite the planned reduction in domestically financed investment spending. The latter could undermine growth in view of the large infrastructure investment needs, which will therefore depend significantly on the need for external (concessional) financing.

**Public finance management.** As highlighted in the November 2022 IMF Article IV consultations, improved public finance management will be a critical lynchpin in moving toward more sustainable and inclusive economic growth and minimizing the impact of the Ukraine crisis. The IMF pointed out the importance of rationalizing the public sector employment and compensation framework as well as gradually raising electricity tariffs and reforming the energy sector in order to reduce subsidies and generate fiscal savings, which in turn should be used for targeted

<sup>59</sup> SDG9 monitoring, <https://stat.unido.org/SDG/KGZ>

<sup>60</sup> MoEC (2022), Results of socio-economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic for January-May 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit (2022). Kyrgyz economy shows strong growth so far in 2022, <https://viewpoint.eiu.com/analysis/article/1412153124/>

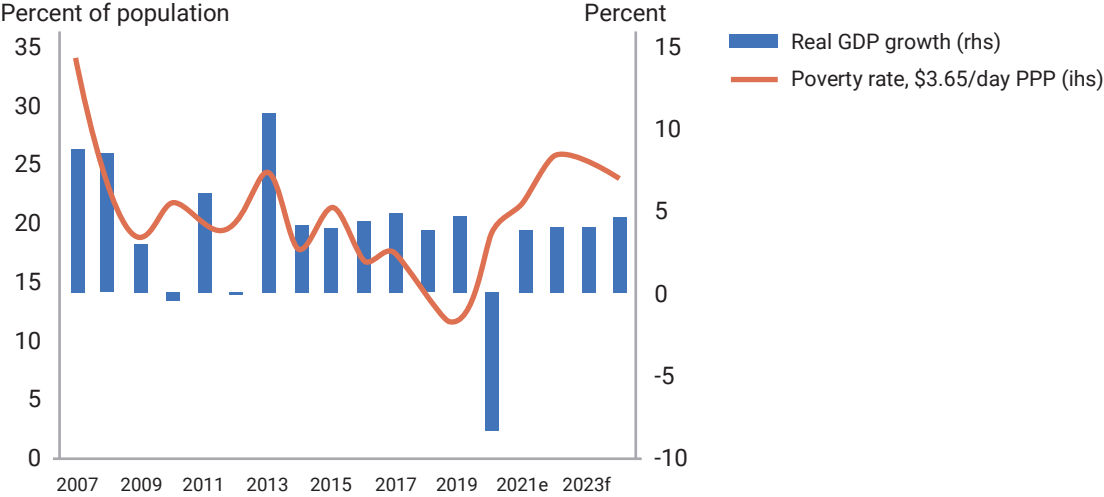


social assistance to the most vulnerable. These measures should be supplemented with reforms to improve budget preparation and execution, including wage bill management, transparency, and limit the use of extra-budgetary funds. These measures of direct concern to the UN Country Team and ensuring that the intended outcomes of the UNSDCF can be effectively met.

**Poverty and economic performance**

One of the major concerns of the Government, the UN, as well as other development partners is the rising poverty rates that deteriorated over the past two years. The poor and those left behind are discussed in greater detail in later sections of this report, but it is useful to briefly view the country’s poverty from a wider economic perspective. The graphic below tracks real GDP growth rates against the poverty rate. As the graphic shows, poverty rates were declining at a substantial rate until 2018-2019 when the rate showed a sharp upward trend. With the exception of negative economic growth in 2020–21 during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic growth was positive at the same time the poverty rate was rising. One example of a factor contributing to the rising poverty rate has been food price inflation. Food price inflation increased by 16.2 percent for main staples in 2022,<sup>62</sup> including wheat and flour, as compared to the same period of the previous year. The food price inflation rate restricts access to food for the poorest quintile of the population, who spend an estimated 70 percent of their income on food, and it affects the affordability of a nutritious diet, as 44 percent of households reported reducing their food spending as a coping mechanism.<sup>63</sup> This situation has also resulted in costly asset depletion, which renders households more fragile to future economic and natural shocks.

**Figure 3. GDP growth and poverty, 2007-2023**



A second indicator on poverty from a wider economic perspective is reflected in GDP growth per capita. The figure below suggests, with the exception of 2020, GDP per capita has continued to grow, however modestly year over year, at the same time that the poverty rate has moved upward, as shown in the previous graphic. This contradiction sheds light on the nature of income inequality in the country and the intransigence of reducing poverty among large segments of the Kyrgyz population through current support programmes and services.

<sup>62</sup> As of August, 2022, NSC (2022), Consumer Prices Indices for good and services in the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>63</sup> NSC (2020). On the results of the sample survey “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on households”.

**Figure 4. GDP per capita (current prices US dollars)**  
*[figures in red are forecasts]*



Source: IMF Datamapper <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/KGZ>

### Investment and business climate

Despite competitive advantages in the costs of labor and utilities, taxation, and membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and World Trade Organization (WTO), the Kyrgyz Republic’s recent history of political turbulence and border conflicts have further exacerbated the trend of significant capital flight, slow business growth, and high proportion of the economy that remains in the informal sector. The business environment has been deteriorating due to poor institutional frameworks for resolving insolvency and enforcing contracts, complex tax compliance requirements, limited minority investor protection, reports of corruption, degraded infrastructure and low productivity combined with rapid wage growth, despite some progress in improving access to finance. The designation of free economic zones to attract investment in certain areas has obtained mixed results and reactions from the public. After the downturn of FDI in 2020 by 50 percent because of high economic and political uncertainty, its level was almost restored in 2021.<sup>64</sup>

According to the National Statistical Committee, the lowest growth rates in 2021 and first half of 2022 were reported in fixed capital investment. The investment rates are expected to remain at a low level, partially in view of the Kyrgyz Government’s nationalization of the Kumtor gold mine that continues to raise concerns about operational risks for foreign businesses and deter foreign investment. In the first half of 2022, foreign direct investment inflows amounted to only USD 628 million with more than 60 percent directed to manufacturing, 11 percent to the financial sector, 10 percent to the mining sector, and 8 percent to the automotive industry.<sup>65</sup>

### SDG Financing Needs and Priorities

The IMF provided provisional estimates of the additional spending required to achieve the SDGs in five sectors over the period 2019–30<sup>66</sup>. Three infrastructure sectors—roads, water, and electricity require additional expenditure amounting to 63 percent of 2018 GDP (nearly two thirds of which was accounted for by investment in roads), while the health and education sectors require additional expenditures of 18 and 25 percent of 2018 GDP, respectively. Unless domestic

<sup>64</sup> NSC, Foreign direct investment. Found at: <http://www.stat.kg/en/opendata/category/1763/>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> IMF 2019

public and private and international public and private resources are successfully mobilized to finance the SDGs, there is a great risk that despite efforts to integrate SDGs into public policy and spending, many of the SDGs may not be achieved due to under-investment. On the back of the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing war in Ukraine, the need to address gaps and overcome blind spots has become increasingly apparent.

In 2020 UNDP’s Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) highlighted that the alignment of the SDGs with national strategic development planning was 82 percent. Although the alignment is high, the assessment identified implementation challenges in all areas of SDG adaptation and implementation, including proper integration (not declarative) of SDGs into development programs at all levels- national, sectoral and regional, making budgeting and monitoring aligned with SDGs, data issues and limited financial resources and weak capacity to work on SDG integration at full scale.

In 2022 the UN and President’s Administration launched the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) as the primary building block for establishing the Kyrgyz Republic Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). The DFA seeks to identify and address structural challenges to resource mobilization affecting the Government of Kyrgyzstan by undertaking an assessment of existing, emerging and future innovative sustainable financing practices. As a result, this assessment will identify challenges to existing policy, institutional, capacity and financing arrangements, as well as new financing instruments and modalities to close the ‘Agenda 2030’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) financing gap. The outcomes of DFA will be reflected in the next Common Country Analysis update in 2023.

## 2.4 Social context

The social context in the Kyrgyz Republic can be analyzed from a number of different perspectives. Broadly speaking, the country is faced with high concentrations of poverty and social assistance systems that do not meet the needs of the country’s population. While Chapter 5 on leaving no one behind will go into more detail on different vulnerable groups of concern, the focus in this section turns to seven issues which define vulnerabilities<sup>67</sup>

### Box 1. Social indicators at a glance

Human Development Index ranking (2021-22)	121 <sup>st</sup> of 191
Human Development Index value (2020)	0.692
Life expectancy – female (2021)	74.4
Life expectancy – male (2021)	65.8
Expected years of schooling - female (2021)	13.4
Expected years of school – male (2021)	13.0
National poverty rate (2021)	33.3%
Working poor at PPP\$ 3.20/day - percent of working population	42.2%
National multidimensional poverty rate (2020)	20.5%
Youth aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training (NEET)	USD 4,750
Gross National Income per capita (2017 constant PPP\$)	29.0%
Gini coefficient index (2020)	0.6
Human Capital Index (2020)	

Source: UNDP, World Bank

<sup>67</sup> In September 2020, during the third cycle of the UPR, Kyrgyzstan supported, among others, the following recommendations “to strengthen further the programmes for social protection for all the people of Kyrgyzstan, especially vulnerable groups” and “to continue all socioeconomic measures for ensuring access to health care, education and affordable housing and reducing poverty, particularly in rural areas”.

## The poor, near poor, and food insecurity

The country has a high poverty rate and high concentration of the population just above the poverty line.<sup>68</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two decades of development gains were severely diminished in just two years. Poverty skyrocketed from 20.1 percent in 2019 to 33.3 percent in 2021, with an additional 10 percent being at risk of poverty. This means that almost 3 million people were living under or close to the poverty line. Extreme poverty reached 6 percent in 2021 from 0.5 percent in 2019. Without remittances, poverty would have reached 42.8 percent and extreme poverty 17.1 percent in 2021.

Poverty disproportionately affects children. The poverty rate among children aged 0–17 increased from 31.8 percent to a staggering 40.5 percent.<sup>69</sup> In December 2022, WFP’s vulnerability assessment estimated that 15 percent of households were food insecure.<sup>70</sup> Around a fifth of all households (18 percent) were not consuming an adequate diet and an additional 8 percent had an acceptable diet but were using severe coping strategies. Previously in 2020, it was estimated that 45 percent of the population consumed less than 2,100 kcal per day (NSC), implying that the poor and those concentrated just above the poverty line do not meet their daily adequate energy consumption requirements.<sup>71</sup> A considerable share of the population falls into the ‘vulnerable’ category as, in 2021, the minimum subsistence level was 1.6 times as high as the threshold of the national poverty line, reaching USD 2.50 leads to a reduction in purchasing power, hindering access to nutritious food and improved livelihoods.

The geographic composition of poverty has also been changing in recent years. While higher poverty rates are largely found in rural areas, there have been growing numbers of urban poor, due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in lost jobs in cities and having no agricultural assets to rely on – leading to a “clusterisation” of poor populations. Migrants are often overrepresented in the informal sector or have unstable employment, leaving them without social protections, including health, of particular importance during the pandemic, or access to basic social services. Migrant workers, particularly low-skilled, women and older workers, can face more acute inequality. Post-COVID-19 trends reveal that returned migrants tend to go to urban areas where there are more opportunities for jobs, networks and services, increasing the rural-urban migration.

## Social protection

The share of the population covered by at least one social protection cash benefit (effective coverage) is 41.7 percent compared to 47 percent of the world’s population, while 73.6 percent of the population is covered by social protection healthcare programmes.<sup>72</sup> System wide, social protection benefits programmes are not adequate to ensure income security and decent living conditions as defined by national standards. This is due to the great disparity between the national poverty line and the minimum subsistence level (MSL), consisting of both food and non-food items and gaps in programme design, particularly for persons of working age. While the average size of pensions is 124 percent of the MSL or only USD 3 per month in case of unemployment benefits, the number of pensioners who receive pensions below the MSL is 36 percent.<sup>73</sup> In fact, those receiving social benefits may receive only 15-30 percent of the MSL. In order to align social benefits to the minimum subsistence level, in the past two years the Government made three indexations of the size of benefits. As a result, the average size of monthly social benefits is about 80 percent of the MSL. In 2022, the size of *ui-buloogo komo* (UBK) was also increased from KGS 800 to 1200 per child per month covering 21 percent

<sup>68</sup> WFP (2021), Poverty analysis based on the Kyrgyz Integrated Household Survey (KIHS 2019), Bishkek

<sup>69</sup> See: <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/v-2020-godu-kazhdyj-chetvertyj-zitel-kyrgyzstana-prozhival-v-usloviyah-bednosti/>

<sup>70</sup> WFP Food Security Monitoring Update, available here: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000143249/download/>

<sup>71</sup> WFP (2021). Food Security Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic

<sup>72</sup> ILO, 2021 World Social Protection Database <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=13>

<sup>73</sup> Social fund of the Kyrgyz Republic (2021). data

of MSL. Also starting from October 2022, the Social Fund planned to increase the base component of pensions, so that the minimum pension will reach 52 percent of MSL, and the average pension will be 123 percent of MSL. Citizens eligible for social protection benefits can apply by the place of actual residence and not the place of registration, which makes it more accessible for internal migrants. Toward this end, the inter-ministerial data exchange was strengthened.

Of equal concern, the national social protection system does not cover all categories of the vulnerable: Among the urban poor and vulnerable (bottom 40 percent), only 2.3 percent receive the monthly child benefit for low-income families (UBK).<sup>74</sup> More than half of all poor and vulnerable urban households do not receive any type of social transfers.<sup>75</sup> This group is not currently visible to the Government targeting system. Despite growing unemployment and poverty, there are very limited active labour market programmes in the country, representing only 0.9 percent of total Government spending, with a caseload of approximately 40,000 people. There are still some legal barriers for the self-employed to participate in active labour market programmes, even if the current income is below the poverty line. However, Government is taking steps to expand the portfolio for Active Labour Market Programmes. To encourage poor families to take active steps to overcome their difficult life situations, and to assist them in activating their labour potential, as well as to create additional jobs or conditions for self-employment for poor families, the Government, supported by WFP, piloted the Social Contract, a new poverty graduation programme was launched in two districts in 2021–2022, and extended throughout the country in September 2022. There is also a vision for expanding the coverage of national paid public works and making the public work salary more adequate. Provision of productive employment opportunities is important to decrease household dependency on remittances and to consider the 14 percent of poor and vulnerable households that have at least one family member with disabilities.<sup>76</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the lack of social protection mechanisms, such as paid sick leave in case of illness, and the low unemployment benefits pushed many to work despite COVID-19 positive status, which may have contributed to the spread of the disease. The social benefits provided by the health system do not provide adequate financial protection to individuals and families. Health coverage is regulated by the state guaranteed benefit package (SGBP) and the additional drug package (ADP). Expanded services are covered by contributions to a mandatory health insurance fund through mandatory health insurance contributions (around 66 percent of the population in 2018). People who make the contribution are entitled to 61 outpatient medicines at reduced prices under the ADP and to reduced SGBP co-payments for inpatient care. Thirty-four per cent of the population, comprising relatively vulnerable groups of people, have access only to the SGBP and are not able to benefit from lower co-payments for hospital care or from access to the subsidized outpatient medicines covered by the ADP that come with mandatory insurance coverage. Despite the fact the Government provided free services for the COVID-19 patients, medicines were not introduced to ADP and the cost was not shared.

In 2022, MLSSM finalized data entry for the digital Social Passport system that contains vulnerability profiles for more than 200,000 poor families. The 1227 hotline was created for registration of people in need in time of emergency.

Overall, there are still several challenges that the national social protection system is facing. According to NSC and as noted above, the poverty rate has grown from 25.3 percent to 33.3 percent, with extreme poverty reaching six percent. Urban poverty has increased significantly from 18.3 percent to 30 percent, and, for the first time over the last decade, was equal to the rural poverty level. This trend creates a need for revision of social benefits design that is currently

<sup>74</sup> Ui-buloogo komok chronically suffers from very limited coverage, low transfer value and targeting errors emerging both in the design and implementation stages. The UBK utilizes a hybrid targeting method, consisting of a categorical element (the presence of a child under the age of 16), a filter and a means-test. Such design comes with high administrative costs due to the capacity required to carry out individual assessments. Families also bear costs during the application process (e.g., collecting required documentation for verification), which in turn contribute to exclusion errors

<sup>75</sup> WFP (2021). Poverty analysis based on the Kyrgyz Integrated Household Survey (KIHS 2019), Bishkek

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

skewed towards rural areas. Thus, among the urban poor and vulnerable (bottom 40 percent) only 2.3 percent receive the monthly child benefit for low-income families (UBK). More than half of all poor and vulnerable urban households do not receive any type of social transfers. This group is not currently visible to the Government targeting system, or is excluded from it due to the fact that some are engaged in the informal economy, thus earning some, albeit unstable incomes which are above the thresholds for strictly targeted social assistance programmes. Thus, the majority of the estimated 70 percent of the working age population engaged in the informal economy has no access to non-contributory or contributory social protection programmes, nor they are able to contribute to national social insurance schemes.

Currently MLSSM is leading the core diagnostics of the national social protection system assessment that is supported by ILO, UNICEF, the World Bank and WFP. This diagnostic should reveal existing gaps in the system and provide recommendations. The results will serve as a basis for new social protection concept until 2026. In addition, the Ministry of Economy is developing a Concept for Transition from Informal to Formal Economy with ILO's technical assistance. The concept will, among a number of issues, address aspects such as formalization of worker's contracts, their inclusion into social insurance system, and extension of coverage with social protection programmes.

### **Early childhood development**

Early childhood, which spans the period up to eight years of age, is critical for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Optimal early childhood development requires a stimulating and nurturing environment, access to books and learning materials, interactions with responsive and attentive caregivers, adequate nutrients, access to good quality early childhood education, and safety and protection. All these aspects of the environment contribute to developmental outcomes for children.

There are also significant differences in education coverage depending on the level of household income. Coverage of households in the wealthiest quintile is 50 percent as compared to 11.7 percent in the poorest quintile. The coverage of children from better-off families is four times higher than that of children from low-income families. There is still a significant variation in the pre-school education coverage between urban and rural areas: in 2018, pre-school education covered 17.5 percent of children in rural areas, as compared to 34.4 percent of children in urban areas.

Children are further confronted by a broad range of risk factors related to ongoing inequalities and thus may fail to reach their developmental potential. These factors include poverty, poor health, violence,<sup>77</sup> abuse and exploitation (in particular, affecting children left behind by migrant parents),<sup>78</sup> and inadequate learning opportunities. In 2020, the World Bank estimated that 40 percent of the productivity of the next generation of workers is already lost relative to the benchmark of complete education and full health.<sup>79</sup> Investing in the early years is one of the most critical and cost-effective ways that countries can reduce gaps that often place children with low social and economic status at a disadvantage. Poor nutrition, combined with lack of quality education and vocational training, deprives many children of opportunities to attain sustainable livelihoods, contributing to inequality and increasing the risk of social and political instability, as well as religious extremism.

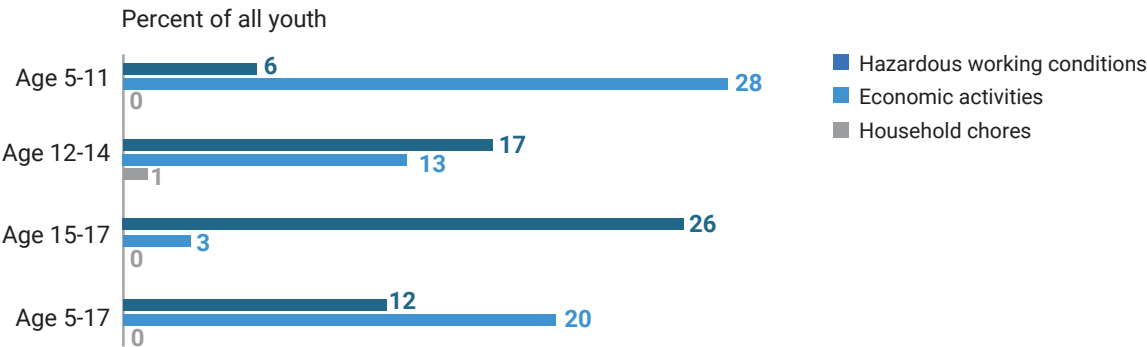
<sup>77</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/LigaZasitnikovPravRebenka/posts/4783720478309531>: On 27 August, NGOs reported that according to the Prosecutor General's Office, the number of cases of violence and ill-treatment of children and suicides in Kyrgyzstan have increased in the past two years. The number of suicides doubled from 2019 to 2020, 48 to 98. In the entire year of 2019, 1756 crimes were registered against children. In the first quarter of 2021, 1463 crimes were registered.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/20362-v-kabmine-obsudili-algoritm-podderzhki-trudovoykh-migrantov-okazavshikhsya-v-trudnoy-zhiznennoy-situatsii>: On 26 August, the Government shared official statistics indicating that 84 thousand children live separately from their parents. While parents migrate for work, children are left behind with relatives. Such children often become victims of violence.

<sup>79</sup> World Bank (2020). Human Capital Index (HCI).

According to the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 26.7 percent of children are engaged in child labour. The prevalence of child labour is higher among boys as compared to girls (33.6 percent vs 19.0 percent). In 2019, the Kyrgyz Republic made only minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government passed a policy package that established a National Referral Mechanism for victims of human trafficking and drafted a new National Action Plan for 2020–2024 on the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, the Kyrgyz Republic has received an assessment of minimal advancement because it delayed passage of laws eliminating the worst forms of child labor.<sup>80</sup> And on 15 April 2022 the 2022–2025 Programme and Action Plan to combat trafficking in persons in the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted.

**Figure 5. Snapshot of child labour conditions**



Source: UNICEF, MICS, 2018

**Nutrition**

The Kyrgyz Republic is facing a triple burden of malnutrition. Although the country has made significant progress in reducing stunting since 1990, the levels of both stunting and anemia among children and women of reproductive age remain high.<sup>81</sup> While there are multiple underlying determinants of malnutrition, poor diets are a common denominator for undernutrition, malnutrition, and obesity. The high consumption of starchy, rather than nutritious, foods and the rise in the consumption of processed foods - that are energy-dense and rich in fats, sugar and salt - are among the factors affecting the nutritional status of the population. In many cases, this has led to increased rates of malnutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases.<sup>82</sup> In 2020, it was estimated that at least 38 percent of the population could not afford a nutritious diet.<sup>83</sup> Despite significant improvements in the overall nutritional status of children, 12 percent of children under 5 suffer from stunting, and 38.3 percent of children in the same age group are estimated to be affected by anemia. The highest rates of stunting are among rural children (13.1 percent) and children in the poorest households (14 percent). The proportion of children suffering from stunting is higher for boys than for girls (12.5 percent vs 10.9 per cent). A high prevalence of anemia is also estimated among women of reproductive age (36.2 percent, 2016) and pregnant women (39.8 percent, 2018).<sup>84</sup> An increase in the prevalence of being overweight has been observed nationally for both women (from 38.8 percent in 2000 to 48.8 percent in 2016) and men (from 37.5 percent in 2000 to 47.4 percent in 2016), with an estimated percent of obesity reaching 18.6 percent for female and 14 percent for male in 2016. The prevalence of overweight and obesity steadily increases with increasing age. It affects about 20 percent of adolescent girls aged 15–18 years, nearly 45 percent of non-pregnant women 15–49 years of age and more than 75 percent of women 45–49 years of age.

<sup>80</sup> ILO (2019). See <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/kyrgyz-republic>  
<sup>81</sup> See <https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/reports/endline-nutrition-survey-kyrgyz-republic>  
<sup>82</sup> NIMAS  
<sup>83</sup> WFP (2022), Fill the Nutrient Gap Analysis.  
<sup>84</sup> Estimates from <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan>

Outcomes of the recently completed National Integrated Micronutrient Anthropometric Survey (NIMAS) identified seven percent of children of 6-59 months of age as being stunted, which is lower than the 11 percent of children classified as stunted in the MICS 2018. Although classified as a mild public health problem at the national level, stunting is considered a problem with medium public health significance for certain sub-groups, such as children with low birth weight, children living in Batken, and children whose households are of the lowest wealth quintile, severely food insecure, and children residing in households with no adequate sanitation or no safe drinking water.

Wasting and underweight in children 6-59 months are rare with a prevalence of less than 1 percent, which is in alignment with the MICS 2018. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in young children can be classified as problem with “medium” public health significance. Anemia would be considered a “moderate” public health problem for non-pregnant women (25 percent) according to the criteria published by the World Health Organization. Anemia is less common in children 5–9 years (20.9 percent) and adolescent girls (14.6 percent), posing a “mild” public health problem. More than 30 percent of children in Talas, Issyk Kul and Naryn have anemia. Nationally, vitamin A deficiency in children 6–59 months is 15.0 percent and can be classified as moderate. Folate deficiency is very high in Kyrgyz adolescent girls (83.6 percent) and non-pregnant women (83.2 percent).

## Education

The education sector has gone through a number of reforms with varying success. Amongst the recent achievements are an increase in teacher salaries and greater enrolment in pre-primary education that reached approximately 90 percent in 2018.<sup>85</sup> However, gross enrollment ratio at pre-primary education remains low (40 percent, 2018).<sup>86</sup> In addition, the quality of education remains a challenge. Despite continuous increase of education financing by the state budget (by 18 times since 2001 totaling KGS 54 billion in 2022). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, less than half of the children attending Grade 3 have foundational reading and numeracy skills.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, children with disabilities lag behind their peers in fundamental learning and lack access to education in mainstream schools. Approximately 40 to 60 percent of children aged up to 14 years have basic functional difficulties in learning and are unable to achieve fundamental skills in reading.<sup>88</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened both quality and access to education due to limited access to technology in education and skills gaps amongst students and teachers.<sup>89</sup> Inadequate infrastructure, teachers’ poor ICT skills and students’ inability to learn independently coupled with connectivity issues, resulted in high non-attendance rates during school closures. The situation worsened in rural and remote areas, and for minority groups, where digital teaching and learning resources were not fully available, leading to increased inequalities in access to education. For example, 70 percent of teachers reported that they did not receive training or consultations on online teaching reported by the Ministry of Education and Science.<sup>90</sup> Students did not get the support required for online learning leaving around 63 percent studying on their own, with a higher proportion among girls as they had to engage more in household chores. As a result, only 12 percent of students had a positive experience during lockdown and 78 percent of parents were not satisfied with the quality of online education.<sup>91</sup>

With the country’s intention to participate in PISA-2025, a stronger focus on teachers’ capacity building, integration of soft/transversal skills into curriculum and quality learning and teaching materials for all, should be among priorities.

<sup>85</sup> UIS

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> National Assessment of Educational Attainments of Students in Kyrgyzstan (2017)

<sup>88</sup> UNESCO (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017-2019

<sup>89</sup> UNESCO (2020). ICT Teacher Readiness Report.

<sup>90</sup> Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Central Asia, UNESCO and UNICEF Sub-regional report, 2022.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



Teacher competencies (including ICT skills) and professional development require further attention and investments. At professional education level, issues of quality assurance and international recognition are among top priorities as the country strives to make progress in terms of international rankings and improved employability of students/graduates.

A Kyrgyz delegation – under the leadership of the President and with the former Minister of Education and Science – participated in the UN Transforming Education Summit in New York in September 2022. The country presented its commitments to education through 2030 based on the outcomes of the national consultations on issues around providing inclusive education, skills for life, teacher competencies, digital learning opportunities and adequate financing. (See Annex E for full statement made to the Education Summit.).

## 2.5 Environmental context

### Environmental governance in the Kyrgyz Republic: quality and effectiveness

Since the 2021 CCA, the Kyrgyz Republic's environmental context has remained relatively unchanged. As noted in the earlier CCA, over the past decades, both geophysical and anthropogenic factors have led to the worsening environmental condition in the Kyrgyz Republic. The country's decreasing quality and effectiveness of environmental governance is considered a main determinant factor of the environment deterioration, distinguishable in key environmental indicators. In 2020, the Kyrgyz Republic ranked 105th in the Environmental Performance Index,<sup>92</sup> having fallen from 99th place in 2018. The current structure of national environmental governance is the result of multiple unconnected environmental programmes, often duplicating or contradicting each other, mostly to fulfill the agendas of donor organizations and not supported by the national budget due to environment's relatively low priority. Environmental policy is dominated by administrative measures and enforcement mechanisms causing disincentives (environmental taxes, pollution charges, administrative fines) over incentives giving positive motivation (grants for green solutions, preferential lending for environmental initiatives). Decision-making on environmental issues is generally not based on scientifically sound principles and without quality and deep expertise. The available environmental data are often incomplete, inaccurate or outdated, which is partially due to the lack of appropriate national infrastructure (monitoring, data base, laboratories, experts, etc.).<sup>93</sup>

The new Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Technical Supervision was established in 2021 which has been delegated wide mandates for policy-setting, policy implementation, and control. The new Ministry has the potential for setting a comprehensive vision of the country's environmental security and increasing national ownership. This will require the creation of well-functioning structures within the Ministry built on a comprehensive strategic diagnostic of the environmental sector. This must be complemented by meeting the need for recruiting more qualified staff and local experts with an adequate level of professional skills.

The second Environmental Performance Review (EPR) for the Kyrgyz Republic was carried out in 2009 and published that same year.<sup>94</sup> The State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic requested UNECE to undertake a third EPR in 2015, However, preparations stopped in 2016 when the State Agency asked for a postponement. In March 2021, the State Agency asked UNECE to continue the work on the third EPR. The Deputy Minister Ministry for Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision reconfirmed the interest of the country to undergo an EPR in November 2021. A review mission took place 16–24 May 2022. The international experts of the EPR team managed to get a wide range of documentation and data, despite challenges regarding availability and

<sup>92</sup> Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy - YCELP - Yale University, and Center for International Earth Science Information Network - CIESIN - Columbia University. 2020. 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI). Palisades, NY: NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center.

<sup>93</sup> UNDP BIOFIN (2019). Environmental Finance Policy and Institutional Review in the Kyrgyz Republic

<sup>94</sup> <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/2nd-environmental-performance-review-kyrgyzstan>

reliability of data. However, during the special session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), the Government requested to postpone the EPR peer review due to “incomplete and inaccurate information that led to faulty recommendations”. It is expected that the recommendations will be finalized and adopted by CEP in 2023.

Broadly speaking, the Government should scale up its activities under the Aarhus Convention, to include promoting access to environmental information, strengthening capacities of public authorities to carry out effective and inclusive public participation procedures related to the environment, and building capacity, and raising awareness among the judiciary, review bodies and law enforcement about the Convention’s obligations.

Additionally, effective Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) systems need to be implemented to support the Government’s efforts to achieve the SDGs, transition to a green economy, and enhance the legitimacy of planning and decision-making processes. The Kyrgyz Republic has been a party to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context but has not yet ratified its Protocol on SEA. The Government needs to finalize and adopt EIA and SEA legislation, build capacity, and raise awareness on EIA and SEA among decision-makers.

## Climate change

The Kyrgyz Republic is very vulnerable to climate change risks due to its mountainous terrain and glaciers, the high occurrence of climate-related disasters, and the country’s dependency on climate-sensitive economic sectors.<sup>95</sup> Recent climate resilience research has shown that the country is the third most vulnerable to climate change impacts in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, primarily due to the sensitivity of its agricultural systems to climatic change.

The scale and frequency of natural disasters associated with climate change has increased 1.5 times over the past 12 years with cascading impacts on society and the economy. In 2019, direct losses from mudflows and floods amounted to 323 million som.<sup>96</sup> For the period 1976-2019, there is a statistically significant increase in average annual air temperature by 0.23°C every 10 years, and a trend for annual precipitation to increase by 1.6 percent in 10 years.<sup>97</sup> Extreme climatic events such as heatwaves, hurricanes/storms, floods, and droughts cause negative health effects. Gradual climate change affecting the quality of water, food, and air also has a negative impact on the health of people around the world. In addition to physical effects, there are also issues related to mental health.<sup>98</sup> A warming climate will negatively affect human health and increase mortality due to poor nutrition, heat, and infectious diseases.<sup>99</sup> The rising temperatures also mean that mountain glaciers are melting at unprecedented rates, affecting freshwater supplies downstream for millions of people, which is particularly relevant to Kyrgyz Republic where over 8,000 glaciers feed freshwater reserves and major rivers in the region.

The Government allocates limited resources to climate activities, including the development of climate policy and legislative frameworks. The authorities continue the extensive practice of subsidies negatively affecting the environment and hindering the advancement of the green economy. According to the draft of 4th National Communication on Climate Change in Kyrgyzstan, a trend of sharp growth in net GHG emissions was identified in 2007–2017.<sup>100</sup> The country was one of the last countries to ratify the Paris Agreement in 2020. This lag indicates that climate issues have not been a high priority for the country’s policy-makers. In 2021–2022 alone, the institutional structure of the agencies

<sup>95</sup> Based on: ‘Climate Investment Programme. Operational Framework for Managing and Accessing Climate Finance in the Kyrgyz Republic’, 2018. WFP (2021). Op. cit.

<sup>97</sup> SIC ICWC. Climate Change: Some Aspects of the Problem (Part 4) [in Russian].

<sup>98</sup> UNDP (2021). Assessment of Risks and Vulnerability to Climate Change. National Report to Update the NDC of the Kyrgyz Republic. [in Russian].

<sup>99</sup> World Bank and Asian Development Bank (2021). Climate Risk Profile: Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>100</sup> To be published in 2021.

responsible for climate policy was changed four times. The legislative framework and budget allocation for measures to respond and mitigate climate change remain insensitive to some groups, such as women at risk of vulnerability/exclusion, pensioners and citizens with disabilities, youth and children, and migrants.

In 2015 the Government submitted its intended nationally determined contribution (INDC), outlining both adaptation and mitigation targets and actions. As part of mitigation targets, the country pledged to reduce GHG gas emissions by up to 13.8 percent by 2030 compared to the business-as-usual scenario, and by up to 31 percent with international support. In 2021 the Kyrgyz Republic further increased its targets and submitted a new revised NDC clear quantifiable mitigation and adaptation targets and a financial plan for implementation committed to reduce GHG emissions by 16.63 percent of GHG emission levels by 2025 unconditionally, and by 36.61 percent with international support. The updated NDC includes integrated provisions facilitating the achievement of gender equality, as well as an improvement in the protection of vulnerable groups such as youth, low mobility groups and those living below the poverty line. The adaptation component is further enhanced with qualitative targets and elaborated implementation plans, including 15 adaptation measures in 6 sectors vulnerable to climate change.

Recent research confirms the disproportionate impact of climate change on the poor, especially rural women and children from marginalized communities living in areas particularly vulnerable to climate change, as manifested in the burden of unpaid home labor, physical and social violence, low incidence of paid work, perpetual cycle of poverty,<sup>101</sup> high rate of non-communicable diseases.<sup>102</sup> Women also face high levels of discrimination and underrepresentation in decision-making, which also has a negative impact on their participation in environmental decision-making and disproportionate exposure to risk from climate-induced phenomena, such as floods.

## Biodiversity and ecosystems

The Kyrgyz Republic is distinguished by a high concentration of plant and animal species. Ecosystems (26 classes) and landscapes (160 types) are inhabited by more than 50,000 species of living organisms. The Red Book of the Kyrgyz Republic includes 57 species of birds, 23 mammal, 2 amphibians, 8 reptiles, 7 species of fish, 18 arthropods, 83 higher plant species and 4 mushrooms. As a result of human activity, some species have disappeared altogether, while others are endangered,<sup>103</sup> among which are iconic and culturally relevant species such as the snow leopard. Less than 40 percent of biodiversity areas are protected officially, and the populations of threatened species in more than 90 percent of these areas are under high to medium threat levels.<sup>104</sup> Climate change and anthropogenic activities put ecosystem functions under pressure, leading to shifting fragmentation and shrinking of habitat and reduced biodiversity. In addition, the mountain ecosystems are among the most vulnerable to climate change in Central Asia, with impacts on glaciers, snow and water availability.<sup>105</sup> Forest loss is of particular concern, as forests are home to at least half of the country's species diversity. The lack of smart and environmentally friendly economic policies and natural resource use pricing mechanisms leads to the overuse of natural resources and the further degradation of habitats. The dependency of the population on natural resources is still high. Thus, more than half of the country's population depends on meadow ecosystems (pastures), and about 18 percent depend on forest ecosystems.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> ESCAP (2018). Population dynamics, vulnerable groups and resilience to climate change and disasters.

<sup>102</sup> UN Women, UNEP, EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies (2020). Gender and climate Change in the context of COVID-19.

<sup>103</sup> Biodiversity conservation priorities of the Kyrgyz Republic till 2024. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/kg/kg-nbsap-v3-en.pdf> [in Russian].

<sup>104</sup> Available at: [https://www.ibat-alliance.org/country\\_profiles/KGZ](https://www.ibat-alliance.org/country_profiles/KGZ).

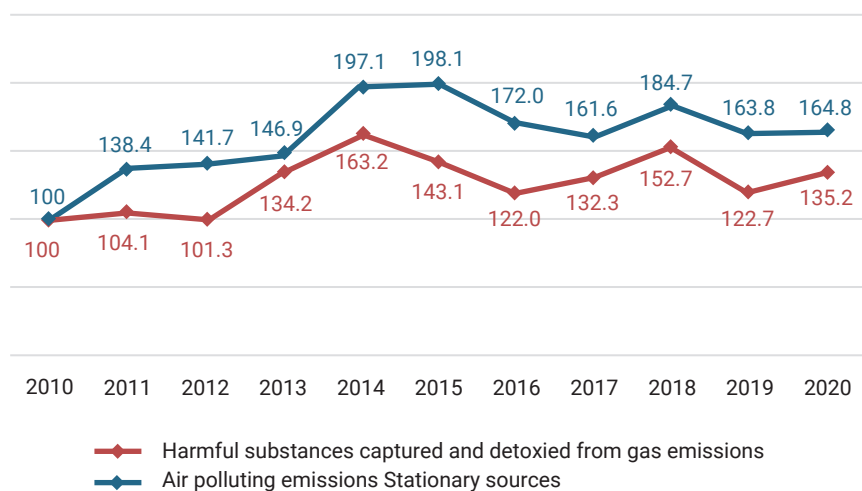
<sup>105</sup> GRID-Arendal (2017). Outlook on Climate Change Adaptation in the Central Asian Mountains [in Russian].

<sup>106</sup> Available at: <https://chm.cbd.int/database/record?documentID=243111>.

## Air pollution

Air pollution has rapidly become a key health, environmental, social, and political issue in the country. Official statistics of air pollution emissions, which are available only for stationary sources, show that emissions over the 2010–2020 period increased by almost 65 percent.<sup>107</sup> Bishkek experiences poor air quality throughout the year, with extremely dangerous levels during the wintertime heating period. Bishkek’s air was amongst the top 10 most polluted in the world during the wintertime heating seasons, and in the winter of 2021–2022, Bishkek was ranked as the city with the worst air quality for several days at a time. Emerging evidence from civil society PM2.5 monitoring that began in 2021 shows that Osh may experience air pollution at least matching, if not higher than, levels seen in Bishkek.<sup>108</sup> The most dangerous levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution are caused by residential heating – that is, private houses not connected to the Combined Heat and Power station (CHP) grid burning low grade sulphur-rich coal for heating during the wintertime exacerbated by poor mixing conditions of the air.<sup>109</sup> In Bishkek annual mean PM2.5 concentrations exceed by far the country’s national and all international (EU, US EPA, and WHO) health-based limits and guidelines. The other sources of emissions include burning of waste and motor transport. Modeling studies suggest that the impact of the CHP station emissions on ground-level pollution concentrations is less important than other sources. Low energy efficiency of buildings also contributes to increased pollution, encouraged by the 60-80 percent heating subsidy by the state and municipalities which creates negative incentives to save thermal energy.<sup>110</sup>

**Figure 6. Air pollution growth rate in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2010-2020, % change (2010 = 100%)**



Source: NSC

During the period 2010–2019, 12–13 percent of all annual deaths in the country were attributed to air pollution, corresponding to approximately 4,100–5,000 deaths annually – more than from tobacco smoking or alcohol and drug use. The health costs of air pollution were estimated at USD 388 million or 6 percent of Gross National Income in 2015.<sup>111</sup> Previous studies have shown that exposure to air pollution and the resulting health risk could depend on socioeconomic factors like gender, social class, and ethnicity. Women can be particularly vulnerable to air pollution due to traditional gender roles, lower salaries, motherhood, and cultural norms. A major source of indoor air pollution is

<sup>107</sup> NSC (2020). Environment in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015-2019 [in Russian].

<sup>108</sup> UNECE “Environment performance Review”, 2022

<sup>109</sup> UNDP-UNEP “Air quality in Bishkek. Assessment of emission sources and road map for supporting air quality management”, October 2022

<sup>110</sup> UNDP BIOFIN (2019). Op. cit.

<sup>111</sup> UNIDO Action Plan for Health and Environment Pollution Issues, 2019

cooking using solid fuels (for example wood, crop wastes, charcoal, and coal) and kerosene in open fires and inefficient stoves. Epidemiological studies have shown that miscarriage, preterm birth, and low birth weight are related to high levels of air pollution exposure. Air pollution is one of the leading risks to child health, accounting for almost 10 percent of deaths in children under five years old. Exposure to air pollution affects children's neurodevelopment which can lead to lower cognitive, mental and motor development as well as triggering of cancer or childhood asthma.<sup>112</sup>

Without adequate mitigation measures, pollution levels are set to rise in the future. Emissions of all key pollutants are expected to grow significantly towards 2040 under a 'business as usual' scenario. An emissions inventory was developed for Bishkek, showing estimates on volumes of priority air pollutants emitted from different sources in the city over 2000–2040. By 2040, PM2.5 emissions are estimated to increase by three-fifths (60 percent), driven predominately by increases in emissions from residential combustion; NOx emissions are estimated to increase by almost two-thirds (63 percent), driven largely by increased emissions from transport, notably petrol-powered cars; and SO2 emissions are estimated to increase by half (50 percent), driven by emissions from CHP.<sup>113</sup>

To address the social, environmental and health impact of air pollution and the magnitude of the problem, the Kyrgyz Republic needs a robust monitoring network over the entire country and improving to process and analyze the data. Enhanced monitoring will also show what policies are effective in reducing air pollution, providing a guide for policy decisions. Modernizing air quality legislation is essential. Existing legislation does not align with international norms that are based on the latest science. Modernizing air quality standards, such as through a transition to an Air Quality Index (AQI), will support an accurate understanding of air pollution on population health. Civil society actively supports improved air quality tracking and promotes transparent and participatory urban planning and alternative heating technologies. However, state institutions lack the capacity and resources to effectively address the challenges of air pollution across many sectors. Air pollution and climate change are interlinked and tackling air pollution is part of the climate agenda. Burning of fossil fuels is by far the largest source of air pollution. Reducing the use of fossil fuels is therefore not only a priority for improving air quality, but also a priority action for climate change mitigation. Investments in climate action often pay off quickly in the short-term through air quality co-benefits via savings in the health sector.

## Water use

With summits above 4,500 m and over 6,000 glaciers, a major part of the water resources originates from the summits of Tien Shan. The characteristics of these mountains provide an important temporary storage, distributing water flow more evenly over the year and providing water for irrigation and hydropower, not just for Kyrgyzstan, but for a large area of Central Asia including the Aral Sea. According to this topography, Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia whose water resources are almost completely formed on its own territory. Water is one of the most important natural resources of the country. The volume of water resources is about 2,458 km<sup>3</sup>, including 650 km<sup>3</sup> of water in glaciers. Kyrgyzstan is using around 25 percent of its water resources; sometimes that number is even stated as just 10 percent. The total actual renewable water resources per inhabitant were 4,379 m<sup>3</sup> per year in 2011, according to the FAO AQUASTAT. For 2020, this can be estimated as 3,578 m<sup>3</sup> per year. This range considers the population growth in the whole country however, not the change in the water resources.

Water is mainly used for irrigation and agricultural purpose – from 94.2 to 95.1 percent of all water used. Some 3.7 percent is used for domestic and drinking needs, and the rest for production and other needs<sup>114</sup>. Approximately 94 percent (2019) of the population has access to clean drinking water, while 31.4 percent use piped water. About 6

<sup>112</sup> WHO, 2022b

<sup>113</sup> UNDP-UNEP "Air quality in Bishkek. Assessment of emission sources and road map for supporting air quality management", October 2022

<sup>114</sup> NSC (2020). Environment in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015-2019 [in Russian].

percent of the population uses water from springs, rivers and ditches. The country has an acute wastewater problem: only 31.5 percent of the population uses a sewage system. The rest release wastewater into the environment.

The irrigation infrastructure, mostly built more than 30 years ago, is dilapidated. According to official data, water losses in irrigation systems due to their poor condition amount to 25-28 percent<sup>115</sup> of water withdrawal, or as much as 40 percent according to other sources.<sup>116</sup> The irrigation sector is underfunded, as the applied water supply tariff is up to 7-8 times lower than the production cost, according to independent experts.<sup>117</sup> Based on volumes, management of water use in the Kyrgyz Republic is primarily driven by irrigation management but has to be aligned with the potentially conflicting use of water for hydropower. The distribution conflict between irrigation and hydropower is a growing challenge and is estimated to increase. Plans of the Government to develop further agriculture land, the growing population and energy demand are factors to foster internal conflicts. Beside the internal conflicts, those water uses have large impacts to downstream countries.

The Kyrgyz Republic participated in the second monitoring on SDG indicator 6.5.2, and according to 2020 data, only 29.9 percent of its transboundary river and lake basins area is covered by operational agreements or arrangements for water cooperation. However, no transboundary aquifers are covered by such arrangements.<sup>118</sup> Although data availability on transboundary groundwater has improved, more effort is needed to enhance knowledge on transboundary groundwater and establish cooperation on shared aquifers.

## Waste management

The Kyrgyz Republic does not have a developed system of waste recycling and reuse. In 2018, there were only 107 sanctioned landfill sites out of the 406 in the country.<sup>119</sup> Existing municipal landfills and unorganized landfills are in an unsanitary condition and are sources of uncontrolled environmental impact. Many landfills are not fenced which creates a risk of spreading contamination, including dangerous infections. Uncontrolled burning of waste covered with a layer of soil on top (which creates anaerobic conditions) is a source of constant air and soil pollution not only in the adjacent territories, but also affects to a large extent the nearest districts of Bishkek. Drainage and discharge of landfill filtrate poses a threat to contamination of surface and ground waters. This risk is not effectively controlled at the existing landfill.

Only 67.1 percent of households used organized waste collection services in 2019, while the rest of households incinerated or buried their waste.<sup>120</sup> Plastic makes up about 21 percent of the waste disposed of in landfills in urban areas of the country and 8 percent in rural areas.<sup>121</sup> Plastic is either incinerated or left to decompose naturally. Both methods have a negative impact on the environment. Industrial waste – the main sources of pollution in the country – contains radionuclides, heavy metals and toxic substances. Due to the lack of infrastructure for storage and processing of industrial waste, enterprises generally store it on their property. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Regional Development, a large volume of obsolete pesticides – more than 5.4 thousand tons - remain in the country.<sup>122</sup> These pesticides are contained in burial sites for toxic substances (more than 88 percent), warehouses, and contaminated soil. The Government has not yet incorporated the concept of waste monitoring in the national

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> ADB (2018). Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment.

<sup>117</sup> UNDP BIOFIN (2019). Op. cit.

<sup>118</sup> UNECE, UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water (2021), Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation Global Status of SDG Indicator 6.5.2 and acceleration needs, 2021. Available at: <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/progress-transboundary-water-cooperation-global-status-sdg>

<sup>119</sup> A package of measures to modernize waste management. Available at: <http://eco-expertise.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/201805251451523.pdf> [in Russian].

<sup>120</sup> NSC (2020). Standard of Living in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015-2019 [in Russian].

<sup>121</sup> SAEPF (2020). National Report on the State of the Environment of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2015-2018 [in Russian].

<sup>122</sup> Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ToxicWaste/PesticidesRtoFood/Kyrgyzstan.pdf> [in Russian].

legislation. Although data on waste generation and management are generally available for both total waste and key waste streams, the quality of this data is not sufficient to ensure proper analysis.

Numerous tailings management facilities (TMFs) in the country store large amounts of mining waste. In the event of a failure, environmental catastrophes could occur, such as water pollution which poses a high risk to water security in the Kyrgyz Republic and neighboring countries, for example, via the transboundary rivers. Climatic and geographic conditions aggravate these risks. Though the country has made progress in this respect as a beneficiary of the Convention's Assistance and Cooperation Programme of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, further work is needed.<sup>123</sup> To address the above-mentioned issues, the Government has been strengthening cooperation and dialogue between riparian countries and national authorities at the transboundary Syr Darya River Basin level and improving its understanding of disaster hazards and risks. During 2021–2022, work has also been carried out to enhance Kyrgyz capacities to address technological/industrial accident risks and to harmonize national policies and legislation in the field of industrial safety with the requirements of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention. Besides, the Government made improvements in better understanding the location of TMFs and the related disaster risks, including in a transboundary context, thanks to an inventory and map of 62 TMFs. Nonetheless, as of November 2022, the country has not still acceded to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, which would allow the country to use all benefits the Convention providing for enhanced prevention, preparedness, and response to industrial accidents.

## 2.6 Demographic context

The Kyrgyz Republic is a multi-ethnic nation with more than 80 different indigenous ethnic groups. The main groups include Kyrgyz (72.3 percent), Russians (5.6 percent), Uzbeks (14.7 percent), Dungans (1.1 percent), Uyghurs (1.1 percent), Tajiks (1.1 percent), Kazakhs (0.7 percent), Ukrainians (0.5 percent) and other ethnicities. According to the latest census data and Population Situation Analysis report for 2017, current demographic trends are contributing to an increase in ethnic homogeneity with the growth of the population, which increased from 40 percent in 1959 to 73 percent by the beginning of 2017.<sup>124</sup>

### Demographic trends

According to the National Statistics Committee the population of the Kyrgyz Republic reached seven million people by 19 October 2022.<sup>125</sup> Overall, the population is “young.” Half of the country's residents are under the age of 22, and, as of January 2022, the median age was 28 years, children under 18 composed 35 percent. Preschool children (under 7 years of age) make up 17 percent of the population, and about 21 percent are school-age children (7–17 years old) with specific nutritional, healthy transition and infrastructure needs.<sup>126</sup> Over a third of the country's population is between 15 and 25 years old (49 percent women and 51 percent men), representing a great opportunity to benefit from a demographic dividend. According to the NSC as of January 2020, 57.4 percent constitute the working age population (Figure 7). Approximately 34.6 percent of the population were persons under the working age (children and adolescents), and 8.0 percent were persons older than working age (61 percent women and 39 percent men).<sup>127</sup> More than 774,300 nationals of the country are migrant workers abroad.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> The Convention helps countries prevent industrial accidents that can have transboundary effects, prepare for and respond to such accidents, if they occur. [<https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents>]

<sup>124</sup> A. Avdeev (2021). Population Situation Analysis in Kyrgyzstan: 2020 update: Demographic Challenges for the Development of the Kyrgyz Republic

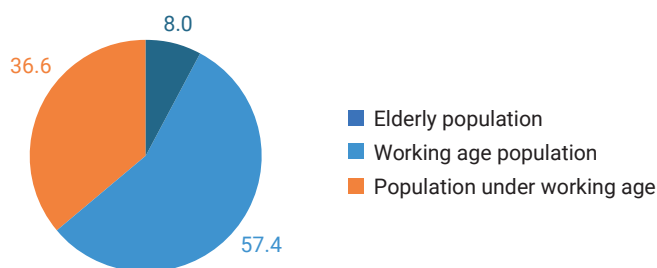
National Statistics Committee, available at <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/v-kyrgyzstane-rodilsya-semimillionnyj-zhitel/>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> M. Denissenko (2020). Policy brief: Young population and high population growth rates

<sup>127</sup> UN Migration ([worlddata.io](http://worlddata.io))

**Figure 7. Composition of population by work category (%)**



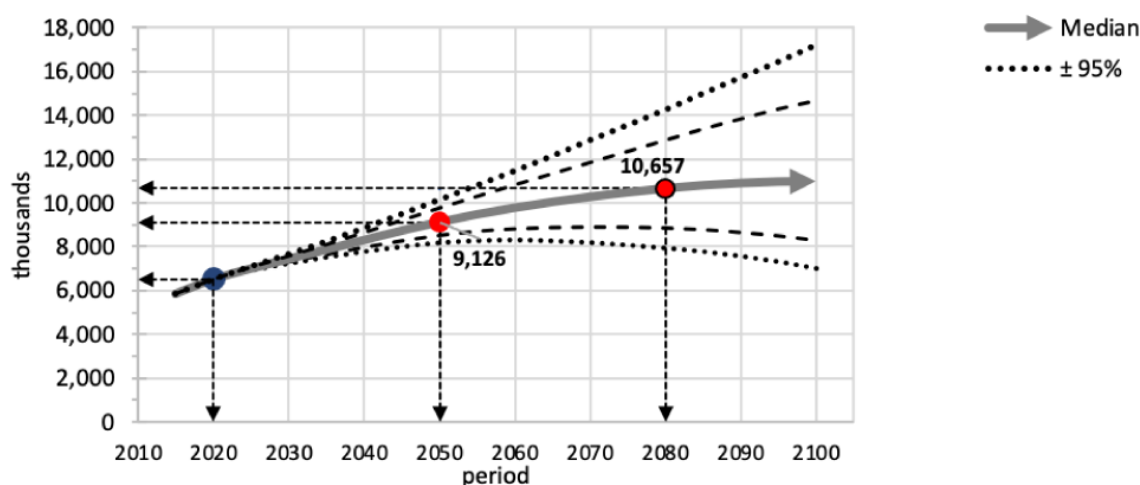
Source: NSC

### Population dynamics and fertility

Over the past decade, the birth rate in the Kyrgyz Republic has varied with small fluctuations averaging around 3.14 births per woman aged 15–49 years. This translates into an increase in the population of more than 1.1 million people over the past decade, representing the largest population increase in the country’s history. In the coming decades, population growth will also remain very significant. In 2020, according to the estimates of the NSC, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the population of the country increased by at least 130,000 people. Today’s high growth rates are explained by high fertility and low mortality, as well as the relatively small contribution played by changing migration patterns.<sup>129</sup>

According to the latest UN forecasts, the fastest growth period will be in the next 30 years, and by 2050 the population will exceed 9 million people, i.e., an increase of 50 percent compared to 2020. Then, in 2050, the growth rate is projected to slow down. As part of this trend, the number of school-age population in the next decade will inevitably increase – from 1.35 million in 2020 to 1.67 million in 2029. This growth will obviously lead to an increase in the burden on the general compulsory education system and provision of quality healthcare of adolescents, which will require additional investments in school infrastructure, teachers and support staff, and the healthcare system.

**Figure 8. Prospects for population growth in the Kyrgyz Republic until the end of the 21st century<sup>130</sup>**



Source: UNDESA Population Division, 2019

<sup>129</sup> A. Avdeev (2021). Population Situation Analysis in Kyrgyzstan: 2020 update: Demographic Challenges for the Development of the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>130</sup> The dashed lines outline the intervals within which the expected population size will be, with a given probability. So, with the probability of 95 percent, it can be expected that in 2080 the population will be in the range from 7.9 to 14.2 million people, with the probability of 80 percent it will be in the range from 8.8 to 12.8 million. The wider the interval, the more likely it is that the expected population size will fall within this interval.



## Migration impacts

Migration poses a significant challenge to the country's demography due to the especially high emigration rates of young people, people of reproductive age, and qualified professionals. The majority of migrant workers outside of the country represent the economically active population, and many of them are young people under 29, who despite of economic sanctions and risks of mobilization still tend to go to the Russian Federation, as well as to Kazakhstan, and Turkey because of the lack of employment opportunities or other reasons. Among them, women migrants account for 53 percent and are especially vulnerable in their inability to secure decent work opportunities and social protection, as the majority work is in the informal sector.<sup>131</sup> Although the high mobility of youth generates gains in terms of remittances, improved prospects for professional growth, and extended horizons, extensive emigration is likely to have long-term negative effects as it depletes the country of its human capital and socio-economic development potential.

Both external and internal migration plays a crucial role in shaping the population dynamics of the districts and regions of the Kyrgyz Republic. Over the past 5 years, a positive migration balance was observed only in the cities of Bishkek and Osh, as well as in the Alamudun, Sokoluk, Moscow and Jayilk districts of the Chui region adjacent to Bishkek. The highest external outflow is observed in the central cities. The largest number of citizens going abroad come from Bishkek, Chui and Osh regions.

Recent UNDP-IOM data show that 54 percent of returned migrants plan to go back to the same country of destination as soon as the situation will allow, while 35 percent will stay if there is a job or investment opportunity for them at home.<sup>132</sup> It is worth noting that the Kyrgyz Republic is among the top five countries with the highest share of remittances in their GDP. Remittance inflows hovered around 30 percent of the country's GDP in 2012–2019, (around 9 times more than FDI flows), with USD 2.5 billion in remittances in 2019.<sup>133</sup> Most macroeconomic studies concluded that the bulk of remittances are used for current consumption and invested in trade, services, agriculture, as well as housing and construction.<sup>134</sup>

Data from the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic shows that in the first nine months of 2022, more than USD 2 billion were transferred to the country as remittances, out of which 95 percent were from the Russian Federation. Whether this rise is solely attributable to remittances from migrant workers, according to experts this may also be due to Russian citizens replenishing international accounts opened in the country. However, the situation remains uncertain as the conflict in Ukraine and subsequent sanctions continue. The economy and labour market of Russia will continue to slow down, and the global inflation will inevitably impact Kyrgyz economies. As noted above, the inflation rate reached around 14.5 percent by end of 2022, according to the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic. Such inflation will likely reduce the positive impact of an increase in remittances, especially if the remittances increase is due to aforementioned temporarily moving around of financial assets by Russian migrants.

<sup>131</sup> Joint Report on Migration in Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek, 2015, available at: <http://rce.kg/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Edinyj-doklad-final.pdf>

<sup>132</sup> UNDP-IOM (2021). Assessment of local authorities' perceptions towards returned migrants and their readiness to reintegrate them. (not published yet)

<sup>133</sup> World Bank (2021). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=KG>

<sup>134</sup> Murzakulova A., Rural Migration in Kyrgyzstan: Drivers, Impact and Governance, 2020, Mountain Societies Research Institute, Research Paper No.7

## 2.7 Commitments under international norms and standards

### Overview

Overall, the human rights situation has significantly deteriorated in 2022. In addition to the escalation of violence at the border between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan in Batken region, the Government has extended its pressure on civil society and the political opposition. Along with adopting legislation restraining fundamental rights and freedoms, the Government has been perceived as using criminal prosecution to stifle monitoring and critical reporting on issues of public interest.

### Accession to human rights treaties

The Kyrgyz Republic has ratified or acceded to eight of the nine core UN human rights treaties.<sup>135</sup> It has also ratified all eight fundamental human rights Conventions of the ILO.<sup>136</sup> The country has yet to accede to the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED). In 2019, the Kyrgyz Republic eliminated statelessness by granting or confirming nationality to all the identified persons in its territory without statehood, for which it received global acknowledgement and award by the High Commissioner for Refugees in 2019.<sup>137</sup> The Kyrgyz Republic has not yet become a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on Reduction of Statelessness, which could help prevent a re-occurrence of statelessness. At the same time, the Government is making efforts in implementing its 2019 Statelessness High-Level Segment pledges, including on birth registration and prevention of childhood statelessness, endorsement of relevant by-laws on statelessness determination procedures and accession to the STA Conventions. After repatriating 79 children from Iraq in 2021, discussions are ongoing within Government over the repatriation of at least 450 remaining Kyrgyz nationals, predominantly women and children, from Iraq and Syria. Government authorities maintain an active dialogue with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Treaty Bodies,<sup>138</sup> the Universal Periodic Review, and Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>139</sup>

Overall, in 2022, little changed in terms of the above-mentioned conventions and protocols. Yet this dynamic relationship could be enhanced further if the Government were to boost capacity and ensure sustainability of the national machinery responsible for reporting obligations and implementation of recommendations made by the UN human rights mechanisms.

As guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), ratified by the country on October 2, 2003, the UN assists the Kyrgyz Republic in its efforts to implement the UNTOC's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Trafficking in Persons Protocol). In 2022, the Government approved a Programme to Combat Human Trafficking for 2022–2025 and the Action Plan for its implementation to ensure a systematic approach and increase the effectiveness of measures to combat human trafficking, aimed at promoting the rights of people – victims of human trafficking, based on the coordination and cooperation of Government agencies with public and international organizations. The Government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the past, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity. These efforts included identifying more victims; updating the criminal code to state that victims should be released from criminal liability

<sup>135</sup> See: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx)

<sup>136</sup> Ratifications of ILO conventions: Ratifications for Kyrgyzstan

<sup>137</sup> At the same time, the Kyrgyz Republic acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 1996

<sup>138</sup> In November 2021, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reviewed the human rights situation in the Kyrgyz Republic. In October 2022, the Human Rights Committee considered the third periodic report of Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>139</sup> In addition, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls and the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights visited the Kyrgyz Republic in February and May 2022 respectively.

from minor crimes committed as trafficking victims; finalizing and adopting standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the majority of ministries responsible for implementing the national referral mechanism (NRM); continuing efforts to repatriate dozens of vulnerable Kyrgyzstani children from potentially exploitative circumstances in armed conflict zones in Iraq and Syria. However, the Government decreased investigations and prosecutions and did not secure convictions of any traffickers-including cases that involved complicit officials, heavily relying on international organizations for victim identification and service provision.<sup>140</sup>

The evaluation of the National Human Rights Action Plan 2019–2021 revealed that the Government failed to implement most of the activities, especially those related to civil and political rights and non-discrimination. On 28 November 2022, the Government approved the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2022–2024, but did not take on board the most sensitive human rights mechanisms recommendations related to civil and political rights as well as fundamental freedoms. On 23 September 2022, the new National Gender Strategy was adopted. Another set of recommendations that requires rigorous attention are those made by the ILO Committee of Experts on Application of Conventions and Recommendations. The country has accepted two individual complaints procedures: under the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and under the Optional Protocol to the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). To date, the Treaty Bodies adopted 58 Views and found violations concerning arbitrary arrest, torture, unfair trial, inhuman treatment of detainees, non-refoulement, and gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment.<sup>141</sup> Still, there is a lack of effective mechanisms and legal procedures for the full implementation of the adopted Views (with only two views partially implemented). In 2022, the Government continued revising the existing procedure of implementing the Adopted Views, but the Regulation is still pending final approval. Despite the preliminary agreement between the Government and the UN in 2021 to establish a regular dialogue on human rights issues, no progress has been achieved so far. On 14 October 2022, Kyrgyzstan was elected to the Human Rights Council (2023-2026) for the third time.<sup>142</sup>

In November 2022, the Government started working on its first-ever voluntary mid-term report on the implementation of the recommendations received during the Third Universal Periodic Review in 2020.

## Ongoing issues

Since 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic has strengthened the national legal framework to prevent gender-based violence and forced marriages, ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2019 and the Protocol 2014 to ILO Convention 29 on Forced Labour.<sup>143</sup> At the same time, the Government has yet to implement recommendations from different human rights mechanisms on several issues, including: fair administration of justice; independence of the judiciary,<sup>144</sup> elimination of torture and gender-based violence;<sup>145</sup> non-discrimination and equality, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity;<sup>146</sup> freedom of expression and access to information;<sup>147</sup> freedom of the media;<sup>148</sup> protection of human rights defenders and journalists;<sup>149</sup> freedom of peaceful assembly; as well as addressing compliance with international labour standards, including all fundamental conventions and ratified governance and technical conventions in the field of freedom of association and collective bargaining, non-discrimination, child labour,

<sup>140</sup> See: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/kyrgyz-republic/>

<sup>141</sup> Refer to: <https://juris.ohchr.org>

<sup>142</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/ga/77/meetings/elections/hrc.shtml>

<sup>143</sup> Ratified by the country in February 2020.

<sup>144</sup> Supported UPR recommendation, September 2020: "Continue measures on strengthening the independence of the judiciary and protecting the rights of accused persons in legal proceedings..."

<sup>145</sup> See: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCSS%2fKGZ%2f44124&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCSS%2fKGZ%2f44124&Lang=en)

<sup>146</sup> See: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/4>

<sup>147</sup> See standards on access to information: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374369>

<sup>148</sup> See standards on safety of journalists covering protests: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374206>

<sup>149</sup> See: HRCtee, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Kyrgyzstan, CCPR/C/KGZ/CO/2, <https://uhri.ohchr.org/Document/File/03e27d7f-7591-4a6b-8d22-b3509183c737/575954B3-6A60-443C-A91E-3481F8467DFB>

forced labour, safe working conditions, labour administration, employment, social protection, and others.<sup>150</sup> Ten years later, the authorities are still reluctant to take any steps to provide justice for the victims of interethnic violence in 2010.

While the Office of Ombudsperson has strengthened its capacity to monitor and report on the human rights violations, it can still deepen its effectiveness by fully complying with the Paris Principles.<sup>151</sup> In September 2022, the Office of the Ombudsperson submitted its first-ever alternative report to international human rights mechanisms – an alternative report to the UN Human Rights Committee, highlighting critical human rights issues on SGBV against women and children.<sup>152</sup> Despite numerous human rights mechanisms' recommendations and advocacy, in June 2022, the Government suggested abolishing the NCPT by merging its functions with the Office of the Ombudsperson. Furthermore, the NCPT remains significantly underfunded, which undermines the ability to fully fulfil its mandate in line with the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture due to the lack of human and financial resources.<sup>153</sup> In November 2022, during the review of the national periodic report under the ICCPR, the Government Delegation noted that the NCPT will not be merged with the Ombudsperson's Institute until it is not brought in line with the Paris Principles. Article 70 of the new Constitution states that the President appoints and dismisses the Children's Rights' Ombudsperson. In addition, the President's control over the judiciary undermines the independence of the judiciary and continues raising human rights concerns.

The 2020 COVID-19 related restrictions imposed by the Government impacted the human rights situation in the country and restricted space for civil society and independent media.<sup>154</sup> While all regions have been in the green zone for some time and all public health requirements were lifted in early 2022, only after the constructive dialogue with the UN Human Rights Committee held on 11–12 October 2022, the COVID-19 Operational Headquarters decided to abolish the emergency provisions in the country.

In 2021–2022, the Government adopted several laws that have negatively affected fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and association. Furthermore, since March 2022, freedom of peaceful assembly has been significantly curtailed in Bishkek through the imposition of unlawful, unnecessary, disproportionate, and discriminatory blanket bans on peaceful assemblies by court decisions that were adopted during hearings that were not announced to the public. The public was also not timely informed of the imposed bans and court decisions were not immediately accessible to the public. The latest court decision extended the blanket ban on all peaceful assemblies in the center of Bishkek (apart from those organized by the authorities) until 31 March 2023. Civil society have characterized these bans as falling short of international and national legal provisions, including the Constitution and the existing progressive Law "On Peaceful Assemblies".

The escalation of violence which occurred along the Kyrgyz and Tajik border in September 2022, significantly deteriorated the human rights situation in Batken region. The high number of casualties, the large number of displaced person, and property damage to Government and civilian infrastructure suggest the lack of protection measures in place. At the 136th Session, the Human Rights Committee raised its concerns about the Government's failure to consider views of the affected population and civil society and recommended the Government to ensure broad and open consultation with all relevant actors.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>150</sup> See: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:14000:0::NO:14000:P14000\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:103529](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:14000:0::NO:14000:P14000_COUNTRY_ID:103529)

<sup>151</sup> In April 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended to accelerate the legal process to ensure independence of the Ombudsperson Office and provide the Office with the necessary resources to discharge its role efficiently. See: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fKGZ%2fCO%2f8-10&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fKGZ%2fCO%2f8-10&Lang=en). In order to comply with the Paris Principles and obtain the Status "A" from the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI), the new Law "On the Ombudsperson's Institute" (pending since a few years) has to exclude a clause that allows the Parliament to dismiss the Ombudsperson in case of non-approval of the Institute's Annual Report to the Parliament. The procedure for nomination of the Ombudsperson and criteria for the candidate have to be also aligned with the Paris Principles.

<sup>152</sup> [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCCPR%2fCSS%2fKGZ%2f49999&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCCPR%2fCSS%2fKGZ%2f49999&Lang=en)

<sup>153</sup> Parliament resolution of 18 September 2019

<sup>154</sup> Refer to: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/kyrgyzstan/freedom-world/2021>

<sup>155</sup> HRCtee COBs on Kyrgyzstan, 2022, paras 27-28, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KGZ/CCPR\\_C\\_KGZ\\_CO\\_3\\_50615\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/KGZ/CCPR_C_KGZ_CO_3_50615_E.pdf)

From a human rights perspective, the arrest of 27 people (including six women) in October 2022 concerning the so-called Kempir-Abad incident, discussed above, has become an issue of major concern in terms of bypassing international human rights norms and standards. On 26 October, an OHCHR spokesperson issued a media comment noting that the charges against the detained persons were widely seen as being linked to their publicly raising their concerns on this issue and their demands for more transparency in Government decision-making. The spokesperson also called on the authorities to ensure there is meaningful information-sharing and participation among a wide array of stakeholders in developing policies, and people's rights to freedom of expression and access to information. The spokesperson iterated the importance of public participation, including with regard to the Kempir-Abad reservoir. A number of international human rights organizations also issued statements calling for the immediate release of the detained people.<sup>156</sup>

In 2022, at least four deaths were reported while in custody, including two deaths in the pre-trial detention centre of the State Committee on National Security, with allegations of torture and ill-treatment. On 12 August 2022, the State Working Group created to investigate the deaths in the pre-trial facility found no violations in these cases. On the contrary, the relatives of died detainees raised their concerns about the impartiality and objectivity of the conducted investigation. In November 2022, in its Concluding Observations, the UN Human Rights Committee called the Government to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into all cases of deaths in detention.

In addition, no progress has been achieved in increasing ethnic minorities' representation in political bodies and decision-making positions, including in the judiciary and law enforcement bodies. Furthermore, the existing State language requirements for all civil servants hamper the nomination of ethnic minority candidates. The controversial draft Law "On the State Language" tabled by the State Language Commission at the end of 2021, has been stalled in 2022. While under the Kyrgyz Zharany Concept, the promotion of the Kyrgyz language as the language that can unite the nation around one civic identity continues, linguistic experts and civil society continue to raise concerns that methodology and teaching materials for the Kyrgyz language require further development. Against a backdrop of events in Ukraine, the promotion of the Kyrgyz language becomes even more acute, with many MPs, including the new Speaker, refusing to accept oral reports in Russian from state officials speaking at the Parliamentary sessions.

Economic, social and cultural rights have also seen a deterioration. Following his country visit to the Kyrgyz Republic, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty underlined<sup>157</sup> that the country remains among the most corrupt countries in the world. In addition, the Transparency International ranks Kyrgyzstan 144th out of 180 countries.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, its score has worsened by four points since 2020, after achieving consistent improvements since 2012. The Government failed to ensure effective and thorough investigations of cases of corruption, especially high-level corruption, creating a climate of impunity.

For the coming years, there will be a need to strengthen, promote and protect the role of civil society and independent media as impartial watchdogs of the Government's implementation of its human rights obligations. Preservation of an enabling civic and democratic space will be possible only if legislation and practices related to fundamental freedoms are aligned with international human rights standards. As mentioned above, over the past several months, several new cases of politically motivated persecution were reported for those who criticize, oppose and challenge current Government policies.<sup>159</sup> With the earlier mentioned pending draft law "On the Normative Legal Acts" that aims at limiting public participation in the law-making in specific cases, there are serious risks to democratic law-making and democratic space in general. Overall, the journey to the fullest respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights in Kyrgyzstan remains a work in progress that is hopefully not going to regress in the near future. In order to ensure

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.iphonline.org/kyrgyzstan-mass-arrests-of-government-critics.html>

<sup>157</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/EOM\\_VisitKyrgyzstan\\_23May\\_3June2022.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/EOM_VisitKyrgyzstan_23May_3June2022.docx)

<sup>158</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/kgz>

<sup>159</sup> <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31961728.html>, <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31993647.html>, <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31744135.html>

enjoyment of the whole range of rights, as prescribed by the ratified human rights treaties, Kyrgyz authorities should foster an environment that encourages dialogue, discussion, and consensus-seeking based on international human rights obligations on the ways forward towards realizing human rights of all without any discrimination. Kyrgyzstan's membership in the Human Rights Council from 2023–25 may provide an opportunity for the country to lead by example.

## Laws affecting sexual and gender-based violence

According to UN experts,<sup>160</sup> the Government has made formal commitments to advance women's rights and gender equality; however, as discussed earlier in this report, the leading root causes and drivers of gender-based discrimination and violence, including harmful gender stereotyping, lack of economic opportunity and security for women and girls, are not being systematically addressed. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), sexual exploitation and violence against children remain a continuing human rights concern in the Kyrgyz Republic, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the significant progress that has been made in addressing SGBV issues.

Furthermore, there are also gaps in the legal framework with regard to violence against women, including the definition of rape and sexual violence within marriage. Hence, it is of utmost importance to strengthen and provide high quality accessible GBV support services to women and girls. According to a 2020 UNFPA survey, 32 percent of respondents heard about an increase in domestic violence or experienced it themselves.<sup>161</sup> The typical portrait of a victim is a young woman aged 31–40 years (32.9 percent) and 21-30 years old (31.8 percent). Main contributing factors to violence are economic dependence on their husbands/partners, lack of resources to pay for an apartment and food; fear of social pressure and condemnation, and prevalent social norms that place women in a subservient role in the family.<sup>162</sup>

There were positive steps taken in introducing protection orders and establishing helplines for reporting domestic violence cases. A new Free Legal Aid Law was signed on 10 August 2022, introducing critical amendments to strengthen the performance of the state-funded legal aid system and increase the number of free recipients of legal services, including survivors of domestic violence. The crisis centers and shelters for survivors of violence (especially in rural areas) could benefit from more funding allocations,<sup>163</sup> and local authorities need to be encouraged to facilitate reporting of incidents of domestic violence to the law enforcement bodies rather than to aksakal courts which generally promote out of court settlement based on traditional norms, a process which often leads to injustice for the victims.<sup>164</sup> Regrettably, the abduction of women for forced marriage still continues to be a socially supported practice while the local authorities, police and courts do not have unified protocols for investigations and victim support.

The alarming rise in domestic violence is also associated with decriminalizing laws related to SGBV during the legal inventory process in 2020-2021.<sup>165</sup> There are also gaps in the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. The Law does not cover all forms of domestic violence and applies only to cohabiting family members and persons equated to them. Furthermore, it does not reflect the specifics of combating domestic violence against persons with disabilities and contains a discrepancy with the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding taking measures to protect all children regardless of age. In addition, the vagueness of concepts makes it difficult to apply certain norms. Moreover, corporal punishment of children is seen as an acceptable way of disciplining children within the family and the education system. The failure of state authorities to address cases of violence in schools indicates a solid need to reconsider mechanisms to address violence away from blaming the child to one protecting a child and making schools a safe environment for children.

<sup>160</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/kyrgyzstan-crossroads-immense-opportunity-harness-potential-women-un-experts>

<sup>161</sup> See: [https://kyrgyzstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/eng\\_gender\\_rapid\\_assessment\\_of\\_covid-19\\_impact\\_june\\_2020\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://kyrgyzstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/eng_gender_rapid_assessment_of_covid-19_impact_june_2020_final_0.pdf)

<sup>162</sup> UN Women (2020). Op. cit.

<sup>163</sup> Out of 15 crisis centres for women, there is only one municipal crisis centre in Bishkek. Only two crisis centres provide shelters (one in Bishkek, the other in Osh).

<sup>164</sup> Consult: <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/unicef-un-women-and-ohchr-joint-statement-impunity-violence-against-girls>

<sup>165</sup> Cases reported rising from 6,145 in 2019 to 10,151 in 2021.

## Media freedom

In 2022, the Kyrgyz Republic was ranked 72nd out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders' press freedom ranking.<sup>166</sup> Independent journalists and bloggers face challenges in accessing information and have made complaints of harassment (online and offline), including threats, physical violence, cyber-attacks and interrogations by security agencies in the performance of their professional functions as well as legal defamation suits. A growing number of civic activists and political opponents have been subjected to surveillance, had their homes searched, been detained and interrogated by law enforcement authorities, and criminally prosecuted in reprisal for their journalistic and civic activities.<sup>167</sup>

Accepted in 2021, the Law on Protection from Inaccurate (false) information, created additional pressure on media outlets. The Law violates freedom of expression and creates an administrative procedure for dealing with online defamation appeals in avoidance of the justice system. As of November 2022, the Law had been invoked three times – against the 24.kg media, the Res Publica news website, and the Azattyk Media websites (the Kyrgyz service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty).<sup>168</sup> Civil society organizations have challenged the Law twice in the Constitutional Court. However, the Court found both appeals inadmissible with the justification that it was too early to assume that implementing the Law would violate the constitutional provisions.

In 2022, the Presidential Administration initiated a bill on Media envisaging a ban on the establishment of media outlets by non-Kyrgyz citizens and by organizations with foreign ownership. All media outlets would need to re-register during 2023, while unregistered foreign outlets or those receiving foreign assistance will now have to obtain a special permit. The draft law also proposes giving websites the status of media outlets yet fails to fully define this category. Civil society, with the support of international development partners including the UN / UNRC, has pushed for dialogue with the authorities draft Law. The Presidential Administration agreed to review the draft Law on Media with a joint working group composed of media, civil society, and Government representatives.



<sup>166</sup> See: <https://rsf.org/en/kyrgyzstan>

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/01/kyrgyzstan-spate-criminal-cases-against-journalists-emilya-bekieva-deportirovali-iz-rossii-i-zaderzhali-v-kyrgyzstane-za-provokatsionnye-posty/>

<sup>168</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/28/kyrgyzstan-authorities-renew-attack-media>

<https://kloop.kg/blog/2022/09/07/aktivista->

### 3. National vision for sustainable development

The National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018–2040 continues to be the overarching framework that provides the strategic long-term visioning for the trajectory of the country’s socio-economic development. It is based on the following four priority dimensions:

1. **Human Development:** recognizing the importance of access to, and engagement in, society through equal access to health, education, decent work, culture, science and civil integration.
2. **Economic Well-being and Promotion of Business and Finance:** recognizing the importance of developing a competitive economy, making the most of human capital and formal labor markets, improving investment potential and regional development with quality infrastructure. This priority also seeks to develop key sectors of the economy, such as the agro-industry, light industry, and sustainable tourism. Ensuring environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change will underpin long-term growth of the economy.
3. **Public Administration:** ensuring a strong and stable public administration through a balanced system of state power, fair judicial system, development of local self-governance, strengthening national and regional security, economic and diplomatic integration, and promotion of a digital economy.
4. **Transformation of the Development System:** reforming management of development system by reviewing all previous development policies prior to the National Development Strategy 2040, strengthening the capacity for coordination in development through reorganizing the National Council for Sustainable Development and improved capacities and use of technologies as well as monitoring and evaluation.

The President of the Kyrgyz Republic endorsed the National Development Strategy until 2026 (NDS). The NDS is built on a series of measures across seven priority areas as shown in the table below.





## Box 2. Overview of National Development Strategy

<b>Anti-crisis measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combating the COVID-19 infection</li> <li>Restoring economic activity</li> <li>Quality and accessibility of education in a COVID-19 Pandemic</li> <li>Governance in a crisis</li> </ul>
<b>Governance reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reform of the executive branch</li> <li>Digitalization of the governance and development of digital infrastructure</li> <li>Administrative-territorial reforms</li> <li>Fiscal reform</li> <li>Judicial and law enforcement reform</li> </ul>
<b>Establishing the environment for development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment and business climate, export promotion</li> <li>Transport and logistics infrastructure</li> <li>Clean drinking water</li> <li>Labor market and employment</li> <li>Financial market</li> <li>Public finance</li> </ul>
<b>Economic development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hydropower</li> <li>Agriculture and processing</li> <li>Tourism development</li> <li>Mining</li> <li>Light industry</li> </ul>
<b>Social development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socio-cultural development, strengthening civic identity.</li> <li>Healthy Nation</li> <li>Educated Nation</li> <li>Inclusive growth</li> <li>Social services</li> </ul>
<b>Foreign policy and national security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring key national security priorities</li> <li>Ensuring military security</li> <li>Border security</li> <li>Foreign policy</li> </ul>
<b>Special priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modernization of cities</li> <li>Environmental sustainability and climate change</li> </ul>

## 4. Leave no one behind

The concept of “leave no one behind” is an analytical tool that goes beyond simple data disaggregation by providing assessments on the intersectionality of circumstances that create groups that are left further behind compared to other groups or cohorts of people. The Five Factor Framework (FFF) was used to identify the following most vulnerable groups. (See Annex B for more information on the ‘Five Factor Framework’ used for the analysis and other vulnerable groups.) Particular groups of those left behind are outlined below.

### Poor rural households with high dependency ratio

According to the FFF, poor rural households, including smallholder farmers, are among the groups of people who face the highest degree of intersectional deprivations. Agriculture accounted for only 15 percent of GDP in 2021. However, the agricultural sector is crucial as a source of employment, income, and food security for the large rural population as alone it employs officially around 20 percent of the labor force.<sup>169</sup> The share of those families is more significant in the southern provinces, facing the challenges of low access to land and smaller land plots. Within this category, particularly vulnerable are poor households with a high dependency ratio living in rural areas prone to climate-related shocks due to poor access to services and limited economic opportunities. Indeed, around 28 percent of poor households have a high dependency ratio, one-third (30 percent) of whom are headed by women.<sup>170</sup> These poor households have more than five dependents per working member, including children, persons with disabilities, elderly and economically inactive working age family members. These households have been extremely vulnerable to the health risks and economic shocks caused by the pandemic and the global food crisis. The loss of employment by the breadwinner and/or the unaffordability of essential needs leaves the whole family without any means of subsistence and entirely reliant on the social protection system that is unable to cope with the growing needs of the population.<sup>171</sup> Health facilities in rural areas are another concern, as they tend to be underequipped and have fewer physical and human resources to serve rural populations. This leaves rural populations to travel to more urban areas to seek healthcare with the additional time and financial cost that entails.

### Rural women and poor female headed households

The high intersectional vulnerability faced by rural women is widely recognized in the country, which placed supporting their economic activities as a key priority in the national gender agenda. Unpaid care makes it difficult for rural women to take advantage of on- and off-farm employment opportunities. In 2020, the share of employed rural women was only 40.6 percent in comparison with 70.7 percent of employed rural men. The lowest employment rate among rural women is in Naryn (24.8 percent) and Batken (26.7 percent).<sup>172</sup> Moreover, when employed, women are mostly engaged in low paid sectors as the salary ratio of women to men salary is 75 percent. Female employment is particularly crucial if one considers that 38.9 percent of households are women-led,<sup>173</sup> exacerbated by high internal and external migration. Female-headed households are thus among those most susceptible to poverty. Women of reproductive age are especially prone to poor and monotonous diets in the most vulnerable communities of the country. In surveys, only 43 percent of women of reproductive age (18-49) were found to have the minimum diet diversity in the last 24-hour reporting period.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>169</sup> NSC, Employed population by industries and the territory. Available at: <http://www.stat.kg/en/statistics/zanyatost/>

<sup>170</sup> WFP (2020). Poverty Analysis based on KIHS 2019.

<sup>171</sup> The share of households in which at least one member of the household lost a job in the country or was forced to return from abroad due to job loss was about 22 percent (IOM, 2020 - “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on households”).

<sup>172</sup> NSC (2021). Report on Women and Men: 2016-2020 .

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> WFP Food Security Outcome Monitoring, 2021.

Rural women also face unequal access to productive assets, including the lack of protection of their rights to ownership of land and other resources, limited access to financial capital, a lower level of technical agricultural knowledge, which, in return, limits the growth of their agricultural output.<sup>175</sup> Likewise, women in general are unequally represented in decision-making. In 2020, 39.2 percent of women worked as civil servants compared to 60.8 percent of men; and this discrepancy is higher if one takes into consideration employment in political and special posts where only 24.3 percent of women are employed versus 75.7 percent of men. In the Jogorku Kenesh, only 20 members (16.7 percent) are women.

Women are also more dependent on social assistance and social services than men, and they make up the majority of low-income people who apply for state social benefits. In 2020, 436,000 people were covered by such benefits, among whom 52 percent were women coming mainly from female-headed households.<sup>176</sup> Particularly disadvantaged within this group are rural women with intersecting forms of discrimination. For example, rural women with disabilities face double stigmatization - not only on the basis of gender, but also due to their disability, with limitations hindering their access to legal, social, health, legal and other type of services. The Gender, Equality and Human Rights Analysis of COVID-19 response from 2022 noted the unequal representation of vulnerable groups and the lack of participation of CSOs at the decision-making level during the COVID-19 period resulted in neglect of specific needs of women, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, especially during the times of building response activities.

Rural women employed in the informal sector, especially in agriculture, are unlikely to contribute to the mandatory health insurance fund, leaving them covered by the SGBP alone, susceptible to higher out of pocket payments for health services. Likewise, they are unable to make pension insurance contributions, resulting in income insecurity in older age. This lack of financial protection coupled with the generally lower quality of basic services provided in rural and remote areas puts them at higher risk of worse health outcomes than their urban counterparts.

Similarly, the Kyrgyz Alliance of Family Planning found that safe abortion services decreased to 25-28 percent in public facilities, whereas they increased in private facilities up to 68-85 percent. This has clear equity implications as women who cannot afford to seek care in private facilities are left behind to carry through to unwanted pregnancies.

## Children and adolescents

With over a fifth of the population of school age,<sup>177</sup> children and adolescents face multiple challenges, notably food and nutrition insecurity, as well as unequal access to health and education services, that, taken together, create lifelong consequences that contribute to reduced human capital. In short, they experience shortfalls in the necessary skills, knowledge and experience, which ultimately affects a country's productivity and economic prospects.

More than half of children (53.9 percent) are deprived of adequate health and nutrition, decent living standards, early development, social inclusion and protection.<sup>178</sup> Although enrolment and attendance rates are relatively high, the quality of education provided is problematic. Approximately 50 percent of children 7-14 years old and 60 percent of primary school students did not have minimal acceptable reading and comprehension skills.<sup>179</sup> Given the prevalence of malnutrition in the early stages of life for children and adolescents, which is often carried over into adulthood (see Chapter 2.3), there is a need to take appropriate measures targeting children. In fact, the onset of many NCDs can be prevented or delayed by addressing risk factors earlier in life.

<sup>175</sup> FAO (2016). National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods - Kyrgyzstan, 2016

<sup>176</sup> NSC (2021). Report on Women and Men: 2016-2020

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> NSC In 2020 at <http://stat.kg/ru/news/v-2020-godu-kazhdjy-chetvertyj-zhitel-kyrgyzstana-prozhival-v-usloviyah-bednosti/>

<sup>179</sup> NSC & UNICEF (2019)

Almost three-quarters of children and adolescents experience some form of violence. Over one-quarter of children are engaged in child labour with ILO Supervisory Bodies raising concerns, especially in regard to children engaged in hazardous work (agriculture).<sup>180</sup> One in 11 girls aged 15-19 was estimated to be currently married<sup>181</sup> and 13 percent of young women aged 20–24 were married or in a union before the age of 18.

The Kyrgyz Republic has effective routine immunization coverage without significant socioeconomic differences in vaccine uptake. Nonetheless routine immunization coverage decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic with immunization services interrupted in March-May 2020. The Kyrgyz Republic was one of four countries in the EURO region who interrupted routine immunization due to COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the burden of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health system, the country continued routine immunization activities according to identified Regional Measles elimination and Poliomyelitis eradication goals.

### **Urban and peri-urban poor households**

Urban and peri-urban poor households have been generally excluded from Government targeted programmes. Over the last 15 years, the gap between rural and urban poverty rates has shrunk from 21 percentage points in 2006 to 11 percentage points in 2020 to no gap in 2021, meaning that consideration should be given to the urban poor as well. This is also true in regard to food security and nutrition as undernutrition is more severe in urban areas (48.2 percent) compared to rural areas (43.6 percent).<sup>182</sup> Among the urban poor and vulnerable (bottom 40 percent), only 2.3 percent receive *ui-buloogo komok*, which is considerably low in comparison with the national indicator (14.1 percent).<sup>183</sup> More than half of all poor and vulnerable urban households do not receive any type of social transfers. In effect, this group is not visible to the Government targeting system.

The ongoing socio-economic crises are deteriorating urban livelihoods as the closure of the gap between rural and urban poverty confirmed. Indeed, urban settings were more harshly hit by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to higher loss of jobs and greater reduction in income compared to rural areas. The regional breakdown on the impact of COVID-19 provided evidence of growing urban vulnerability in the two major cities of Bishkek and Osh cities, which suffered the most from job loss (35.2 percent compared to 21.8 percent nationally), income reduction (66.2 percent compared to 53.8 percent nationally) and had a higher percentage of households experiencing financial issues (77.5 percent compared to 72.6 percent nationally).<sup>184</sup> In 2021, almost 36 percent of the population of Bishkek was living under the poverty line, with 9.5 percent of the population living in extreme poverty.

Disparities in investment, infrastructure and staffing of health services across the country results in people in underserve areas being left behind. PHC offers the most affordable services to the population. PHC is more accessible in urban areas than in the rest of the country, leaving those living in deprived regions behind. The two city regions are relatively over-staffed with PHC health workers (in particular Bishkek City) while other regions are 'understaffed' (in particular Osh, Chui and Jalal-Abad Oblasts). PHC staff/population ratios by region tell the same story: only Bishkek and Osh cities have adequate ratios of PHC to population. These ratios are particularly low in Osh, Chui and Jalal-Abad Oblasts.

<sup>180</sup> ILO (2016). Kyrgyzstan Child Labour Survey

<sup>181</sup> Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018 available at <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/reports/multiple-indicator-cluster-survey-mics-situation-children-and-women-kyrgyzstan>

<sup>182</sup> Proportion of the population consuming less than 2,100 kcal per day: <https://sustainabledevelopment-kyrgyzstan.github.io/2-1-1/>

<sup>183</sup> WFP (2019). Op.cit.

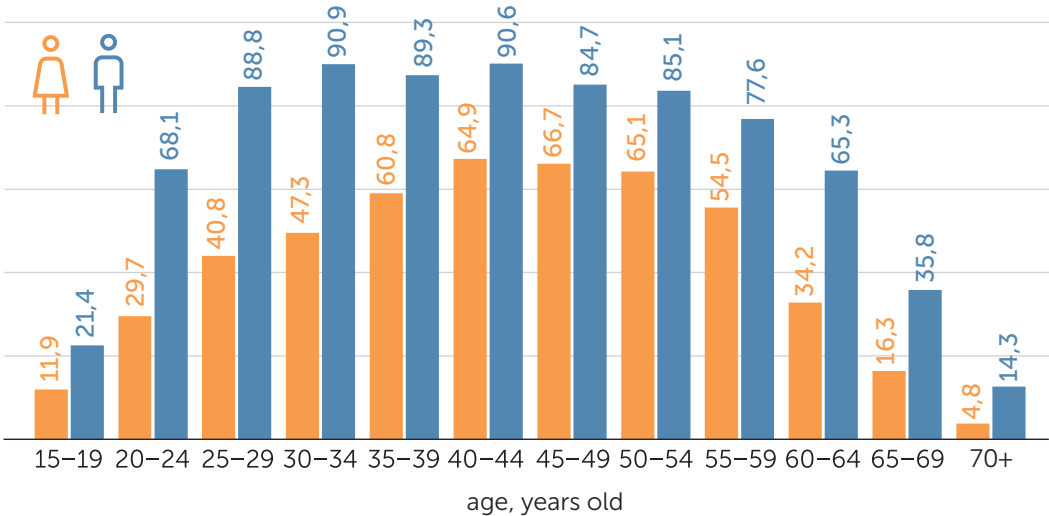
<sup>184</sup> NSC (2020). On the results of the sample survey "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on households

**Unemployed youth, youth working informally and young households.**

Young people, especially from poor, rural, marginalized, excluded and high-risk groups, represent a greater challenge in order for them to be fully engaged in the social, economic and political life of the country. Approximately 15 percent of the population is between 15 and 24 years old, which implies that the number of youths entering the labor market every year is very high.<sup>185</sup> Active participation of ethnically diverse youth in the labor sector is critical to achieve the 2030 Agenda and other related frameworks, which requires the healthy transition of young people into adulthood. In 2020, 83.9 percent of youth (15–24 years of age) were working in the informal sector, making this group one of the most vulnerable to the current economic crises.<sup>186</sup> It also makes them less likely to forgo seeking medical care or paying out of pocket when they do need medical help because informal workers are not eligible for copayments for a wide range of health services and products. Youth employed in the informal sector are not covered by sick leave and thus more likely to continue working even when sick, with consequences for disease control in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

The employment rate of young men in the Kyrgyz Republic remains higher than that of young women.<sup>187</sup> The most significant gap is observed in the 20–34 age group, which is due to the fact that young women leave work due to childbirth, as reflected in the shortage of kindergartens and the low coverage of children in preschool education throughout the country (25 percent).<sup>188</sup>

**Figure 9. Employment by gender and age group in 2020 (%)**



Source: NSC, 2021, Report on Women and Men: 2016-2020

During the community level consultations conducted by WFP in April-May 2021, young households with infants who are not supported by their parents emerged to be another category particularly at risk to be left behind, given the high unemployment and informality youth are subjected to and the high rate of teenage/early pregnancies.

<sup>185</sup> NSC, Resident population of the Kyrgyz Republic as of January 1, 2022. Available at: <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>  
<sup>186</sup> ILO (2018). Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer32/>  
<sup>187</sup> NSC (2020). Op. cit.  
<sup>188</sup> A. Avdeev (2021). Op. cit.

## Returned and internal migrants, migrant workers, and households dependent on remittances

According to recent statistics, there are more than one million Kyrgyz migrants abroad – as of 2021, there were 1.064 million Kyrgyz migrants in the Russian Federation alone, the most popular destination country of Kyrgyz migrants.<sup>189</sup> It is estimated that about 76 percent of migrants are under 35 years old and about 53 percent of labor migrants are women.<sup>190</sup> Most labor migrants (over 95 percent) work within member-countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Economic migrants and their families typically face multiple vulnerabilities and deprivations, including poverty. The COVID-19 crisis triggered the return of labour migrants due to shrinking employment and labour market opportunities in the countries of destination.

Both migrants remaining abroad and returning home are at risk of becoming food insecure.<sup>191</sup> As a coping mechanism to the ongoing economic crises, 16 percent of households in the country has increased the number of members in migration in search for income.<sup>192</sup> Households dependent on remittances are very often made up of people who, even if working, rely on remittances as their main source of income. With remittances needed primarily to cover basic consumption needs, many families have limited or no savings to cushion the shocks triggered by a fall in or the cessation of remittances. This will in its turn affect consumption patterns and households' capacities to meet food, health, and education needs. Return migration also puts additional pressure on an already strained health system. Their access to health and social services is also hampered by the registration system, propiska, requiring migrants to be registered to access urban public services such as healthcare, water, education, energy, etc. To obtain the city registration, migrants need to legalize their residences and complete additional paperwork, which is an expensive and time-consuming process especially in the light of unsteady, seasonal or part-time employment.

More than 277,000 children have one migrant worker parent and 99,000 have both parents working overseas.<sup>193</sup> In these cases, children are left in the care of relatives, in residential institutions, or in informal foster care with friends or neighbours – sometimes without formalized guardianship arrangements. Lack of parental care can lead to detrimental effects on the psycho-social development and academic performance of children and children staying with family members are at increased risk of experiencing violence and abuse.<sup>194</sup> Children who remain behind while their parents are in migration are at higher risk of child labour.<sup>195</sup>

## Conflict affected populations (IDPs, host families and returnees)

As discussed above, the violence along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in September 2022 resulted in over 142,000 being internally displaced from several locations in Batken, Leilek and Osh districts. According to official information as of the 28 September 2022, people started returning to their homes later in September, with 126,890 people having returned to Leilek and Batken districts. From the remaining displaced population, a total of 12,516 people was being hosted by host families, while the remaining 2,665 were in temporary collective shelters set up by the Government and local authorities.<sup>196</sup> The most vulnerable groups in the affected areas are women and children, the elderly, people with disabilities (women, girls, men, and boys) and female heads of households. It is to be noted that women and children are the most populous group among the vulnerable groups, with high percentages of them having been displaced/

<sup>189</sup> Selected indicators of the migration situation in the Russian Federation for January - December 2021 with distribution by country and region. Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic

Joint Report on Migration in Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Armenia, Republic of Tajikistan, and the Russian Federation. Bishkek, 2018, available at: <http://rce.kg/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Edinyj-doklad-final.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> Joint Report on Migration in Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek, 2015, available at: <http://rce.kg/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Edinyj-doklad-final.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> WFP (2022). mVAM Report – not published yet.

<sup>192</sup> IOM (2021) Kyrgyzstan: Study on the Socioeconomic Effects of COVID-19 on Returnees. Vienna.

<sup>193</sup> MICS 2018

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in Izidool + Situation Analysis on Adolescent and Youth Suicides and Attempted Suicides in Kyrgyzstan UNICEF (2020) Bishkek

<sup>195</sup> Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2020). 2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Kyrgyz Republic

<sup>196</sup> Disaster Response Coordination Unit (DRCU) (2022). MULTI SECTORAL RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

evacuated by the Government. Moreover, people with legal and documentation issues, are also highlighted as a vulnerable group in need of support in some affected areas. IDPs have hindered access to food and non-food items. An estimated 38 percent of surveyed population reported having difficulties securing enough food, including 20 percent going at least one whole day and night without eating, 11 percent skipping meals or eating less than usual. Difficulties were most prevalent among affected people living in or near the place directly impacted, and the displaced population living with family, friends or local residents (living with or assisted by host families). They are also an urgent need in accessing non-food items like clothes, blankets, tents, etc. For many among the affected populations interviewed (36 percent), no cash savings were available at all during the time of the assessment. For some households (13 percent), only up to KGS 2,000 was available per person for the next two weeks. An additional 24 percent had some savings, but the amount was less than the national average Minimum Subsistence Level. This implies that nearly one in three of the affected population mainly was relying on external assistance to cover their food and essential non-food needs.

### **Prisoners and ex-prisoners (deprivation of liberty and alternatives to imprisonment)**

The prison population of the Kyrgyz Republic is more than 10,500 people, which puts the country in 90th place in the world ranking table for the total number of inmates. It ranks 93rd with respect to the percentage of its population incarcerated at 171 convicts per 100,000. At present, the number of persons in the SIZO (pre-trial detention facilities) is 1,949, and 8,625 in the PS (penitentiary system).<sup>197</sup> There is an ongoing reform process in the criminal justice system, which includes the adoption of the Law on Probation that came into force on 1 January 2019. In December 2018, the Government issued a decree to transfer the Probation service from the Penitentiary service to the Ministry of Justice by 2020. The legislative changes to the criminal and probation laws laid the foundation for a new criminal policy based on the humanization of the justice system. Since 2019, thousands of cases were reviewed, and the number of convicts reduced from 10,891 in 2019 to 9,400 in 2020 and further reduced to 8,625 in 2021.

From a wider perspective, imprisonment disrupts relationships and weakens social cohesion, since the maintenance of such cohesion is based on long-term relationships. When a member of a family is imprisoned, the disruption of the family structure affects relationships between spouses, as well as between parents and children, reshaping the family and community across generations. Imprisonment produces a deep social transformation in families and communities.

Imprisonment disproportionately affects individuals and families living in poverty. When an income generating member of the family is imprisoned, the rest of the family must adjust to this loss of income. Thus, the family experiences financial losses as a result of the imprisonment of one of its members, exacerbated by the new expenses that must be met, such as the cost of a lawyer, food for the imprisoned person, transport to prison for visits and so on. When released, often with no prospects for employment, former prisoners are generally subject to socio-economic exclusion and are thus vulnerable to an endless cycle of poverty, marginalization, criminality and imprisonment. Thus, imprisonment contributes directly to the impoverishment of the prisoner, of his family (with a significant cross-generational effect) and of society by creating future victims and reducing future potential economic performance.

<sup>197</sup> Information provided during the Consultation with Penal Reform International and cited in and <http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/kyrgyzstan>

## 5. Global, cross-boundary, regional and sub-regional perspectives

### Overview

Global and regional interactions significantly shape the development pathways of countries in the modern world. Peace and security, economic growth, and even political stability depend on partnerships with global and regional partners, military alliances, and economic unions, including relationships with neighbouring countries. The Kyrgyz Republic's international cooperation frameworks were redefined and adapted following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Kyrgyz Republic has been an active member in the UN since 1992 and WTO since 1998, with open and diverse international partnerships and diplomatic relations. Globally, Russia, China, the EU and US have been key international partners of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the country engages with Central Asian states, especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, on security, as well as economic and political issues.

### Russian Federation

The Russian Federation continues to be the key geostrategic, military, economic and political partner of the Kyrgyz Republic over the last 30 years contributing to its development. Russia is a key security guarantor, with a unified military base present in the country (including an airbase in Kant), and provides military equipment (both donated and purchased) as well as training for personnel and exchange of experience, including joint military exercises. The Kyrgyz Republic is part of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (the CSTO), which guarantees support of members in case of external invasion. The Kyrgyz Republic is also part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The country joined the Russia-initiated Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2014 – an important step towards integration of trade cooperation, which includes a Custom Union with some of key trading partners (Russia, Kazakhstan). Russia has remained the largest trading partner over the years, with imports of USD 1.3 billion, and USD 241 million of exports in 2020.<sup>198</sup> Russia is the third largest investor with over USD 1.5 billion of investments between 1995 and 2020.<sup>199</sup>

The Russian Federation has been one of the most frequently referred to Governments as a potential third party facilitator for resolving the border dispute between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The Russian Federation offered to make relevant historical maps and documents available to the two sides to facilitate their border negotiation process. More specifically, President Putin stated in Astana on 13 October 2022 that Moscow had “more reliable” information on the border between former Soviet States, noting that the three countries “agreed” that the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan would give Russia the “relevant documents and their vision of resolving” problems. Russia would in turn not only try to evaluate the proposals, but also “use the documents” at its disposal to find a “joint” solution which could become a basis for a possible agreement. No information has since been shared publicly on any follow up to the Russia's offer to facilitate and provide additional maps. Neither country expressed any official position on the proposal.

The Kyrgyz Government's Defense Minister voiced a possibility of deploying a small contingent of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) troops in the disputed border areas to ensure the sides adhere to the agreements on ceasefire and weapon withdrawal. There is no public reaction to this by the CSTO.

<sup>198</sup> All trade data in this chapter are based on preliminary 2020 data provided by the Statistics Office of the Kyrgyz Republic (<http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/download/dynamic/527/>; and <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/download/dynamic/525/>)

<sup>199</sup> Inbound foreign direct investments by country 1995-2020 Available at: (<http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/download/dynamic/395/>). Statistics Office of the Kyrgyz Republic. All data on FDI in this chapter refer to this source.



The Eurasian Development Bank (in which Russia holds 66 percent of shares) holds 14 percent of Kyrgyz sovereign debt. Russia continues to provide budget support (e.g., USD 20 million in December 2020) and humanitarian assistance, and both countries established the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund which has sought to enhance modernization of the Kyrgyz economy and country's integration into the EAEU, with disbursed funding of USD 433 million between 1995–2020.<sup>200</sup>

Russian language is the official language in the Kyrgyz Republic, and widely spoken, with most online and traditional media having a Russian-language version. Historic cultural ties remain strong. Russia is also a destination for 85 percent of Kyrgyz emigrants. Considering the close partnership, the Government considers the position of the Russian Federation in diplomatic affairs, international alliances, economic and investment policies, security and military partnerships, and some domestic issues.

## People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China is an increasingly important partner of the Kyrgyz Republic contributing to its development. A 1,063 km shared border demarcation was completed in 2009. China is the largest bilateral lender, holding 42.6 percent of the country's overall sovereign debt, a portion of which went to finance key infrastructure within the Belt and Road Initiative, such as the new railroad infrastructure.<sup>201</sup> It is also the largest investor in the country, investing USD 3.1 billion in 1995–2020, and an important trade partner -the second largest importer (USD 736.8 million) in 2020 [sixth export partner with USD 43.2 million]. With growing economic cooperation, the countries also cooperate in political and military fields. China provided military equipment valued at over USD 28 million<sup>202</sup> in the period of 1992-2013, and joint military (mostly anti-terrorist) exercises were held. The Government likewise cooperates with China on cybersecurity and counter-terrorism using the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Friendly and close relationships between China and the Kyrgyz Republic are marred with some community protests against Chinese investments (e.g., in January 2019 and February 2020).

## Other key partnerships

Western countries, including the European Union and the United States, have been important investment partners for the Kyrgyz Republic, with limited political and trade cooperation. Political dialogue takes place through a number of platforms, including C5+1 (Central Asian countries and the US), the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Council, and EU-Kyrgyz Republic human rights dialogue. Trade levels between the West and the Kyrgyz republic are limited, The EU collectively was the fourth largest trading partner in 2020 with USD 259 million in exports and USD 50 million in imports. In November 2021 Kyrgyz Republic hosted the European Union-Central Asia Economic Forum. This high-level gathering was the first in a series of events taking place in Central Asian countries in the coming years, within the framework of the EU Strategy on Central Asia adopted in 2019<sup>203</sup>. Strengthening economic ties between the European Union and Central Asia is one of the priorities of the strategy. The Forum offered an opportunity to exchange views on priority areas for the Central Asia region in respect of sustainable economic development. The three main areas of the Forum were green recovery, digitalization, and a better business environment. Canada is the second largest investor in the country with USD 2.4 billion invested in the 1995-2020 period – mostly for mining. And Great Britain invested approximately USD 1 billion in the same period. Western countries bilaterally do not hold large shares of

<sup>200</sup> See: [https://www.rkdf.org/ru/o\\_nas](https://www.rkdf.org/ru/o_nas); <https://ru.sputnik.kg/economy/20210322/1051853697/rkfr-kolichestvo-kreditov.html>

<sup>201</sup> Projects financed within the Belt and Road Initiative are presented in: Roman Mogilevskii, Kyrgyzstan and the Belt and Road Initiative, UCA WORKING PAPER #50, 2019 See: <https://ucentralasia.org/Content/Downloads/UCA-IPPA-Wp50%20-%20ENG.pdf>

<sup>202</sup> Kozhemyakin S.V. Foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan in the mirror of integration processes in Central Asia // Post-Soviet continent. – 2014. – № 1 (1). – C. 112; Mikhnevich S.V. Promoting the development of trade and the PRC's approaches to the provision of international assistance // Russia and China: problems of strategic interaction: collection of the Eastern Center. – 2014. – № 15. – C. 53.

<sup>203</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint\\_communication\\_-\\_the\\_eu\\_and\\_central\\_asia\\_-\\_new\\_opportunities\\_for\\_a\\_stronger\\_partnership.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_the_eu_and_central_asia_-_new_opportunities_for_a_stronger_partnership.pdf)

Kyrgyz sovereign debt, but multilateral banks, including the World Bank Group, EBRD and EIB hold around 28 percent of it. Western countries are vocal on issues of the democratic space and rule of law in the country. Many of them remain important development partners for the country by providing funding to a wide range of socio-economic development projects, as well as by supporting democratic institutions, rule of law, media and human rights. Their support has been crucial for enabling civil society to work on sensitive issues and promoting compliance with human rights.

The Kyrgyz Republic actively engages in the activities of the United Nations platforms, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP)<sup>204</sup>. The Kyrgyz Republic was a founding member State of UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) since 1998. Within these organizations, the Kyrgyz Republic engages in cooperation in the areas of water, energy and environment, sustainable transport, transit and connectivity, trade, statistics, innovation and technology for sustainable development, as well as gender issues.

### **Central Asian States and other partners**

Sharing common history and cultural similarities, the Kyrgyz Republic engages in close cooperation with Central Asian States, especially its neighbors - Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Yet regional integration and connectivity and 'horizontal integration' (as opposed to 'vertical integration' through large players such as Russia and China) in Central Asia have not been fully harnessed, despite continuing opportunities to expand. Kazakhstan is the fourth largest investment partner with USD 1.35 billion invested in 1995–2020, as well as being an important trade partner (USD 500 million in imports, USD 293.8 million in exports in 2020). Likewise, Kazakhstan is an important provider of humanitarian support, and a key partner for the transit of goods. Notable trade volumes also exist with Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's cooperation and role in the Kyrgyz Republic is growing under the greater regional cooperation policies adopted by the two countries, including humanitarian support, joint enterprises, and investments.

Trading relationships are uneven in other Central Asian countries, especially with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, partly because Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are not part of the EAEU, but also because of the similarities of their economies.<sup>205</sup> Kyrgyzstan keeps the border closed with Tajikistan after the first large escalation of the border conflict in April-May 2021. The Kyrgyz Government has been appealing to abolish (reduce) trade barriers between Central Asian countries. The Government has also been supporting the peace process and cooperation with Afghanistan within the Heart of Asia process, and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). In addition, the Government cooperates with other Central Asian states on economic cooperation, security, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, military cooperation (including joint exercises), and many other areas both bilaterally as well as through CIS, CSTO, SCO, OSCE, CoE and other organizations.

The close cooperation notwithstanding, there are several issues that mar the overall friendly relationships of the Kyrgyz Republic with other Central Asian States. As discussed earlier, incomplete delimitation of the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan triggers intermittent border conflicts that contribute to political tensions especially between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. Water resources remain an important issue of concern and dialogue in Central Asia. The Interstate Water Use Coordination Commission was established in 1992 and regulates water quotas annually, with the 1998 agreement on the Naryn-Syrdarya basin water based on the "water for fuel and electricity" principle. The agreement stopped operating effectively in 2006, raising negative reactions by various sides. The Kyrgyz Government has been proposing to reestablish the Naryn-Syrdarya basin agreement between four Central Asian states that

<sup>204</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/resources/intergovernmental-agreement-asian-highway-network>

<sup>205</sup> Uzbekistan became an EAEU observer at the end of 2020.

envisages the use of a compensatory mechanism. The Government has also effectively resigned from the participation in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. The Kyrgyz Government claims that 45 percent of all water resources of the region are formed in Kyrgyz mountains.<sup>206</sup> Climate and demographic changes and changing economic policies (e.g., intensive agriculture development), as well as ineffective water management pose a risk of long-term tensions over water resources in the region.<sup>207</sup>

Recent developments in Afghanistan indicate growing risks to regional stability and security that could impact the Kyrgyz Republic, including transport and connectivity, regional energy projects (CASA-1000), as well as drug trafficking, and violent extremism. The domestic and foreign policies of the Taliban Government and its ability to control various groups inside the country, as well as the position of key global and regional players to the new Afghan Government are yet to define future ramifications for Central Asian countries, including the Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyz Government has been supportive in establishing contacts with the Taliban Government, and provided humanitarian support in September and October 2021, advocating for continued humanitarian support to the people of Afghanistan.

Both bilateral and multilateral meetings of the highest Central Asian decision-makers take place regularly. Fourth Consultative Summit of the Leaders of Central Asian States organized in July 2022 in Kyrgyzstan laid out a joint vision and multiple initiatives on better regional aligning against external shocks, leading to a joint declaration. The joint declaration of the fourth meeting has included a new principle – the inviolability of state borders – along with the principle of territorial integrity, which was included in the second joint declaration issued in 2019. The Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation for Development of Central Asia in the 21st century, which President of Kazakhstan Kasym Tokayev proposed during the third Consultative Meeting has been signed at the Summit by the heads of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, however, the leaders of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan refused to sign the document until having undergone specific domestic political procedures.

## Geographic considerations

To overcome landlocked<sup>208</sup> geographical isolation, the Kyrgyz Republic is part of several regional infrastructure initiatives in transport connectivity and energy,<sup>209</sup> financed and implemented through multiple mechanisms.<sup>210</sup> The geographic location of the Kyrgyz Republic creates considerable opportunities to use existing corridors for international transport and transit traffic. At the same time, international transport corridors provide practically the only way for the country to access regional markets for goods and services. The country has high transport costs due to the inadequate development of its transport infrastructure, existing non-physical barriers to cross-border transport, and difficult climatic and geographic conditions, especially in winter. In addition, the Kyrgyz Republic has a heavily road-centric transport system with road transport providing annually an average of more than 95 percent of freight and about 99 percent of passenger traffic. Achieving a more balanced modal split between road and rail transport would help to increase the sustainability and effectiveness of the transport networks. In addition, strengthening inter-modality through interfaces – such as dry ports which serve as an efficient crossover point where freight can switch modes without delays or damage – would increase the effectiveness of transport systems.

<sup>206</sup> <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2019/11/30/ca-partnership/>

<sup>207</sup> <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20201127/fao-strani-tsentralnoi-azii-neeekonomno-ispolzuyut-vodu-dlya-orosheniya>

<sup>208</sup> As a Landlocked Developing Country (LLDC), the Kyrgyz Republic is committed to implement the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs 2014-2024 in framework of the national development strategies and plans, including the development of transport, energy, and ICT connectivity, trade facilitation (such as paperless and e-trade), and other priority areas.

<sup>209</sup> Refer to: <https://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/CAREC-Regional-Cooperation-Strategy-in-Energy-ru.pdf>

<sup>210</sup> These include: CAREC, ADB, Belt and Road Initiative, TRACECA, EAEU and others. Some notable projects include CASA-1000 (electricity powerline to South Asia), and currently being discussed China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railroad.

## 2022 developments

**War in Ukraine.** The war in Ukraine is globally jeopardizing the achievement of the SDGs and brings major geopolitical shifts in the post-Soviet space. Due to strong ties between the Kyrgyz Republic and Russia, the war risks to have significant long-term political, security, trade and economic impacts on the Kyrgyz Republic. Yet, from a short-term perspective, the conflict has not fundamentally transformed existing global, regional and subregional partnerships of the country. Trade relationships with Russia as an EAEU partner have been largely maintained (although with some obstacles, e.g., disconnection of Russian banks from SWIFT), and partnerships continued in all other sectors. The Kyrgyz Republic has emphasized its impartiality in the war, including by President Japarov in his statement to the Parliament on 9 March, 2022<sup>211</sup>. The Kyrgyz Republic abstained in the vote of the UN General Assembly Resolution on Ukraine on 2 March 2022 which demanded to “immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.”.

**Stability disruptions in neighbouring countries.** Three out of five Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – have experienced short-term disruptions to stability in 2022. Violent protests in Kazakhstan in January 2022 were triggered by the increase of fuel prices. Rallies in GBAO in Tajikistan in May 2022 were triggered by demands for a fair investigation of the murder of three people by law enforcement officials. Protests in Uzbekistan’s Karakalpakstan region followed proposed changes to the Constitution which planned to abolish the region’s autonomous status. Of all three, events in Kazakhstan directly impacted the Kyrgyz Republic, which – after an internal political debate – sent its troops to help Kazakhstan to stabilize the situation, thereby fulfilling its CSTO obligations. During the Central Asian leaders’ summit in Cholpon-Ata on 19-21 July 2022, all Central Asian countries reconfirmed their commitment to ramp up regional economic, political and security cooperation.

As mentioned above, on 29 and 30 November 2022, the President of Kyrgyzstan and the President of Uzbekistan, respectively, signed a border agreement on another 302 kilometres, including on the most disputed sections after it was ratified by the Parliaments of the two countries.<sup>212</sup> Reportedly, only one section remains disputed.<sup>213</sup> Full details of the border deal and the agreement document have not yet been shared with the public.

As highlighted above, a severe escalation of violence in border areas between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan took place on September 2022, in which 122 people died on both sides (63 in the Kyrgyz Republic, and 59 in Tajikistan), 205 wounded in Kyrgyzstan and 234 in Tajikistan), and over 142,000 Kyrgyz citizens displaced (see chapter 2.6. on drivers of the conflict in border areas).

<sup>211</sup> [https://www.president.kg/ru/sobytiya/22008\\_vistuplenie\\_prezidenta\\_sadira\\_ghaparova\\_naocherednom\\_zasedanii\\_ghogorku\\_kenesha](https://www.president.kg/ru/sobytiya/22008_vistuplenie_prezidenta_sadira_ghaparova_naocherednom_zasedanii_ghogorku_kenesha)

<sup>212</sup> [https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883\\_podpisan\\_zakon\\_o\\_ratifikacii\\_dogovora\\_meghdu\\_kirgizstanom\\_i\\_uzbekistanom\\_ob\\_otdelnih\\_uchastkah\\_kirgizsko\\_uzbekskey\\_gosudarstvennoy\\_granici\\_podpisannogo\\_3\\_noyabrya\\_2022\\_goda\\_v\\_gorode\\_bishkek](https://president.kg/ru/sobytiya/zakony/23883_podpisan_zakon_o_ratifikacii_dogovora_meghdu_kirgizstanom_i_uzbekistanom_ob_otdelnih_uchastkah_kirgizsko_uzbekskey_gosudarstvennoy_granici_podpisannogo_3_noyabrya_2022_goda_v_gorode_bishkek)  
<https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/5745>.

<sup>213</sup> Chechme (Cheshma) section on the border Kadamzhay district of Kyrgyzstan and Sokh district of Uzbekistan. The outbreak of violence with dozens of severely wounded people took place in Sokh on 31 May 2020 (Uzbek enclave in Kyrgyzstan, inhabited mainly by Tajiks).

## 6. Multidimensional risk analysis

### Overview

Risks to sustainable development in the Kyrgyz Republic are diverse, and, if not mitigated, the development gains achieved in recent years could be reversed in such areas as poverty reduction, maternal and child health, rule of law, human rights, and overall achievement of the SDGs. Risks are fundamentally interconnected, reinforcing each other. This chapter provides an analysis of risks based on data from the Regional Monthly Review (RMR) conducted in February 2021, Conflict and Peace Analysis, SERF, COVID-19 and global food crisis specific analyses, and uses the SDGs risks framework which identifies 11 key risk areas.<sup>214</sup> The Kyrgyz Republic has undergone multiple crises in its history, including economic collapse after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, three extra-constitutional changes of power in 2005, 2010, and 2020, the COVID-19 and the impact of the global food crisis, border clashes with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in addition to multiple natural disasters.

The sub-regional crisis arising from the war in Ukraine exacerbated existing stresses, directly following the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a food, fuel and fertilizer crisis around the world, coupled with limited financing to address them. This led to the declaration of a “Global Food Crisis” in May 2022, with repercussions on the food security situation in the Kyrgyz Republic. The RMR also identified three multidimensional risks with high likelihood and highest impact that go along with relatively limited national capacity to address them: economic stability, democratic space, and political stability. Social cohesion, justice and rule of law, and regional and internal security risks are moderately likely but have very high potential impact on the country’s development trajectory. Public health risks are still of importance considering the COVID-19 pandemic’s long-term impacts on health, nutrition and other areas are yet to be seen. Other risks that threaten the development pathway of the Kyrgyz Republic are briefly reviewed below. Annex C provides a further summary of the many elements that constitute the multidimensional risk analysis framework.

Other multidimensional risks are highlighted below, many of which have been discussed earlier in this report.

### Political stability

With over 30 Governments in 30 years, frequent internal Government reshuffling, and three extra-constitutional changes of Presidential power, political instability remains an important risk for sustainable development in the Kyrgyz Republic. Underlying factors for instability are multiple. They include weak political institutions, suboptimal economic development and public services, as well as rule of law and human rights challenges that create public grievances and dissatisfaction. The risk is assessed as high by experts and the Regional Monthly Review (RMR). The developmental impact of political instability is significant – creating overall unpredictability, making it harder to carry out sustainable and consistent policies to overcome development challenges. This creates a lack of confidence among Government civil servants and recipients and various rights-holders. The scenario of larger and/or protracted political crises, with possible narrowing of political diversity and pluralism could be a major threat. This scenario sees divisions among various groups of people under growing polarization over values, popular resentment over failures of the Government, including the failure to deliver on electoral promises or frequent rotations of the Government. Such a scenario could derail achievement of the SDGs and other development aspirations. Positive triggers to mitigate negative scenarios

<sup>214</sup> See: [https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/UNSDCF\\_CP/\\_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B374DEE75-E84A-4859-BB05-EA606E8AF84B%7D&file=Annex%204\\_Multidimensional%20SDG%20Risk%20Analysis%20Framework.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true](https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/UNSDCF_CP/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B374DEE75-E84A-4859-BB05-EA606E8AF84B%7D&file=Annex%204_Multidimensional%20SDG%20Risk%20Analysis%20Framework.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)

include peaceful, fair and transparent elections, reforms that improve effectiveness, transparency and accountability of Government policies and programmes, and inclusive economic growth based on more participatory governance.

### **Justice and the rule of law**

The rule of law, corruption, and judicial independence remains a concern in the Kyrgyz Republic. The judiciary has been criticized as remaining under political influence involving illegal practices within the system. There have been ongoing efforts to reform the judiciary and the police so as to root out corruption within its ranks. The public's perception of corruption within the judiciary and other state institutions remains high.<sup>215</sup> Current risks to the rule of law are moderate, while the development impact is high. In the best-case scenario, the country carries out strong and consistent anti-corruption reform, strengthens institutions, impedes human rights violations, and upholds judicial independence and impartiality in line with international human rights standards. Such measures would lead to improved trust and confidence in the state and its institutions and would rebound positively on economic growth. In the worst-case scenario, lack of reforms will lead to an imbalance between the branches of Government (with a dominating role for the executive), erosion of democratic institutions, and capture of the state by various oligarchic groups, thereby limiting economic growth.

### **Democratic space**

The Kyrgyz Republic's image of 'island of democracy' in Central Asia has been further fading as the pressure against civil society and independent media increased and governance has moved toward a more centralized presidential system. The country's once vibrant civil society has been increasingly affected by stigmatisation, harassment and restrictions; independent media risks to being further censored through the adoption of restrictive legislation; and the right for peaceful assemblies has been banned by courts on vague grounds. The legislative pressure against the free environment that started in 2021 with the adoption of laws mandating additional scrutiny of CSOs and blocking media for alleged false information has accelerated and expanded with the Presidential Administrations' bill that increases the state's control over free media as well as the bills from the parliament restricting CSOs "performing political activities." The adoption of laws that may potentially restrict civic space are often criticized for the lack of proper, inclusive public consultations. Some political and public actors persistently use rhetoric accusing civil society and independent media of acting in conflict with national traditions and spreading a culture alien to the nation's values, operating on foreign (US and European) grants or advocating for the rights of minority groups. Some CSOs, human rights advocates, and mass media are especially vulnerable to increasing hostility, and smear campaigns, especially those who work on civil and political rights issues.<sup>216</sup>

### **Border conflict with Tajikistan**

The Kyrgyz Republic experienced two major escalations of violence at its border with Tajikistan in the last couple of years, namely in April–May 2021 and September 2022, which has been discussed elsewhere in this report. Although a ceasefire agreement signed by the security services of the two countries on 19 September 2022 has so far held, the situation on the border remains precarious with the two countries maintaining troops there, while trading accusations and belligerent rhetoric. The two latest large escalation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict went beyond disputes over natural resources and entered a political and military dimension, which puts the wider region at risk of inter-state

<sup>215</sup> See, for example, [https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri\\_poll\\_presentation-kyrgyzstan\\_july\\_2021-public\\_rus\\_final.pdf](https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_poll_presentation-kyrgyzstan_july_2021-public_rus_final.pdf)

<sup>216</sup> Supported recommendation during the 3rd UPR cycle, September 2020: "Ensure that everyone, including human rights defenders and journalists, can exercise their right to freedom of expression, including online, without fear of reprisals, in compliance with international law and standards."

conflict. Furthermore, the rhetoric of enmity risks to take root in society and in traditional and social media, potentially complicating prospects for peaceful conflict resolution. The ripple effect of this conflict is spreading widely in society and exacerbates pre-existing conflict drivers, undermining the sustainability of successful UN assistance efforts in the recent past. There are clear indications that the conflict is putting additional strains on social cohesion within the country. Despite high levels of distrust and enmity in the two societies, the Governments are putting further efforts to clarify the borderline.

## **Social cohesion**

Ethnic and other forms of discrimination and exclusion, especially in the south of the country, inadequate human rights protection, regional divisions, and growing polarization over values are the key drivers of risks to social cohesion. The Government adopted and now implements multiple policies to mitigate such risks, including the Kyrgyz Jarany (civic identity) concept, and the Religious Policy concept, Prevention of Violent Extremism and others. Tensions between ethnic groups persist nonetheless, although such tensions seem to have faded in recent years. However, antagonisms between religious and secular groups have increased in recent years. The tensions are manifested, among other ways, through cleavages around the roles of women and the role of religion in society. The tensions may affect the fundamental aspirations of the country as the issue of secularization reappeared during the constitutional reform discussions. In the best-case scenario, the Government will be able to balance various views and narratives, and regulate identity spheres and diversity. In the worst-case scenario, contradictions will become irreconcilable and may lead to identity-based politics and civil conflicts in the long-term. These risks are moderate, but their potential impact is high. Tensions along the vertical relations, i.e., authorities and parts of the society, have been explicit in 2022 as the legislative pressure against CSOs and independent media as well as crackdown on dissenting views on important issues has mounted. Escalations on the border with Tajikistan sparked hate speech and discrimination against ethnic minorities adversely affecting the domestic social cohesion.

## **Economic stability**

The country has made significant progress in eradicating poverty and promoting economic growth, reaching middle-income status in 2014. At the same time, the “doing business “environment, investment climate, as well as external shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, are factors that increase the risk of economic downturn, which, in turn, could slow economic prosperity for all. Geographical isolation, dependency on extractive industries, remittances and imports for key commodities open the Kyrgyz economy to other shocks. These fundamental constraints are exacerbated by inconsistent economic policies. Government activities around the Kumtor gold mine (introducing external management with the potential of nationalization) as well as reported pressure on businesses through arbitrary fiscal policies and the state’s control may contribute to creating an environment that limits investments and innovation in the country. The weak Kyrgyz judicial system often fails to protect the interests of business and investors and to act as an independent arbiter in the resolution of legal disputes. If reforms are not undertaken, the worst-case scenario is that the country will not be able to address its balance of payment and budget deficit problems, that the economy will not be innovative, and that the country could remain on the economic periphery of global markets. While the risk is moderate, the developmental impact could be very high.

## Food security

The extremely high dependency on Russian imports, also for key staple commodities with no alternative source for import, exposes the country to increased vulnerability to shocks and volatility, particularly in disruptions were to occur in trade flows. Together with higher inputs (fertilizers) costs, this can affect availability of food in the country. The Kyrgyz Republic does not produce mineral fertilizers and thus relies completely on imports from Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. Globally, fertilizer prices have increased by 300 percent in the last two years and by around 15 percent since January 2022. Rising input costs could impact harvests, as farmers struggle to pay for a key input and face potential supply chain disruptions, leading to elevated food prices in the longer run<sup>217</sup>.

**Table 4. Commodity dependencies in the Kyrgyz Republic**

Commodity	Import dependency	Share of import countries
Wheat	30%	95% from the Russian Federation (RF) and 5% from Kazakhstan
Vegetable Oil	84%	81% from the RF, 19% from Kazakhstan
Sugar	37%	99% from RF, 1% from Kazakhstan and Iran

At the same time, rising food and fuel prices, combined with high inflation (highest in the region after Kazakhstan) are eroding the purchasing power of the most vulnerable affecting their ability to access a nutritious diet. In 2021, food inflation stood at 20.7 percent and in August 2022 was 20.3 percent higher compared to August 2021. Fuel and diesel prices are 61 percent and 98 percent higher in August 2022 compared to February 2021 levels. Moreover, there is a high risk of a reduced inflow of remittances in the country, which would increase poverty and jeopardize households' capacities to meet essential needs, compromising their dietary diversity and quality.

## Natural disaster and climate change risks

The Kyrgyz Republic is highly vulnerable to climate change due to its topography and poor infrastructure. Natural hazards affected by climate change such as heatwaves, floods and droughts have increased in scale and frequency by 150 percent since 2010. There were 412 different natural disasters between 2015 and 2020.<sup>218</sup> More than 3,000 earthquakes occur in the country each year with the latest having an over-5 magnitude that struck the Osh region in 2015 and 2017. There is a risk of a devastating earthquake of a magnitude of 8-9 on the Richter scale in most parts of the country. The country is facing increasingly frequent mudslides and seasonal flooding resulting in significant human and financial losses (33 percent of all registered emergencies). Droughts are becoming more regular. Temperature increases of over 5°C are projected by 2090 and water resources are expected to decline dramatically as glaciers melt.

With respect to epidemics, human brucellosis is widespread and measles outbreaks are recurrent. The country is also exposed to technological hazards such as dam breaches or industrial contamination accidents. Climate change risks are multidimensional affecting livelihoods and economic activities, access to drinking water, food security, and peace and stability, notably along borders.

<sup>217</sup> <https://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/version2/country/kyrgyzstan/reports>

<sup>218</sup> Annual Statistics from Ministry of Emergency Situations



The Government has established a system of multi-faceted emergency preparedness and response, led by the Ministry of Emergency Situations. The disaster risk reduction activities include legislation, policies, risk monitoring and mitigation of risks. Key challenges identified in this area are planning, budgeting, and implementation at the local level, along with issues related to the inter-sectoral coordination, governance, including building resilience of communities, disaster preparedness, and capacities for multi-hazard risk assessment and damage and loss data management.<sup>219</sup>

### **Public health risks**

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that a weak health system is a liability for society at large, including the economy. The underfunded health system poses a risk at multiple levels. Primary Healthcare is underdeveloped which means that there is no effective means to contain mild cases of a future disease at this level and prevent hospital collapse. Moreover, high numbers of underpaid doctors leave the country to seek better working conditions elsewhere, which means the country may not have the numbers and skills in the health workforce to prevent and tackle the next pandemic. Furthermore, a low level of digitalization poses a threat to disease surveillance which means that Kyrgyzstan may not be equipped to detect the early cases of an incipient outbreak. Lastly, suboptimal capacity to counter misinformation about health may lead to social unrest in response to health measures and low levels of vaccination. In sum, the health sector itself may pose a risk to the extent that it may not have the human and material resources to contain an incipient outbreak or epidemic in the future.

### **Regional and internal security risks**

The risk of border conflicts with neighbouring countries remains high, with the possibility of escalation. The development impact of those conflicts is high, especially in areas directly affected by tensions, which could see reversals of development gains. In the best-case scenario, the countries concerned will be able to agree on delimitation of the border, and gradually settle disputes around natural resources, and re-build trust and confidence between communities.<sup>220</sup> In the worst-case scenario, localized conflicts may escalate into military actions between countries. Violent extremism risks are currently considered low, with limited number of terrorist attacks. But the risk remains and could be exacerbated with the growing role of political-religious movements, and if social issues are not addressed, especially among youth. The potential impact of radicalization and violent extremism should be seen as very high, since it is directly linked to the risk of civil conflict between liberal and conservative groups. And certainly, the recent events in Afghanistan could have major – if still unforeseen – impacts on regional and internal security.

<sup>219</sup> CADRI Scoping mission findings, 1-4 June 2021, Kyrgyz Republic

<sup>220</sup> Such disputes may be further exacerbated by reported negative impact of climate change resulting in the scarcity of water. <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/case-studies/2021/08/02/is-climate-change-heating-up-central-asias-border-disputes-clues-from-satellite-imagery/>

# 7. Strategic entry points for UN programming

## 7.1 Structural challenges

The updated diagnostic in the preceding chapters has sought to give a snapshot of the development challenges and concerns facing the Kyrgyz Republic, as seen from the UN family's perspective. Those chapters laid out what are the more recent and ongoing challenges that impact the UN family's ability to deliver on the new UNSDCF and the possibility for undertaking programmatic changes in this regard.

As the preceding chapters discussed, the Kyrgyz Republic has made great strides in its development efforts over the last two decades, but significant challenges remain. Prior to the pandemic, the economy was growing at an acceptable rate and the number of people living in poverty was trending downward, although pockets of poverty remain unacceptably high, such as among children, female-headed households, pensioners, certain ethnic groups, and individuals or families with household family members with disabilities. In short, Kyrgyz Republic has made some notable progress towards achieving of its national development goals and the SDGs. However, both external and internal factors including COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the escalation of violence at the border with Tajikistan and shrinking civic space are contributing to a halt or reversal of the gains made and have exposed some underlying structural issues that present significant hurdles going forward. These structural issues will remain for the foreseeable future.

### **As highlighted in the 2021 CCA, the structural issues include:**

1. Reestablishing trust between the Government and society remains a critical lynchpin in achieving development aspirations. This will require concerted efforts among a wide range of stakeholders and constituencies that will be conducive only if there is an enabling democratic and civic space in place. Economic transformation cannot proceed without respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the resulting increase in social cohesion and reduction in potential political and social flashpoints.
2. Exclusion and inequalities, defined to include multiple and intersecting discriminations, deprivations and injustices, are key development challenges facing the country in its journey to achieving its national development priorities and realization of the 2030 Agenda.
3. There is a clear need for stronger integration of ongoing reforms, national development strategies, and sectoral programmes, calling for stronger national coordination capacities.
4. Ensuring policy coherence, fixing statistical gaps, and addressing administrative and civil society capacities will be vital enabling factors for further progress towards achievement of the nationally defined development goals;
5. Confidence building between the communities both along the Kyrgyz-Tajik and the Kyrgyz-Uzbek borders needs to be prioritized to accompany the ongoing efforts to finalize the border demarcation. Economic empowerment of women and youth as well as enabling cross-border exchange in culture, education, science and other social fields are of relevance.

A sixth structural issue of growing importance since the onset of the war in Ukraine is the critical need to give much greater attention to the Government's fiscal policy in order to reduce the trend in rising fiscal deficits, to strengthen public finance management, and to actively identify and promote new sources of development financing. This challenge

is even more urgent given the border conflicts which risk drawing down development expenditures toward military spending.

These factors, taken together, are significant issues that must be addressed if the Kyrgyz Republic is to reach its full potential for sustainable and equitable growth, while ensuring full respect, protection and fulfillment of the country's human rights commitments. These challenges remain constant – independent of the residual impacts from the COVID-19 crisis and now the war in Ukraine.

## **7.2 UN strategic entry points: identifying and implementing accelerators.**

It will be recalled that the 2021 CCA identified five strategic entry points or accelerators that were incorporated into the Cooperation Framework. From the UN family's perspective, these five entry points remain valid, notwithstanding the events of the past year. The five entry points were:

1. Digitalization and information technologies for improved service delivery
2. Promoting societal innovation
3. Applying green solutions to development challenges
4. Creating the conditions for a resilient Kyrgyz Republic
5. Youth, women, and human rights at the center of development efforts

It is further recalled that the five strategic entry points that form the building blocks the Cooperation Framework encompass a functional approach, rather than a traditional sectorial approach, with the goal of simultaneously impacting multiple sectors in ways that could have medium- and longer-term benefits for sustainable and inclusive development. Needless to say, the functional entry-point approach implies increased investment in the chosen entry points, but with the highest likelihood of positive outcomes for the greatest number of people. Furthermore, based on discussions with the Government, these entry points may be adapted to meet shifting needs or opportunities, but it is believed that such an approach for policy design and implementation can meet the much-needed objective of bringing synergies and greater resource efficiencies to the development challenges confronting the Kyrgyz Republic in the foreseeable future.

### **Four underlying implementation principles remain of critical importance looking to 2023 and beyond.**

- Easing bottlenecks and blockages in moving from policy articulation to actual implementation;
- Helping to reach critical mass of supporting reforms in order to generate tipping points;
- Helping to contain or manage key “de-railing” risks (such as demonstrated by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, but applicable in other economic, social and governance domains); and
- Putting in motion constructive governance dynamics, rooted in democracy and rule of law, that generate well-functioning and positive feedback loops.

## 7.3 Strategic planning, budgeting and implementation

COVID-19 and now the war in Ukraine highlight the growing importance for policy-makers to give increasing attention to the quality and effectiveness of the planning and budget prioritization process in the near term, so as to lay the foundation for longer-term budgeting and programming. This point was strongly emphasized during the Article IV Consultations between the IMF and the Government in November 2022. In this regard, the ongoing role of the UN Country Team will be to help the Government to identify and then implement a strategic set of policy and programme choices that:

- are deemed priorities in their national context and that are in alignment with international norms;
- have the highest likelihood of generating significant improvements;
- can work synergistically; and
- have the best chance of being successfully implemented.

The task does not necessarily entail selecting and implementing a wide range of policy options, but rather, following an orderly, participatory and transparent process of prioritizing among multiple (and often contending) policy options, all of which place competing demands on scarce public resources. As the recently approved UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework discusses, jumpstarting and accelerating efforts to forcefully address sustainable development goals will require the Government to incorporate a commitment to strong, proactive and accountable governance frameworks that develop policies for both the public and private sectors. Such a commitment must be based on a long-term vision and leadership, shared norms and values, and rules and institutions that build trust and cohesion in line with the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

At the same time, an important ingredient will be the capacity for flexibility and adaptation. In a complex society such as that in the Kyrgyz Republic, the outcome of any particular policy is inevitably uncertain. Policy-makers will need to follow a governance framework that is pragmatic and able to problem-solve and adapt collectively and rapidly.

From the UN Country Team's perspective, some of the characteristics of a highly flexible and adaptive Government would include the following:

- *Government is consistent and committed in its pursuit of developmental objectives, including rule of law, human rights and gender equality.* Failing to achieve certain developmental objectives may, in fact, always be a bad thing, but may in fact be an opportunity to learn, adapt, and then to re-engage with fresh insights.
- *Government is proactive.* Government institutions are not relegated to the role of overseer, but, rather, they actively participate in the development process, often serving as an entrepreneur of first (or last) resort.
- *Government evolves its policy framework according to the changing needs of all groups in society, leaving no one behind.* Change is welcomed provided that it does not detract from the overall development objectives that the nation as a whole has set for itself.
- *Government actively promotes a socially legitimate, competent, and non-discriminatory bureaucracy that is performance- and outcome-oriented* to ensure implementation and that actively engages with other stakeholders.
- *Government values the presence and contribution of viable and vocal stakeholders* including the private sector, civil society, minority groups and local communities.
- *Government is committed to protecting the rule of law, in addition to reducing corruption and rent-seeking* because of their detrimental effects on inclusive growth and human development.

These characteristics of good governance should remain constant regardless of the current socioeconomic trends and challenges.

## 8. Summary observations

The preceding chapters have presented an updated analysis of the Kyrgyz Republic as a lower-middle-income country that has made great strides over the last two decades, yet still faces significant challenges. And like many other developing countries, these challenges were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, escalation of violence at Kyrgyz-Tajik border, the shrinking civic space - all have economic and social repercussions that have affected large portions of Kyrgyz society.

At the center of the development challenge facing the country is the disparity – the growing gap – between the rich and the poor, between the advantaged and the disadvantaged and their access to both economic opportunities and social services. While the Kyrgyz Republic has made significant progress in several social indicators, there are still major problems related to the health and well-being of the poor, near poor and their food security – all of which were exacerbated by COVID-19 and now the Ukraine crisis. Thus, as the previous analysis demonstrated, it is fair to say that the current constellation of Government institutions and programmes is not meeting the needs of far too many people, whether in the area of jobs creation, access to affordable health care and quality education, food security, social protection for those left behind, or mitigating environmental factors that put people at risk. How the Government effectively tackles these vulnerabilities will be a fundamental concern in the near- and medium-term, at the same time that the Government must address the macroeconomic goals of restoring the economy to a sustainable growth trajectory. This ‘tension’ between using Government revenues to meet both short-term and long-term policy objectives was discussed in chapter 9 and is a challenge facing virtually every country – developed or developing – including the Kyrgyz Republic.

Another area of concern discussed in the preceding chapters is the disruptive potential from public discontent that remains an ongoing and smoldering problem. Despite the new constitution and changes in the form of Government, institutional inefficiencies, lack of capacity, and corruption remain major problems in the delivery of Government services, further eroding public confidence in the state. At the same time, considerable efforts are still needed to improve the legal system and the rule of law so that all citizens feel that the laws and protections afforded them by the judicial system are serving their best interests, including such concerns as addressing gender inequality and discrimination faced by many ethnic and social groups. All of these factors, taken together, are manifested in the shrinking civic and democratic space that characterized the Kyrgyz Republic in 2022 and now in 2023.

Three major developments have been determining the country’s political and peace context, notably (1) a further deterioration of the situation along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border culminating in an escalation of violence between 14-17 September that resulted in hundreds of casualties, hundreds of thousands temporarily displaced people, destruction of private and public infrastructure and hostile public narrative towards Tajikistan; (2) the conclusion of a bilateral border agreement with Uzbekistan on 29 November 2022, which was, however, contested by some segments of society; and (3) an increasing threat to basic rights and fundamental freedoms accompanied by a severely shrinking space for civil society, including for those working on peace and stability including women, peace and security (WPS), and an increased polarization between the Government on one side and civil society on the other.

Against this backdrop, the UN system in Kyrgyzstan sees its principal task as effectively supporting the Government and other Kyrgyz institutions in meeting these critical development challenges through the lens of the new Cooperation

Framework. The objective will be to use the UN's collective experience and comparative advantages in a coordinated and targeted manner that leverages the resources available in the most cost-effective manner.

At the same time, the events of 2022 suggest that the UNCT must give added attention to the following priority concerns to more effectively implement the new UNSDCF going forward.

- Promoting the expansion of democratic space for civil society while maintaining the trust and confidence by the Government to support this important endeavor;
- Giving higher priority to policies and programmes that promote social cohesion among the country's different ethnic and socioeconomic groups;
- Facilitating conflict resolution efforts between the Kyrgyz Republic and its neighbors in order to end the longstanding conflicts that are, in both the short- and longer-term, counterproductive to all concerned parties;
- Using the UNCT's comparative advantages to support efforts by the Government and other partner organizations to improve public expenditure planning and management; and
- Redoubling efforts to identify and attract new sources of development financing in order to overcome current shortfalls in available resources needed to achieve the SDGS and other development priorities.

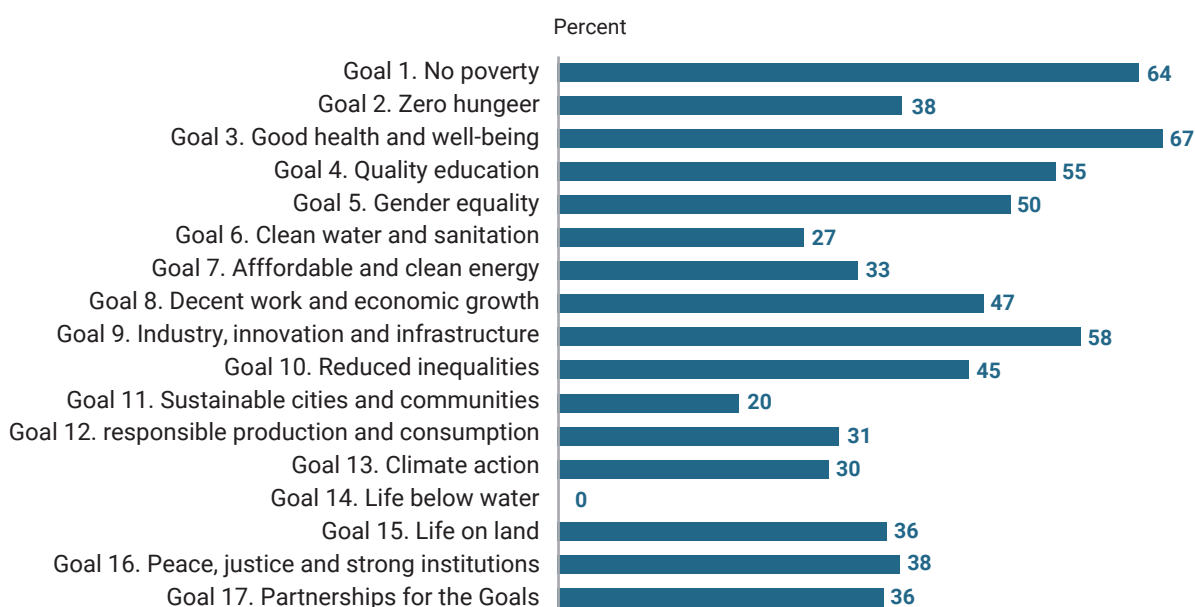


# ANNEXES

## Annex A. Progress toward the 2030 Agenda

The Annex provides a brief overview of the Kyrgyz Republic’s progress toward the 2030 Agenda as well as some key socioeconomic data of relevance to the UN’s Cooperation Framework and achievement of the SDGs. As discussed in the country’s first Voluntary National Review at the 2020 session of High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development,<sup>221</sup> the 2030 Agenda has been at the center of policy setting, and in 2020 UNDP’s Rapid Integrated Assessment<sup>222</sup> assessed the overall alignment of the SDGs and the country’s national policy development planning at 82 percent. The figure below shows the alignment for each Goal.

### Alignment of Kyrgyz national development planning and SDGs by Goal



Source: Rapid Integrated Assessment, 2020

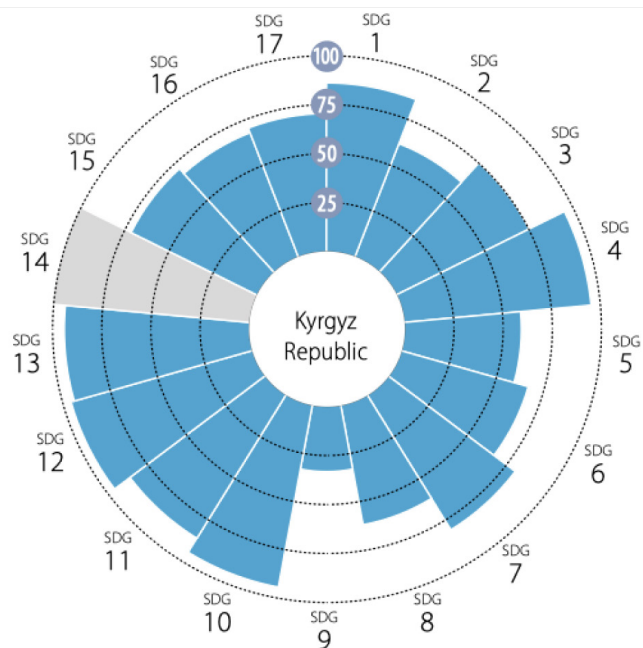
A second set of indicators is found in the global Sustainable Development Report for the Kyrgyz Republic that offers country comparisons and arrives at slightly different calculations of the country’s performance.<sup>223</sup> According to this analysis, comparatively the country ranks 48th out of 163 countries surveyed and has a country score of 73.7, slightly higher than the regional average of 71.6. The average performance by individual Goal is shown in the next figure.

<sup>221</sup> The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2020). Volunteer National Review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kyrgyz Republic, (VNR)

<sup>222</sup> See: <https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/library/poverty/implementing-sustainable-development-goals-rapid-integrated-ass.html>

<sup>223</sup> Sachs et al. (2021). The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Report 2021. Found at: <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/kyrgyz-republic>

## Average performance by SDG



Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/kyrgyz-republic>

The figures above should be interpreted by understanding that each estimate offers two different aspects for examining overall country progress. The first captures alignment between the Goals and national development plans (82 percent), whereas the second figure estimates performance progress for achieving that particular SDG by 2030. The key message is that from a policy perspective, the Kyrgyz Republic is doing reasonably well. The second figure would suggest that, again, the country – at the time of analysis – was doing fairly well on the path to meeting many of the SDGs. However, this latter analysis does not consider the full socio-economic impact of COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine on SDG performance, nor does it capture at this aggregated level many of the development and governance challenges still confronting the country that are discussed elsewhere in this report.

## Annex B. The Five Factor Framework for Leave No One Behind

The five-factor framework for determining those who run the risk of being left behind and why consists of analyzing the following determinants within a country or social group: (i) discrimination; (ii) place of residence; (iii) socio-economic status; (iv) governance; and (v) vulnerability to shocks. In effect, people get left behind when they lack the choices and opportunities to participate in and benefit from development progress. All persons living in extreme poverty can thus be considered 'left behind', as can those who endure disadvantages or deprivations that limit their choices and opportunities relative to others in society.

Some of the key determinants and deprivations of those who risk being left behind are the following:

- Although some progress has been achieved in the past years, in 2020, 42.2 percent of the population was still multidimensionally deprived considering monetary poverty, health, housing, food security and education.<sup>224</sup> 50.9 percent children, 48.8 percent of rural population are living in multidimensional poverty. In Batken (61.1 percent), Jalal-Abad (56.7 percent), Naryn (49 percent) and Osh (43.5 percent) multidimensional poverty is above national average.

<sup>224</sup> Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment-kyrgyzstan.github.io/1-2-2/>



- Around 21 percent of households (more than 1.3 million people) were found to be food insecure in August 2022. The prevalence of food insecurity was similar in rural and urban areas, reflecting the grown economic vulnerabilities in urban areas. Food insecurity was higher in Osh city and Jalal-Abad region (southern part of the country) and more prevalent in female-headed households and in ethnic minorities. 82 percent of households were using some asset depleting coping strategies, which can have direct negative consequences to the nutritional, health and productivity status, which are difficult to reverse in the future, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.<sup>225</sup>
- Given the high share of informal employment in the country, the situation is particularly severe for those ‘invisible’ to the formal employment systems, by large, urban and semi-urban populations.
- Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services is relatively high – 87 percent of households had at least basic drinking water, 97 percent had at least basic sanitation services, and 89 percent had at least basic hygiene facilities in 2017. Yet there was a large gap in access to at least basic drinking water services between urban (97 percent) and rural (82 percent) households.
- Although the country has generally effective immunization coverage, it decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic with immunization services interrupted in March-May 2020. Disparities in investment, infrastructure and staffing of health services across the country result in people in underserved areas (mostly rural areas) being left behind. Safe abortion services decreased to 25-28 percent in public facilities, whereas increased in private facilities up to 68-85 percent. Women who cannot afford to seek care in private facilities are left behind to carry out unwanted pregnancies. Rural schools significantly lack specialized medical units/rooms in schools enabling firsthand access to medical care for children.<sup>226</sup>
- Beyond the geographic location, other circumstances known to shape inequality include ethnicity, age, gender, education level, migratory status and a combination of these factors.
- Natural disasters and climate change cause loss of lives and livelihoods, damage productive assets and infrastructure, and disrupt critical services such as access to food, water and health services. The poorest people in communities are the most vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters since they lack the tools to be able to prevent their livelihoods being lost and the ability to then recover.
- The root causes for persistent gender inequalities can be found in the negative interpretation of some cultural and social practices over the roles of women and men, and in patriarchal attitudes, that increasingly restrict women’s rights to control their lives, particularly in rural areas. Although the Kyrgyz Republic has ratified numerous human rights instruments, its legal framework governing the prohibition of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment have consistently fallen short of the requirements under these instruments<sup>227</sup>. Violence against women is widespread and takes many forms, including domestic violence, bride kidnapping, trafficking, child marriages and physical abuse. Gender inequalities are starkly evident in the key indicators of women’s labor force participation, women’s leadership, and maternal mortality ratio.
- Ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in public life and are subjected to discrimination including stereotyping, stigmatization, ethnic profiling by law enforcement officers and the judiciary, and hate speech against them. Problems of inter-ethnic relations are exacerbated by lack of an effective and efficient language policy as the country did not produce a generation that could speak the state, official and foreign languages.<sup>228</sup>
- In 2021, 202,551 people with disabilities – about 3 percent of the population – were registered in the country, receiving some form of pensions and disability benefits,<sup>229</sup> 53 percent of which were women. Still, more resources are needed to ensure persons with disabilities receive adequate access to health and social services. Discrimination of and stereotypes about them are detrimental to their rights, their social integration, and

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Assessment of the National School Health Services for their improvement in the WHO European Region, 2021

<sup>227</sup> See the 2015 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Treaty bodies Download (ohchr.org) and the 2020 Direct Request of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations concerning the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), Comments (ilo.org).

<sup>228</sup> Available at: [https://www.un-page.org/files/public/kyrgyz\\_national\\_sustainable\\_development\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.un-page.org/files/public/kyrgyz_national_sustainable_development_strategy.pdf)

<sup>229</sup> NSC data, Available at: <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/zdravoohranenie/>

adaptation to society. Women with disabilities face intersecting forms of discrimination including limited access to reproductive health services. Children with disabilities experience obstacles in accessing inclusive education, thereby hampering their chances to play an active role in the society. Changing the way society perceives PwD would require time and protection of their rights in line with the ratified UN human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>230</sup>

- The Kyrgyz Republic remains a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor, and for women and children subjected to sex trafficking. Destination countries for labor exploitation include Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. Sexual exploitation of Kyrgyz women and girls occurs in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, India, Russia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, and within the country. Forced labor remains the predominant form of trafficking with 85 percent of registered cases and trafficking for sexual exploitation make up 15 percent of registered case.
- In the Kyrgyz Republic, another population at extreme risk is the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community, which is among the most vulnerable group in all of the Kyrgyz social system due to high stigma, discrimination, and intolerance. Alongside them, people living with HIV face a similar treatment. This group of citizens does not receive equal access to quality education as the enacting measures to protect and promote the rights of LGBT+ students in education institutions are missing. LGBTI+ women, like others, face the effects of gender inequality in economic, social and political domains.
- People with, or assumed to have, TB experience high levels of stigma and discrimination from health workers, community members and sometimes extended family. In addition, gender norms and practices and gender-based violence present a significant barrier to TB services.
- Survivors of GBV. A significant percentage of domestic violence (DV) victims prefer not to apply to law enforcement and other bodies for the protection of their rights. In 2020, 8,300 women sought help in crisis centers and other specialized institutions providing social and psychological assistance in cases of domestic violence. Hence, the significant proportion of crimes is not reported. This is largely due to the mistrust of the victims in the justice system, the incompetence of law enforcement and judicial officials, their refusal to perceive gender-based violence as a serious crime, negative attitude of society towards the victims and social shaming of women and girls. Also, the current legislative framework stops women from reporting the incident for a second time since the person who reports must pay a fine, and it is usually a victim who pays it. UNITE suggests that the trend could be reversed (that abusers get away with their violent actions) if the fine could be substituted with a detention measure (imprisonment of DV perpetrators). Moreover, the appeal also does not guarantee the punishment of the perpetrators. The persecutors are lenient towards men and neglectful to rights of victims to report DV or other forms of crimes like sexual harassment and sex exploitation and abuse. Official data on the latter incidents are rarely reported by the victims; hence, the real scope of the issue is missing.
- Statistical reporting on calls to System 112 run by the Ministry of Emergency Situations from citizens about domestic and gender-based violence against women and children has been maintained since 2016, in line with CEDAW recommendations. While there is a regulation on an intersectoral mechanism on response to GBV during crisis and emergencies, there is a need for strengthening the similar mechanism within the Civil Protection Act with the purpose to reduce the risks of violence against women and children within the civil protection sector. The lives and rights of workers protecting rights of sex-workers are becoming increasingly violated and this issue must be addressed to ensure their safety.
- People deprived of their liberty – around 9,000, mostly from low-income and working-class backgrounds – are subject to the power of an antiquated prison system.<sup>231</sup> If they were implemented, application of alternative measures to imprisonment and humanization of the criminal legislation, in line with the UN human rights treaties

<sup>230</sup> UNDP (2018). Report on the identification of negative stereotypes towards women and men with disabilities and rural women

<sup>231</sup> As of January 2021, the number of prisoners was 8635 (as of January 2019 - 9,400 prisoners). Five hundred twenty-seven (527) sentences of the prisoners have been reconsidered based on the new Law on Amnesty that came into force in 2020.

and UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), should assist in decreasing the prison population and promote effective rehabilitation and social reintegration processes in the country, as well as implementation of HIV prevention and harm reduction strategies in prisons

- With regard to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons, as of end 2022, there were 156 recognized Convention Refugees in the Kyrgyz Republic, 120 Mandate Refugees, 670 Asylum-seekers and 203 persons remaining stateless and/or at risk of statelessness. All these categories represent people who are largely jobless, out of the social protection scheme benefits and in a vulnerable situation as they do not have access to basic services and the right to work. Refugees and stateless persons, especially those of undetermined nationality, were seriously affected by the widespread socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. These vulnerable groups face increased economic hardship because they often live in precarious situations and depend on the informal sector for their livelihoods.

## **Annex C. National Statement of Commitments of the Kyrgyz Republic**

### **National Statement of Commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to Transform the Education System in the Period up to 2030**

*This statement was presented at the Global Summit in September 2022 in New York as part of the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly.*

#### **Introduction:**

The Kyrgyz Republic has recognized the particular importance of developing the human potential of children and youth, which directly affects the future of the country. It views the fields of education and science as the core sources of human development and as the foundations of peace, tolerance and solidarity in the society.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) of the Kyrgyz Republic organized a national consultation forum with various groups of stakeholders for the transformation of education. Guided by five thematic areas, the forum enabled the MOES and all stakeholders to share experience and rethink the prospect of better education in the country.

In addition, the online poll was organized to hear from more than 1,600 young people regarding the educational challenges and ways forward in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to the poll, 85 per cent of the participants experienced a learning loss due to the limited access to digital and interactive learning opportunities in the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 90 per cent are concerned about learning outcomes, thereby suggesting that Government should provide more support to ensure that all children gain basic reading and math skills in primary school. The poll also suggests that young people believe that teachers play a key role in making schools safer and learning more interactive in the classroom.

#### **Country commitments:**

Informed by the national consultation and the results from the online poll, the Kyrgyz Republic will make the following country commitment statements for the transformation of education system in the period up to 2030:

### **Inclusive, equitable, safe schools that care about student health:**

- The Kyrgyz Republic aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Comprehensive support is to be provided to the following priorities: ensuring access to early and preschool-age learning with relevant legislative changes; providing distance learning for those unable to go to school even after the pandemic; offering multiple inclusive learning pathways to children and youth with special educational needs; providing psychological support for children, parents and teachers in need; addressing issues on student health through water, sanitation and hygiene and hot meals; and strengthening EMIS data collection, analysis, visualization and actual use for education planning in order to tackle the existing gender, geographical and socio-economic disparities in access to learning opportunities.

### **Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development:**

- The Kyrgyz Republic aims to leverage expertise and resources in improving student learning outcomes at all levels of education; strengthen children's foundational literacy and numeracy skills; implement the content of the latest generation standards and textbooks; strengthen digital and information literacy; provide the 21st century skills development opportunities relevant to their real-life environment; and ensure participation opportunities for youth in decision-making in formal and non-formal education settings for sustainable development.

### **Teacher training, systematic professional development and advanced training:**

- The Kyrgyz Republic aims to provide preschools, schools and universities with high quality teaching personnel. For that end, further assistance is to be provided to improving the quality of teaching in educational institutions that train teachers in pedagogy skills and subject matters; to advancing innovative reforms in terms of content and methods of teaching; to supporting teachers in professional development and career pathways; to further train school personnel on child safeguarding in school settings; and to increasing the effectiveness of the teaching profession, especially after the completion of advanced training.

### **Digital learning:**

- The Kyrgyz Republic aims to build and upgrade effective digital learning platforms; ensure the automation of licensing and accreditation processes; equip schools with the latest technology for a full-fledged "Electronic School", where children with disabilities or children living abroad can enjoy school education using relevant learning materials; develop and monitor teachers' digital skills and literacy; ensure e-safety for students and teachers; and advance digital transformation in education for greater inclusiveness and equity.

### **Financing education:**

- The Kyrgyz Republic aims to make sustainable financial investments in the education system; increase the domestic resource allocation to education and ensuring the efficient use, including the growth of an appropriate GDP percentage, given the high demographic rates; ensure that the investment in education stimulates returns to improved learning achievements of students; ensure the involvement of parents and communities in the activities of the educational organization for the clear and transparent financing of education; switch financing to personalized allocation of funds for educational organizations of all types and ownership forms; and increase the financing of applied university science in full whilst giving priority to innovations that contribute to the development of human resources for high-quality and competitive education.

## Annex E. Voluntary Commitments to human rights

### Voluntary pledges and commitments of the Kyrgyz Republic on human rights pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

The Kyrgyz Republic is committed to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Kyrgyz Republic supports the universality of human rights and their application on an equal, non-discriminatory and non-selective basis.

The Kyrgyz Republic firmly believes that the Human Rights Council is one of the most important bodies of the United Nations and is a unique global platform for the discussion and development of recommendations in the field of human rights.

The Kyrgyz Republic has already been a member of the Human Rights Council twice, between 2009 and 2012, and between 2016 and 2018, and, drawing on its previous experience, intends to continue contributing to the work of this vital and in-demand United Nations body. In this connection, the Kyrgyz Republic has submitted its candidacy to the Council for the period 2023–2025.

### Kyrgyzstan's achievements in the field of human rights

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the processes of forming a strong democratic form of Government, building the rule of law, bringing national legislation into conformity with applicable norms of international law, and major reform of the judicial and law enforcement systems continue to develop dynamically.

In this connection, a large-scale inventory of the legislation of the country has been under way since 2021; systematic work has been undertaken on the humanization of criminal legislation, and implementation of the following is ongoing:

the 2018–2040 National Strategy for Sustainable Development; the 2021–2024 State strategy for combating corruption and eliminating its causes; the 2019–2022 dedicated State programme for the development of the judicial system of the Kyrgyz Republic; the 2018–2023 strategy for the development of the penal correction system of the Kyrgyz Republic; the 2019–2025 Plan of Action to Improve the Quality of Life of Older Persons; the 2018–2028 Programme of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to Support the Family and Protect Children, and the National Development Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period up to 2026.

In the period from 2019 to 2021, the human rights action plan was actively implemented. Currently, final preparations are in progress for the adoption of a new action plan for 2022–2024 based on the recommendations of the third cycle of the universal periodic review of the treaty bodies and of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, and the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period up to 2030.

There have been significant achievements in the process of reforming and democratizing the electoral law and process of the Kyrgyz Republic. As part of a successful reform of the electoral system, election credibility, transparency and competitiveness have been achieved, and conditions have been created to ensure the full realization of the political rights of citizens in elections, both as candidates and as voters.

Those efforts will continue, as ensuring free democratic elections is important for the implementation of the paramount international standard of democracy and constitutional obligation – the principle of citizens' power and the expansion of civic engagement.

Further steps will be taken to make the electoral process more inclusive by improving conditions for the full exercise of active and passive suffrage of citizens, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and internal and external migrants.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a party to eight of the nine major universal United Nations human rights treaties (the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), having submitted more than 28 national reports to United Nations treaty bodies since 1992. The Kyrgyz Republic engaged in its third universal periodic review cycle in January 2020, and in December of that year it extended a standing invitation to all thematic United Nations special procedures. A total of 12 special mandate holders visited the Kyrgyz Republic on country visits between 2001 and 2022. The Kyrgyz Republic has also officially recognized the competence of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to receive individual communications.

The Kyrgyz Republic regards partnership as an effective way of promoting human rights issues in the country, and has therefore been creating the necessary conditions for the establishment of a reliable platform for equitable dialogue and cooperation. The Kyrgyz Republic has more than 6,000 non-Governmental organizations, human rights defenders, the Ombudsman Institute, the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Council for Persons with Disabilities reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, the National Council for Women and Gender Development reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the National Centre for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

A Coordinating Council on Human Rights reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic has been operating since 2013. It monitors the activities of State bodies to implement United Nations recommendations on human rights.

### **Further action by the Kyrgyz Republic to promote human rights:**

Making every effort to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democracy at both the national and international levels;

Actively participating in efforts to strengthen the Council's role in improving international cooperation to achieve universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Supporting the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council's treaty bodies and special procedures and their mandates and responsibilities;

Maintaining the universal character of the universal periodic review and participating constructively in the review process;

Promoting at international level the rights of women, children, migrant workers and persons with disabilities;

Contributing to international cooperation and dialogue in the Human Rights Council by promoting the fight against discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance;

Continuing to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in fulfilling his or her mandate.

**The Kyrgyz Republic also intends to:**

Maintain a standing invitation to all special procedures mandate holders and engage in constructive dialogue aimed at improving the country's human rights protection system;

Continue to cooperate with United Nations treaty bodies, ensure timely submission of national periodic reports, and follow up on review recommendations;

Strengthen and enhance the capacities and capabilities of national human rights institutions to enable them to fulfil their mandates effectively and independently, with adequate financial and human resources, in accordance with the Paris Principles;

Strengthen the independence of the Office of the Ombudsman, in compliance with the Paris Principles;

Ensure the effective functioning of the Coordinating Council on Human Rights reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic;

Continue to build the capacity of civil society and work in partnership with civil society organizations in the development of national policy;

Continue efforts to strengthen anti-corruption measures in line with the international campaign to strengthen good governance;

Continue to work actively and consistently to bring the national legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on birth registration into compliance with international standards in order to ensure that every child born in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic is registered;

In cooperation with international organizations and representatives of civil society, continue activities to raise awareness of human rights among the population through information campaigns, as well as training in this area for law enforcement and judicial officials;

Promote the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of citizens, with due regard for the rights of the most vulnerable groups;

Increase efforts to eradicate poverty, including through the implementation of the Labour and Social Protection Development Programme;

Introduce the “Accessible Country” programme, to address the issues of persons with disabilities and other low-mobility population groups in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Continue to ensure gender mainstreaming in all areas of public policy, based on the constitutionally enshrined concept of gender equality;

Continue to work to create the conditions for the realization of women’s and girls’ economic, political, social, and cultural rights, including the establishment of a functional education system, increasing women’s access to justice, and supporting women’s political leadership at all levels, as well as elections and governance;

Continue efforts to improve the well-being of children, including through family support and the protection of children from all forms of violence, and increase access to quality, multilingual and inclusive education for children, especially children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and children in difficult circumstances.







