



World Health  
Organization

European Region

# Annual report 2023

## WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan



## Abstract

In 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan demonstrated agility in implementing the objectives set out in the Biennial Collaborative Agreement 2022–2023 between WHO/Europe and Kyrgyzstan, the WHO European Programme of Work, and WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW13). Throughout the year, WHO Kyrgyzstan actively supported evolving national priorities through regular consultations with the Government of Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Health, United Nations agencies, development partners, and donors. Furthermore, WHO played a pivotal role in advancing health and well-being across the country by collaborating with national and sub-national stakeholders both within and beyond the health-care sector. This annual report reflects on goals achieved during 2023 and considers next steps that will help ensure progress is maintained.

## KEYWORDS:

**KYRGYZSTAN; ANNUAL REPORT; CENTRAL ASIA; COUNTRY COOPERATION STRATEGY**

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# Abbreviations

AMR	antimicrobial resistance
CCS	Country Cooperation Strategy
GICC	Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer
HPV	human papillomavirus vaccine
JEE	Joint External Evaluation
MCM OT	Multisectoral Coordination Mechanism Operational Tool
M&RP	Measles & Rubella Partnership
NAPHS	national action plan for health security
NCD	noncommunicable disease
NEML	National Essential Medicines List
NIS	National Immunization Strategy
NITAG	National Immunization Technical Advisory Group
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PHC	primary health care
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STIKO	Standing Committee on Vaccination
TB	tuberculosis
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WDF	World Diabetes Foundation





## Key highlights:

- A Country Cooperation Strategy for 2024–2030 was signed during a visit by Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe.
- The new WHO Representative to Kyrgyzstan, Dr Liviu Vedrasco, assumed his duties.
- The legislation framework in the health sector was revised and new laws endorsed by the President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Japarov.
- WHO and the Ministry of Health responded to a severe measles epidemic.
- Kyrgyzstan joined the WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer.
- Kyrgyzstan became the first country in the WHO European Region to conduct a second International Health Regulations Joint External Evaluation.
- Kyrgyzstan achieved hepatitis B control validation certification.
- Kyrgyzstan introduced price control mechanisms for essential medicines.
- A 7-year National Action Plan for Health Security was launched.
- A novel integrated digital surveillance system was launched
- The National Genomic Sequencing Strategy 2024–2030 for Kyrgyzstan was developed.
- A revised National Laboratory Policy and Strategic Plan for 2024–2030 was introduced.
- Kyrgyzstan was chosen to conduct the world's first national antimicrobial prevalence survey of its kind.



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## The first Country Cooperation Strategy for Kyrgyzstan

In November 2023, for the first time, WHO and the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan signed a 7-year Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) for 2024–2030.

This strategy outlines how WHO will work together with the Kyrgyzstan across different levels and provides a clear roadmap for WHO involvement in the country. The approach, referred to as the “triple seven”, focuses on seven key areas with specific targets to be achieved over the next seven years, spanning Kyrgyzstan’s seven regions. This approach guides our strategic and technical collaboration.

Particular attention will be paid to: cardiovascular diseases; mental health; emergency response; antimicrobial resistance; environmental health and chemical safety; attracting human resources to rural areas; and data digitalization.

The CCS signing ceremony occurred during the visit to Kyrgyzstan of Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe. Throughout the visit, the Dr Kluge engaged in various activities, including meetings with President Sadyr Japarov, and the Annual Commonwealth of Independent States Health Council Meeting, and interacted with Kyrgyz young health professional associations, health facilities and organizations representing civil society.

Furthermore, Dr Kluge presented a certificate of validation of hepatitis B control targets to Kyrgyzstan’s Minister of Health, Alymkadyr Beishenaliev, in acknowledgement of the country’s commendable efforts in achieving high vaccination rates.



# Prevention and control of communicable diseases

## Vaccine-preventable diseases

Kyrgyzstan has a well-established immunization programme reporting around 90% national coverage for most antigens. Throughout 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan provided instrumental technical support in the development of the National Immunization Strategy (NIS) for 2024–2030. This comprehensive strategy outlines priorities, objectives and main interventions that were elaborated on and agreed collaboratively by stakeholders. The NIS was designed to align with various national, regional and global strategic documents, including the National Health Sector Strategy for 2019–2030, the National Programme of Immunoprophylaxis, the European Immunization Agenda 2030, the Immunization Agenda 2030 and the Gavi vaccination strategy.



Recognizing the importance of efficient data management in immunization programmes, WHO provided technical support in reviewing the existing immunization data information system. As a result of this review, a digitalization roadmap for the immunization programme was developed. This serves as a strategic guide for transitioning towards a more technologically advanced and streamlined data management system. In a significant milestone, the Ministry of Health endorsed the roadmap in March 2023, indicating a commitment to embracing technology for improved immunization data management.

In October 2023, an evaluation of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) was conducted, with technical assistance from WHO and in collaboration with Germany's Standing Committee on Vaccination, known as STIKO. NITAG members visited Germany to acquire insights from STIKO. By examining best practices and learning from STIKO experiences, group members aspired to enhance NITAG's capabilities and refine decision-making processes.

In November 2022, the human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV) was introduced throughout Kyrgyzstan. The target group for vaccination is 11-year-old girls and the recommended schedule is two doses at least 6 months apart. In 2023, first-dose HPV vaccinations were administered to more than 49 829 girls aged 11 (71% of the target age group) and second-dose vaccinations to 31 990 girls (46%). The WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with WHO/Europe, organized capacity-building training sessions for health-care workers to enhance their skills in advising parents and caregivers about the benefits of HPV vaccination.

Furthermore, over the past few years, several new vaccines have been introduced to the national immunization calendar, facilitated by technical support from WHO: HPV in 2022; the rotavirus vaccine in 2019; the inactivated polio vaccine in 2018; and the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine in 2016. In Kyrgyzstan, 12 vaccinations are now listed on the national immunization calendar.





# Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases

## Strategies and policy dialogues

In January 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan spearheaded a high-level policy dialogue addressing the pressing issue of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of blindness among the country's working-age population. Collaborating with the Ministry of Health, this initiative was part of a joint project with the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) aimed at preventing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by detecting diabetes mellitus and hypertension among the population.

According to the Ministry of Health, about 75 000 people in Kyrgyzstan suffer from diabetes and there has been a two-fold increase in incidence in 10 years. Kyrgyzstan faces challenges because of high levels of diabetes, which is estimated to affect 11% of the population, most of whom have not yet been diagnosed, and because of high rates of premature mortality from NCDs.

A milestone was achieved with the introduction of the first laser equipment dedicated to treating diabetic retinopathy in a public sector health-care facility. This development, facilitated by the WHO-WDF project and supported by the Ministry of Health and other key partners, marks a positive shift for individuals with diabetes in Kyrgyzstan, providing them with access to sight-saving treatment. The Tallinn Charter 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Health Systems



Conference in 2023 featured the presentation of results from the WHO-WDF project, highlighting a remarkable case study that exemplified the “trust-transformation cycle” in action.

One of the keys to the success of the initiative to date has been the active involvement of key stakeholders, including people with diabetes, health-care workers and policy-makers, in identifying the problem, shaping the solution and implementing the change. People with diabetes in Kyrgyzstan have had an active role since the beginning.

In addition to addressing diabetes, several WHO missions were organized to explore the possibility of Kyrgyzstan joining the international WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer and, as a result, Kyrgyzstan has joined the initiative. Kyrgyzstan’s National Centre for Maternal and Child Health now plays a vital role in this international initiative, which focuses on improving diagnosis, treatment and access to affordable medicines and technologies for children with cancer. The programme also offers social support to families dealing with childhood cancer.

During 2023, Kyrgyzstan’s cancer registry (launched in 2015) has been providing crucial information on cancer cases in three of the country’s regions, including the largest, Chüy region. In particular, the cancer registry allows tracking of the entire epidemiology of tumours, and evaluation of the results of treatment, types of treatment, outcomes for patients and frequency of relapses.

In May 2023, Kyrgyzstan’s First Lady, Aigul Japarova, participated in a summit in Zagreb, Croatia, where the spouses of 16 European leaders launched the Network of Spouses of European Leaders on the Prevention of Childhood Obesity in the WHO European Region. They adopted unanimously the Zagreb Declaration, demonstrating a political commitment to address childhood obesity and urging other countries to follow suit. Childhood obesity is a pressing issue, with approximately one in three children of primary school age in the WHO European Region affected, according to the WHO European Regional Obesity Report 2022.

In March 2023, Kyrgyzstan hosted a high-level multistakeholder event within the framework of a United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs mission. The resulting report aims to inform evidence-driven decisions and influence funding priorities. NCDs cause a significant annual loss in gross domestic product (almost 4%, equivalent to US\$ 250 million) and are responsible for 80% of deaths, with a 28% probability of premature mortality between the ages of 30 and 70. The mission was a collaborative effort between WHO and the United Nations Development Programme.



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## Promoting health through the life-course

### Improving maternal and newborn health

In 2023, as part of a WHO-Ministry of Health project aimed at enhancing the quality of hospital care to reduce maternal, newborn and child deaths, WHO teamed with the WHO Collaboration Centres in the Russian Federation, specifically the National Medical Research Centre for Obstetrics, Gynecology and Perinatology, named after academician V.I. Kulakov, and the National Medical Research Centre for Children's Health. The collaborative effort involved conducting on-the-job practical training, benefitting more 430 health-care professionals nationwide. This diverse group included members of quality committees, obstetricians, midwives, paediatricians, paediatric nurses, neonatologists, neonatology nurses and intensive care specialists, all of whom received training on effective perinatal care, the WHO *Pocket book of hospital care for children* and quality improvement approaches.

A progress assessment in November 2023 revealed substantial improvements in many case-management indicators across most hospitals. Key achievements included, among others, improved preparedness of



hospitals in the management of emergency obstetric care, rational use of medicines, care for postpartum haemorrhage, assessment of newborn babies, care for sick newborns and specialized neonatal care, as well as improved management of children with diarrhoea.

In June 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan orchestrated a high-level policy dialogue aimed at addressing preventable maternal and child mortality. Participants reached a consensus to harmonize efforts to empower health workers and acknowledged the importance of advocating for nonpunitive near-miss and death surveillance approaches to enhance the quality of care for mothers, infants and their families. The dialogue also featured valuable policy recommendations from WHO, highlighting confidential, evidence-based enquiry approaches from leading health experts.

In addition, in February 2023, the results of the first national study of health behaviour in school-aged children were presented during a roundtable with representatives of the Kyrgyz government, ministries, parliament, public health organizations and the media. The survey was conducted by the National Centre of Maternity and Childhood Care and supported by WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The nationwide survey covered 9649 schoolchildren aged 11, 13 and 15 years in 172 targeted schools.

## Health systems

### Health financing

In 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan collaborated with the Ministry of Health to support the development of the second phase action plan for the implementation of the state health programme, Healthy Person – Prosperous Country (2019–2030). This collaborative effort involved an inclusive consultative process, taking into account lessons learned from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In addition, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan contributed to the development of a new diagnosis-related groups system and its gradual introduction into the case-mix payment system in hospitals. This initiative aims to improve the payment model, incentivize providers to register

essential parameters and enhance the overall effectiveness of inpatient care delivery. Additionally, WHO conducted a comprehensive overview of the financing system for primary health care (PHC), providing tailored recommendations to enhance efficiency.

Collaboration with the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund included costing of PHC services for the first time. WHO also facilitated access to the WHO Universal Health Coverage Compendium and Service Package Delivery and Implementation Tool, supporting the development and implementation of a national package for progress towards universal health coverage.

## PHC

Throughout 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan actively supported a PHC task force in addressing nine priorities/components in the development of PHC. The Country Office facilitated strong representation and participation in the Astana International Conference on Primary Health Care Policy and Practice, held on 23 October 2023.

In April 2023, WHO and UNICEF jointly supported high-level policy dialogue on investment in PHC in Kyrgyzstan. Participants called for increased investment in PHC to reduce overall health-care costs in the country – for example, in hospital-based and tertiary-level care. WHO recommends strengthening PHC financing by reviewing the per capita rate calculation



and initiated more accurate costing of PHC services to better align PHC with population health needs and the available level of public funding.

Throughout 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, through the Development Partners Coordination Council, collaborated with joint financiers such as the World Bank, KfW Development Bank, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to provide vital technical assistance. This support focused on enhancing cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund in critical areas such as service delivery, health financing, governance, pharmaceutical price regulation and additional drug packages. Technical discussions, facilitated by WHO experts, centred on PHC, NCDs, medicines and digitalization.

## **Legislation in health and policies**

In 2023, Kyrgyzstan, with technical assistance from WHO, adopted two comprehensive laws on public health and on the protection of the health of citizens of Kyrgyzstan. These umbrella laws consolidated respectively five and 10 sub-sectoral laws relating to public health, immunoprophylaxis of infectious diseases, protection from tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, and prevention of iodine deficiency diseases, as well as health-care organizations, the professional status of health workers, oncological care to the population, breastfeeding, diabetes mellitus and other issues.

In addition, Kyrgyzstan adopted two laws on the circulation of medicines and medical devices, developed with support from the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan. The aims are to improve regulatory systems and implement electronic governance; ensure the availability of medicines during emergencies and address the threat of potential shortages; and harmonize national legislation with the acts of the Eurasian Economic Union, including matters related to the import and export of medicinal products.

## **Human resources for health**

In 2023, Kyrgyzstan actively engaged in WHO/Europe-led interventions to tackle health workforce challenges across the entire region. During the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in Astana, Kazakhstan,



Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with 52 other nations, unanimously embraced a resolution endorsing a result-oriented framework for action on the health and care workforce in the WHO European Region, spanning 2023 to 2030.

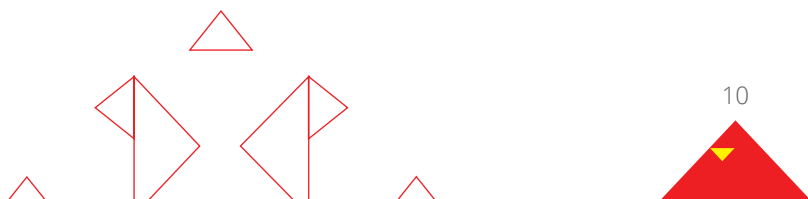
In a significant move, in March 2023, Kyrgyzstan adopted the Bucharest Declaration during a WHO regional meeting in Bucharest, Romania. This declaration emphasizes actionable steps to improve the recruitment, retention and strategic planning of the health and care workforce, underscoring the significance of public investment and workforce optimization. Kyrgyzstan, along with fellow participants, committed to implementing the outlined measures, aimed at effective resolution of the health workforce crisis.

## **Access to essential medicines and medical technologies**

Acknowledging that the main drivers of out-of-pocket spending are medicines and medical products, Kyrgyzstan started addressing this issue in 2017. In May 2023, the government, for the first time in the country's history, endorsed permanent regulation for price control for prescription medicines. This was followed by several iterations of the temporary regulation, piloted since 2019. The introduction of price control, together with revision of the methodology for the selection of products into the Additional Drug Package, was supported by the joint efforts of WHO and the World Bank within the implementation of the PHC Quality Improvement Programme.

The regulation identifying the criteria and process for the selection of medicines and medical devices into the National Essential Medicines List (NEML) has been developed with the support of WHO and endorsed by government decree.

Comprehensive support has been provided to the Ministry of Health in the modernization of legislation to strengthen the regulation of medicines and medical devices, with the aim of increasing affordable access to safe, quality and efficacious medicinal products. In particular, the two overarching laws regulating the pharmaceutical sphere have been developed with the support of WHO.





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## Antimicrobial resistance and stewardship

In 2023, based on WHO initiative, Kyrgyzstan was selected as a pilot country to conduct the first Antimicrobial Prevalence Survey, with preparatory work starting in 2024. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) data for major human bacterial pathogens in Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, are lacking. The survey will help strengthen the country's capacity for surveillance systems and accelerate the availability of quality-assured representative AMR data that can inform national policy and global trends. It focuses on estimating the prevalence of AMR in human bloodstream infections in individuals seeking acute hospital inpatient care.

In 2023, the Ministry of Health began revising the NEML, which had remained unchanged since 2017. A significant innovation in this update was the adoption of the AWaRE classification system, aimed at enhancing the rational use of antimicrobials at all health-care levels. WHO supported this revision by supplying the most recent evidence and up-to-date information on the process. Additionally, WHO provided recommendations for selecting the NEML and implementing the AWaRe classification within it.

# Preparedness, surveillance and response

## Infectious disease outbreak preparedness

In response to a measles outbreak in 2023 (7046 confirmed cases), the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, together with WHO/Europe, provided essential technical support in terms of the development of applications to the Measles & Rubella Partnership (M&RP) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. As a result, Kyrgyzstan received 755 500 vaccine doses from the M&RP, leading to the successful implementation of immunization activities. A second application is currently under review by Gavi.

Given the increasing incidence of bacterial meningitis in Kyrgyzstan, WHO responded to the Ministry of Health's request for technical assistance. WHO provided nutrient media, sera for *N. meningitidis* typing, and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) kits to the Department of Disease Prevention and State Sanitary and Epidemiological Surveillance. This support enabled the introduction and successful testing of the PCR method for early detection and typing of meningitis pathogens. Thirty-two bacteriologists were trained in bacteriological methods, while 25 received training in real-time PCR for meningitis diagnosis.

Kyrgyzstan took proactive measures to strengthen its preparedness and response capabilities to effectively manage any potential poliomyelitis (polio) outbreaks in the future through a polio outbreak simulation exercise in July 2023, making it the first country to implement such an activity in the WHO European Region since 2019. Following a polio outbreak in neighbouring Tajikistan in 2021 and the detection of polioviruses in other countries in the region in 2022, health authorities in Kyrgyzstan have proactively strengthened surveillance to detect any possible importation or spread. They have also conducted a nationwide catch-up campaign to vaccinate 260 000 children who missed polio doses in the past and initiated activities to verify readiness for use of the novel oral polio vaccine in the event it is needed to stop any potential outbreak of poliovirus type 2.

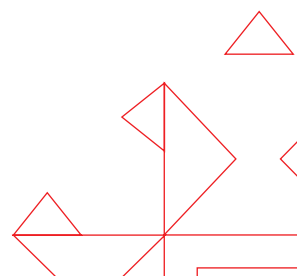


## Health emergencies preparedness and response

In 2023, Kyrgyzstan became the first country among the 53 countries in the WHO European Region to conduct the second round of the Joint External Evaluation (JEE). The JEE, which took place from 3–7 July, brought together 15 international technical experts from multiple countries, technical institutions and United Nations agencies to assess Kyrgyzstan's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health threats. The JEE examined 19 technical areas, including immunization and laboratories, through a peer-to-peer, collaborative process involving international and national experts. The objective was to identify gaps and strengths and equip the country with valuable insights to respond effectively to emerging health threats.

The JEE also noted that financing for health security in Kyrgyzstan remains a challenge and would benefit from a national action plan for health security (NAPHS) developed by national and international experts and representatives of different ministries and departments. The plan, presented in November 2023, provides a clear roadmap, outlining a specific list of activities to be implemented and the steps and resources needed to achieve health security goals across 11 technical working groups: infection prevention and control; zoonotic diseases; points of entry; surveillance; laboratory services; biosafety and biosecurity; food safety; chemical and radiation events; risk communication and community engagement; health emergency; and AMR. Successful implementation of the NAPHS will allow Kyrgyzstan to build International Health Regulations core capacity and be better prepared for health emergencies.

As the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated, early detection and response to infection are critical to surveillance. Together with the Ministry of Health's e-Health Centre, WHO strengthened the capabilities of the iEPID and iLab electronic surveillance platforms. At the end of October 2023, an expert mission came to Kyrgyzstan to assess the existing capacity of iEPID and iLab and further combine these platforms with the electronic surveillance system of the Ministry of Agriculture.





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## Better Labs for Better Health initiative

Introduced in 2014, the Better Labs for Better Health initiative aimed to bolster national laboratory system reforms in Kyrgyzstan. It emphasized enhancing national training programmes, providing quality management system mentoring, establishing laboratory networks for emergency preparedness and response, and fostering advocacy, partnerships and leadership in the field.

In 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan provided technical assistance in the development of the National Genomic Sequencing Strategy 2024–2030 for Kyrgyzstan as well as revised national laboratory policy and strategic plans.

Over 30 virologists, bacteriologists and laboratory specialists participated in a WHO simulation exercise focusing on rapid response in emergencies. The exercise specifically addressed quarantine measures and handling highly dangerous infections using mobile laboratories.

Additionally, 11 facilitators received training in mentoring and training techniques. WHO supported the development of national capacity for whole-genome sequencing for SARS-CoV-2 through online and offline training, resulting in successful uploads of sequencing results to the GISAID platform, which enables the rapid sharing of pathogen data.

The Global Laboratory Leadership Programme was launched in June 2023 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where the programme welcomed a cohort of 15 carefully selected participants. These individuals were drawn from diverse



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laboratories spanning the public health, veterinary and environmental health sectors. Eleven skilled facilitators from Kyrgyzstan deliver the programme, guiding participants through the curriculum while providing invaluable mentoring for their thesis work.

On the 2023 mentoring programme, there were 10 national mentors dedicated to maternity and child hospitals and eight specializing in COVID-19. Four laboratories received guidance on AMR. The programme facilitates the exchange of experiences and knowledge between national and international mentors, promoting collaboration in the development of innovative processes and procedures.

In addition, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan equipped over 130 sampling points in public health laboratories with scanners and thermal printers compatible with the national iLab laboratory information system. To ensure proper traceability, more than 100 public health laboratory specialists were trained in the use of barcoding systems. This step is integral to maintaining the quality management system throughout the laboratory process.

## One Health

To advance the implementation of the One Health approach in Kyrgyzstan, a national workshop was held from 10–12 October 2023 focusing on enhancing multisectoral coordination to tackle zoonotic diseases and



health concerns across human, animal and environmental sectors. The workshop utilized the Multisectoral Coordination Mechanism Operational Tool (MCM OT), endorsed by the tripartite collaboration of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Of the 18 strategic technical elements outlined in the MCM OT, nine were prioritized for establishing the country's multisectoral One Health coordination mechanism. The forthcoming action plan for establishing this mechanism will be integrated into the NAPHS.

## Behavioural and cultural insights

In 2023, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan offered technical assistance for various research endeavours relating to behavioural and cultural insights. Among these was a study focused on exclusive breastfeeding before 6 months in Kyrgyzstan. The primary objective of the research was to comprehend the diverse factors impacting breastfeeding behaviours and leverage these insights to enhance the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding in Kyrgyzstan. The outcomes of the study will be unveiled in 2024.

In addition, to assess the prevalence of NCDs and their risk factors among the adult population (18–69 years old) in Kyrgyzstan, a STEPS survey took place in Kyrgyzstan. The survey addressed factors such as tobacco use, physical activity, alcohol consumption and nutrition. The results of this study will also be disclosed in 2024.

Furthermore, in 2023, the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative surveyed 7500 children aged 7 across seven regions to measure trends in overweight and obesity among primary school-aged children, as well as taking standardized weight and height measurements and collecting information on school environments and dietary and physical activity habits. Also in 2023, another research initiative in Kyrgyzstan, conducted jointly by WHO, the Ministry of Health and the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy, focused on inappropriate food marketing for children aged 6–36 months. Key findings from the research will be made available to those to those with a role in food marketing in Kyrgyzstan.

# Empowerment through digital health

A pivotal moment in 2023 was the comprehensive Health Information System assessment, a collaborative effort undertaken with WHO's technical assistance. This assessment, conducted using the WHO support tool, aimed to evaluate and enhance health information systems, aligning with the WHO European Region's objectives. The goal was to strike a better balance between data collection and utilization, recognizing the increasing significance of electronic health records and other digital solutions.

Throughout 2023, a series of capacity-building activities was organized for Ministry of Health professionals. These focused on advancing knowledge in the secondary use of health data, exploring the potential of "big data" in health care and understanding the applications of health geo-information systems. The activities were designed to empower health-care professionals with the skills needed to harness the full potential of modern health information technologies.

Notably, key personnel from the Kyrgyzstan government, including the Deputy Minister of Health on Digitalization, the e-Health Centre Deputy Director and the Head of the Presidential Administration's Department for Digital Development, actively participated in the 2nd WHO Symposium on the Future of Health Systems in a Digital Era in the European Region, held in Portugal. This event provided a platform for sharing insights and staying abreast of the latest developments in digital health on an international scale.

Leadership from the Ministry of Health, steering the digitalization of health care in Kyrgyzstan, played a pivotal role in the steering group meeting of CARINFONET, the Central Asian Republics Information Network. This gathering, attended by representatives from all member countries, showcased Kyrgyzstan's progress in implementing digital health tools. The team actively contributed to shaping a roadmap for the integration of digital health information systems within the Sanarip MED digitalization programme for the period 2022–2024.



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## Strategic communication

In an unprecedented move, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, in close partnership with WHO/Europe, launched the country's social media accounts on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn in January 2023. Over the course of the year, the Country Office actively disseminated advocacy materials to engage a wider audience. It achieved a significant milestone by being the first country office within the WHO/Europe region to create and successfully introduce a monthly e-newsletter. This served as a vital communication tool, keeping partners and donors well-informed about the latest developments and plans. The e-newsletter was made available in three languages: English, Kyrgyz and Russian.

In 2023, the Country Office collaborated with the Ministry of Health, United Nations agencies and development partners to celebrate World Health Day and commemorate WHO's 75th anniversary. Additionally, the Country Office actively conducted advocacy events throughout the year, focusing on European Immunization Week, World No Tobacco Day, World TB Day, and more. Special advocacy activities were organized for seasonal flu and COVID-19 to boost vaccination rates.



## Looking ahead

In 2024 and beyond, the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan will focus on the strategic priorities of its CCS by utilizing support from all three levels of WHO. Major initiatives and activities planned for 2024 are listed below.

- Launch the world's first national study on AMR prevalence in Kyrgyzstan. The study will involve 40 hospitals nationwide.
- Support the process of preparation for the laboratory accreditation of four laboratory facilities in Karakol, Bishkek and Osh cities in Kyrgyzstan, adhering to the ISO 15189 standard.
- Conduct national health labour market analysis to assess the dynamics of the health workforce in the country.
- Conduct e-health assessment on data flows and data collection systems to support optimization of data reporting, reduce duplication and standardize health data.
- Kick off the joint programme of the Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Digital Transformation Funding Window, led by WHO in partnership with UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme, which aims at optimization of inclusive digital health ecosystems and bridging the digital divide by expanding e-health services.
- Conduct the World Health Survey Plus (WHS+), WHO's flagship household survey programme, which focuses on monitoring health-related SDGs, generating data needed to align with shifting data needs in health programming, policy and analysis. The survey will be implemented through the National Statistical Committee.
- Kick off the Regional Pandemic Fund Grant to strengthen the regional response to shared current and emerging threats to public health and food security in Central Asia.
- Conduct activities on reducing salt consumption and eliminating trans-fatty acids as a main dietary risk factor for hypertension while continuing advocacy efforts.
- Continue responding to the ongoing measles outbreak.
- Adapt the WHO Pocket book of primary health care for children and adolescents to establish country-specific standards for promoting health, preventing diseases and managing health issues from infancy to adolescence, in line with evidence-based global guidelines.
- Sustain efforts to bolster PHC services and enhance the State Guaranteed Benefit Package to enhance health-care accessibility and financial security for the population, alongside initiatives aimed at strengthening the broader health system.
- Continue to advocate for legislative and policy enhancements aimed at improving affordable access to safe, high-quality medicines and medical devices across all tiers of health-care delivery.



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## The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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