

UN Common Country Analysis  
for the Cooperation Framework and the 2030 Agenda

Kazakhstan  
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## Executive Summary

Kazakhstan is an upper middle-income country whose spectacular economic growth since independence depended largely on exploiting its fossil fuel wealth. Kazakhstan was able to significantly reduce poverty levels, although intrinsic inequalities persist suggesting that the newly acquired wealth have not been redistributed fairly. After the managed leadership transition in 2019 political system in Kazakhstan is stable. The authorities have heard the demands of the civil society for creating more political space (e.g. creation of the Council of Public Trust). However, it is too early to say whether this will lead to substantive reforms.

Kazakhstan's economy has recovered from the crisis caused by low oil prices although it continues to depend on fossil fuels. For the next several years, the economic growth is expected to remain flat (at around 3.2%), which might narrow the fiscal space to increase social expenditures. Despite Gini coefficient at 27.5, social cohesion in the county shows signs of strain. Regional inequality is high. This document identifies location, access to services, gender, income and household composition, age, disability and gender identity as determinants of vulnerability. During the years of economic growth, the government has been able to respond to social challenges by increasing expenditure and was able to achieve positive results in education and maternal and infant mortality. The country will need to use a more sophisticated policy mix to ensure that 'nobody is left behind'.

Kazakhstan sees itself as an important regional player, the richest country in the Central Asia region and biggest by territory. It has become a destination country for migrants from neighbouring Central Asian countries. Regional and sub-regional issues, such as water management and development and openness of trade routes are likely to play an important role for the future development of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is one of the biggest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> and, at the same time, needs to adapt to climate change, especially with regards to agriculture, as it remains the important supplier of grains, oilseeds and legumes in the region and has an ambitious livestock development program. Kazakhstan is a flood-prone country, exposed to extreme temperatures, and impacted by glacier melting droughts.

The Government of Kazakhstan is committed to the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals. 79.9% of the Goals are reflected in the existing strategic documents and programs. The Government has created a high-level institutional mechanism to oversee the implementation of SDGs. The process of nationalization of SDGs is under way, along with the work on indicators and monitoring mechanisms. The multifaceted agenda of SDGs is well-suited for the challenges of Kazakhstan and is likely to assist the country to reach its development goals.

Kazakhstan intends to continue its ODA activities, aiding neighbouring countries and supporting regional initiatives. As an emerging donor, it does not receive large amounts of assistance from developing partners. Development Financing Assessment would be useful to gauge the amount and sources of financing to achieve SDGs in Kazakhstan.

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# 1. Country Context

## 1.1 Political Situation and Governance

2019 was a year of a managed political transition in Kazakhstan. On March 19, in a televised address to the nation, President Nazarbayev announced his resignation, with immediate effect<sup>1</sup>. The Senate Speaker, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev became the acting Head of State. The elections were brought forward from 2020 and conducted on 9 June 2019. The process was dominated by the ruling Nur Otan party, although there were seven candidates, including for the first time a woman. According to the Statement of Preliminary Observations and Conclusions by OSCE International Election Observation mission, the elections “were efficiently organized and election day proceedings were orderly. However, significant irregularities were observed on election day, including cases of ballot box stuffing, and a disregard of counting procedures meant that an honest count could not be guaranteed”<sup>2</sup>. A number of peaceful protesters were detained on election day.

Overall, the political transition is not likely to lead to a drastic change of course. The Government shows signs that the public discontent<sup>3</sup> was heard – on 17 July, the new President established a Council of National Trust<sup>4</sup> with the declared purpose of assessing the draft state programs and legislation, discussing strategic challenges, ensuring constructive dialogue with the civil society and non-government organizations; on 2 September, when speaking in Parliament, he called for easing of restrictions on peaceful demonstrations<sup>5</sup>.

In March 2017 a reform of the country’s Constitution was enacted. The reform moved some of the powers of the President to the Government, especially in the socio-economic issues. Presidential orders will not have the power of the laws anymore. At the same time, President appoints regional akims in consultation with local maslikhats and will not consult the Government. The powers of the Parliament increased, and Prime Minister should now report both to the Parliament and to the President<sup>6</sup>.

Kazakhstan continues its efforts to improve governance. An Open Government Portal (<https://open.egov.kz/>) provides access to government services as well as information, on budgets of various agencies. In 2018 Kazakhstan was ranked 39th in the United Nations E-Government Survey. Kazakhstan’s E-Gov online service provided 30 million Government services in 2018, while the number of registered users exceeded 8.5 million people. Half of the 165 Government services provided exclusively online are licenses and permitting documents including subsidy permits. The Government is planning to add another 140 services online<sup>7</sup>. About 76.4% of the population have access to internet.<sup>8</sup> By 2021, it is planned to provide access to high-speed Internet to 3,718 state bodies and state-financed organizations

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13562-kazakhstans-president-resigns-at-a-moment-of-political-tension-and-uncertainty.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kazakhstan/422510?download=true>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-oil-industry-workers-on-strike-for-pay-rise/29213790.html>;  
<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2019/03/22/pressure-mounts-on-kazakh-authorities-to-release-protesting-workers/>;  
<https://www.rferl.org/a/tragic-fire-in-astana-gives-kazakh-mothers-protests-new-momentum/29765930.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/ob-utverzhenii-polozheniya-i-sostava-nacionalnogo-soveta-obshchestvennogo-doveriya-pri-prezidente-respubliki-kazahstan](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/ob-utverzhenii-polozheniya-i-sostava-nacionalnogo-soveta-obshchestvennogo-doveriya-pri-prezidente-respubliki-kazahstan)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/kazakhstan-president-moves-to-allow-peaceful-protests-2094405>

<sup>6</sup> <https://informburo.kz/cards/kak-vyglyadyat-popravki-v-konstituciyu-rk-v-okonchatelnoy-redakcii.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Resources/E-Government-Survey-in-Media/ID/1992/Kazakhstan-ranked-39th-in-UN-E-Government-survey>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

located in 1,250 rural localities where more than 2.4 million people live. The total length of the FOC will be more than 20,000 km. By the end of 2021, more than 3,000 (3,166) settlements in rural area could be covered with LTE network with a connection speed of at least 3 Mbps.<sup>9</sup>

Anti-corruption Agency reports a 16% decrease in the registered cases of corruption between 2016 and 2018 and names the following main instruments to prevent corruption: transparent and accountable state, professional civil service, client-orientation and automation of government services.<sup>10</sup> Transparency International ranks Kazakhstan as 124 out of 180 countries (score 31/100).<sup>11</sup> In addition, some indicators of the World Governance Index (see Table 1), such as government effectiveness, rule of law and regulatory quality show improvements, although voice and accountability appear challenging.

**Table 1 World Governance Indicators for Kazakhstan**

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017
Government Effectiveness	53.4	50.5	51.0	53.8
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism	47.6	43.8	47.6	45.2
Regulatory Quality	45.2	53.4	51.9	61.1
Rule of Law	32.2	38.9	36.1	38.5
Voice and Accountability	14.3	16.3	13.8	13.8

Source: <https://datatabank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators#>

In 2018 the country moved to a ‘career’ model of civil service, which is expected to rise the motivation of civil servants. Competency-based selection of employees was also introduced. As a result of this reform more people have the opportunity to be promoted from within the rank and file<sup>12</sup>.

Independence of the judiciary has been a concern in Kazakhstan. The on-going judicial reform aims at increasing the judicial authority; modernizing the recruitment process and career development of judges; improving the evaluation system of judges; increasing the legal literacy of citizens.

## 1.2 Human Rights

Kazakhstan is a party to most of the main human rights mechanisms (more details in section 1.5) and has moved forward in tackling some of economic and social consequences of the global economic crisis. There is still much space for improvements, specifically, but not exclusively, in the fields of political and civil rights. Kazakhstan's rather strict legislation with excessive regulation on freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom association, including political parties, NGOs, religious organizations, labour unions, has been subject of multiple recommendations from UN Human Rights Council and UN human rights treaty bodies. Torture is reported to be endemic to the prison system and other detention facilities, including police stations, although the National Preventive Mechanism, established under UN OPCAT demonstrates a potential to address the issue. Prejudices based on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation remain unaddressed by the State. Human rights defenders and activists face legal persecution and report about the authorities' lack of willingness to investigate the cases of crimes

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.zakon.kz/4969020-kak-i-kogda-v-kazahstane-uluchshat.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://anticorruption.gov.kz/en/kategorii/nacionalnyy-doklad-o-protivodeystvii-korruptcii>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>

<sup>12</sup> <http://anticorruption.gov.kz/en/kategorii/nacionalnyy-doklad-o-protivodeystvii-korruptcii>

committed against them. Grievances about the lack of access to political participation led to an unprecedented wave of peaceful protests across the country, culminating in 2019.

The human rights of LGBTQ community in Kazakhstan are limited. LGBTQ community faces social and legal challenges, violence and discrimination. It is reflected in homophobic attitudes, hateful treatment and failure of police and government agencies to protect LGBTQ people. Recent cases of violence towards a transgender woman in the prison showed intolerance and discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

Freedom of speech is defined as the right guaranteed by the constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan to freely search, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information in any legal way. 3,520 mass media outlets were registered in Kazakhstan<sup>14</sup>, of which 2,886 are periodicals, 157 are television channels, 72 are radio, 405 are information agencies and online publications. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are hampered by self-censorship of the media. Criminal liability for libel and insult against public officials exist. The Government commonly applies measures to strengthen monitoring systems and restrict websites that are perceived to conduct harmful activities.

### 1.3 Economic Outlook

Kazakhstan's economic growth has slowed down since the peak of 2000-2007. After a sharp drop in 2015 (1.2%) and 2016 (1.1%), following the decrease in oil prices, the economy recovered slowly, with growth reaching 4.1% in 2017 and in 2018<sup>15</sup>. The growth is expected to slow down slightly in 2019-2020 (to 3.2%) and average about 3.9% in years 2021-2024 (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Selected Economic Indicators 2018-2024**

Economic Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP, constant prices, %	4.1	3.204	3.208	3.295	3.307	4.553	4.472
GDP, current prices (b USD)	170.539	164.207	177.322	190.855	206.041	226.115	248.852
GDP p/c, current prices (USD)	9,236.974	8,763.939	9,325.459	9,890.394	10,521.173	11,377.355	12,338.243
Inflation, average consumer prices, %	6.025	5.464	4.974	4.376	4.239	4.047	4.03
Volume of imports of goods and services, %	0.404	3.175	2.973	3.154	3.123	3.047	3.025
Volume of exports of goods and services, %	6.457	3.26	3.116	3.224	3.27	5.637	5.45
Unemployment rate, %	4.951	4.951	4.951	4.951	4.951	4.951	4.951
Population (m)	18.463	18.737	19.015	19.297	19.583	19.874	20.169
General gov. revenue, % of GDP	20.377	21.231	21.679	21.492	21.43	21.559	21.719
General gov. total expenditure, % of GDP	19.839	19.792	19.995	19.922	20.025	20.129	20.216
Current account balance, % of GDP	0.576	0.135	0.56	0.639	0.691	1.155	1.53

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2019

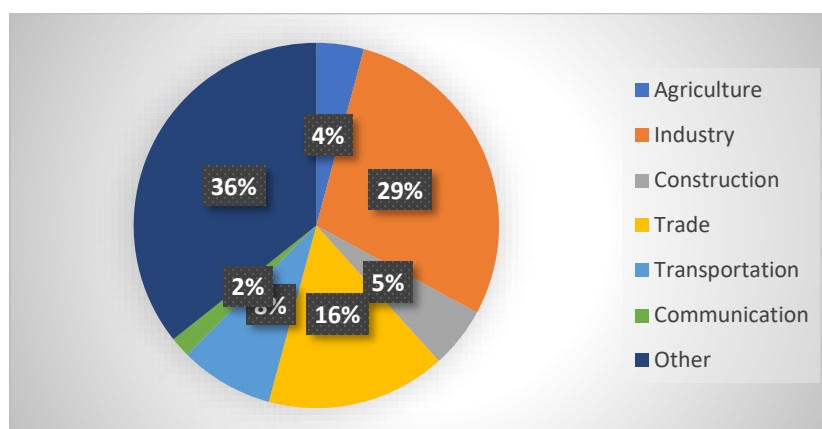
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.zakon.kz/4979161-trans-zhenshchina-zayavila-chto.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://qogam.gov.kz/ru/content/smi>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13562-kazakhstans-president-resigns-at-a-moment-of-political-tension-and-uncertainty.html>

Some of the reasons for this include slow productivity growth and the market dominance by state-owned enterprises, continued dependence on oil exports, as well as decelerating economic growth in Kazakhstan's main trading partners - particularly China, the European Union, and the Russian Federation<sup>16</sup>. Volatility of Russian financial markets caused by international sanctions is also a cause for concern. FDI inflows in the country constitute 4.6 bn USD in 2017<sup>17</sup>. The dependence of Kazakhstan's economy on extractive industry remains high. Crude oil and natural gas production accounts for almost 45% of the manufacturing industry. The share of crude oil and gas in the country's total exports is 67%<sup>18</sup>. Oil output reached a record 90.3m tons in 2018, owing to an increase in production from the Kashagan oilfield.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 1 GDP Composition in 2018



source: economy.kz

It is noteworthy that in 2018, agriculture contributed only about 4% of GDP (see Figure1), while 42.12% of population lives in rural areas.<sup>20</sup> This points to structural inequalities of economic performance. Another sign of inequality (regional) is the rate of growth in different regions of Kazakhstan, ranging from 12.5% growth in the oil-dominated Atyrau oblast to 4.7% growth in Karaganda Oblast to contraction by 2.3% in Kyzylorda oblast.<sup>21</sup>

Unemployment rate is expected to stay stable but with growing population might mean more people out of work. The economic uncertainty has an impact on low-income households as job prospects shrink, consumer prices and loan rates rise, and lack of savings means no financial cushion. Women, particularly those from households headed by women with children and elderly women on their own, are among the most vulnerable during periods of economic shocks.<sup>22</sup> In order to assuage social tensions, the government has launched a new fiscal stimulus in 2019. At the end of February 2019, a KZT 2.35 trn package was announced to fund 25-30% increases of the lowest public-sector salaries from July 1st and larger social security benefits for low-income groups. Additional KZT 50bn per year for seven years was announced

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kazakhstan/overview#3>

<sup>17</sup> <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/398/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> Voluntary National Report, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>19</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report, August 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Kazakhstan Population Analysis, UNFPA (2019)

<sup>21</sup> <https://economy.kz/>

<sup>22</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)



to build 40,000 new rental homes for large and low-income families. This package is expected to widen the budget deficit to 1.1% of GDP in 2019<sup>23</sup>.

The wage gap between women and men remains persistent. In 2012, women in paid employment earned on average 31 per cent less than men, but in 2015 the wage gap widened to 34.1 per cent. When comparing only those incomes below \$75,000 per year, women earn only 57% of what men earn based on 2017 data from the World Economic Forum.<sup>24</sup> Although the share of the shadow economy decreased from 34.8% to 28%, from the beginning of the 1990s to 2015, it is still high.<sup>25</sup>

Consumer price inflation slowed to 6% in 2018, down from 7.4% in 2017. In the first half of 2019, despite a sharp acceleration in food price growth, inflation decelerated to 5.1% year on year, compared with 6.4% in the year-earlier period, although it picked up slightly, to 5.4% in July. The decline was mainly driven by a sharp deceleration in services inflation owing to the government's decision to lower tariffs for electricity, natural gas, coal, water and telecommunications from January 1st<sup>26</sup>.

Kazakhstan is ranked a respectable 28 out of 190 economies (score of 77.89/100) in 2019 in the Doing Business Index.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, it is noted that economy is dominated by the state-owned enterprises, which weakens incentives for private investment and thwarts competition. The government owns directly or indirectly the main network sectors of the economy and has full ownership and control of the largest firms in the gas sector, in several transport sectors, the post, mobile services, and electricity (distribution, supply, and generation) and has a majority stake in firms in other sectors. Many of Kazakhstan's initiatives to support the development of the private sector development include state support programs that lessen the role of the market and distort incentives. Kazakhstan's many private sector development programs rely heavily on import tariffs, soft loans, subsidies (including transport subsidies, operational subsidies, and subsidized loans), SOE support, export taxes or restrictions, and localization requirements, among others. This creates an uneven playing field for the private sector, which is exacerbated by the lack of transparency in the allocation of subsidies. These private sector development programs also bias the incentives of firms toward capturing subsidies rather than improving competitiveness.<sup>28</sup>

#### 1.4 Social Dimension

Over the years Kazakhstan has reduced the proportion of the population living in poverty. Subsistence minimum in Kazakhstan was 23,738 KZT/month in 2017 (60% of the subsistence minimum was assumed to be spent on food basket). Since January 2018, the methodology was changed, and non-food goods and services constitute 45% of the subsistence minimum. In 2013-2017 the proportion of people living under the subsistence line remained stable (see Table 3) and increased in 2018 (4.3% total, 2.5% urban, 6.7% rural) – this can be partially explained by the changes in the structure of the consumer basket. In 2018 the SML was set at 27,072 (which makes roughly 2.6 USD/day)<sup>29</sup>. Minimum pension in Kazakhstan is

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<sup>23</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report, August 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>25</sup> [https://kz.expert/en/news/analitika/476\\_the\\_shadow\\_economy\\_one\\_third\\_or\\_more](https://kz.expert/en/news/analitika/476_the_shadow_economy_one_third_or_more)

<sup>26</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report, August 2019

<sup>27</sup> Doing Business Kazakhstan, World Bank (2019)

<sup>28</sup> A New Growth Model for Building a Secure Middle Class. Kazakhstan Systematic Country Diagnostic. World Bank (2018)

<sup>29</sup> Average USD/KZT exchange rate of 2018 is calculated as 344.4 based on <https://www.x-rates.com/average/?from=USD&to=KZT&amount=1&year=2018>

33,745.<sup>30</sup> Although minimum wages was increased as of 1 January 2019 from 28,284 to 42 thousand KZT,<sup>31</sup> it can still be argued that recipients of minimum pension and wages are vulnerable to fall below subsistence line. It can be further argued that for an upper-middle income country, the SML is set too low. If USD 5.5 PPP per day is used, the percentage of people living in poverty increases.

**Table 3 Subsistence minimum and poverty levels**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Subsistence minimum/m (KZT)	17,789	19,068	19,647	21,612	23,783	27,072
% of people below SML (total)	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	4.3
% of people below SML (urban)	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	2.5
% of people below SML (rural)	4.9	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.5	6.7
% of people below USD 5,5 PPP per day	12.6	11.7	14.5	12.1	10.0	7.6

*Source: Analysis based on UNFPA Kazakhstan Population analysis and data from Committee of Statistics<sup>32</sup>*

In terms of wages, the highest average wage was earned in Atyrau Oblast (299,485 KZT) and lowest in Turkestan Oblast (106,916 KZT). Workers in agriculture earn smallest wages (88 632 KZT), while the highest paid workers are found in mining (385,228 KZT) and financial services (315,191 KZT).<sup>33</sup>

Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan was able to improve its HDI standing (see Table 4 below), however average national performance on human development, masks a very uneven performance at the regional level (see section 1.6 for more detail).

**Table 4 HDI trends, 1990-2017**

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2001 PPP \$)	HDI value
1990	66.8	12.4	8.1	13,734	0.690
1995	63.9	12.0	9.3	8,735	0.664
2000	63.5	12.3	10.5	9,902	0.685
2005	65.2	14.3	11.7	15,407	0.747
2010	67.6	14.4	11.4	17,925	0.765
2015	69.7	15.0	11.7	23,164	0.797
2017	70.0	15.1	11.8	22,626	0.800

*Source: A Situational Analysis of Children's Rights, UNICEF (2019)*

<sup>30</sup> <http://stat.gov.kz/important/dynamic>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.kz/en/beijing/content-view/growing-welfare-of-kazakh-citizens-increase-in-income-and-quality-of-life>

<sup>32</sup> The official name is the Committee of Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy. The institution will be referred to as the Committee of Statistics throughout the text.

<sup>33</sup> National Human Development Report, UNDP (2016).

The value for GINI index in Kazakhstan in 2017 is 27.5, up from the previous year (27.2) and higher than in 2015 (26.50) as of 2015<sup>34</sup>. GINI index varies by region. The highest level of inequality is found in Akmola, Karagandy and East Kazakhstan and the lowest level in Mangystau, Kyzylorda, South Kazakhstan and Pavlodar, with a Gini index of less than 0.22<sup>35</sup>.

Kazakhstan has made some progress in terms of gender equality – the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits have been equalized (although it can be argued that this means a postponement of a guaranteed monthly income for many ‘self-employed’ women),<sup>36</sup> secondary education attainment is practically similar for girls and boys (around 99,5%) and more women (55.9%) than men are in university. Women are much more likely to proceed to postgraduate education: with 61.2% of master’s-level students and 60.9% of doctoral students being women, although higher education fields of study in Kazakhstan are highly gender-segregated - women continue to be overrepresented in traditional areas of study, and are less likely to participate in science and technology related studies<sup>37</sup>. Maternal mortality decreased from 60.9 for every 100,000 live births in 2000 to 14 by 2018<sup>38</sup>. Despite significant progress, number of abortions (1 in six pregnancies) and teenage pregnancies (25/1,000 births for 15-19 years of age) and still high and contraceptive prevalence rate has been stagnating for the last 15 years.

In 2017, female employment-to-population ratio stood at 63.8%. Women concentrated in service spheres, like education, health (72% of women are employed in the service sphere). Kazakhstan has 299 jobs which are prohibited for women (metalworking, selected construction jobs, metallurgical works, etc.). Women comprise 42% of SME owners in Kazakhstan, albeit in 2018 SME share of the country’s GDP was 28 %. At the same time, women are underrepresented in executive positions in the majority of the sectors of economy with the exception of education (for instance, only 19% of CEOs, Members of the Board of Directors, Members of the Board in private banks are women).<sup>39</sup> Many economically active women are unemployed or underemployed because of their reproductive and housekeeping roles. It is estimated that there are two million women categorized as ‘self-employed’. These women are employed in the informal sector, and are denied all social guarantees, such as maternity benefit, sickness benefit, and pensions.<sup>40</sup> Women are more likely than men to take time off for children, thus potentially limiting their career advancement. Women in Kazakhstan spend more time on domestic tasks than men, even though most are also economically active<sup>41</sup>. The prevalence of gender-based violence remains an important socio-economic barrier for women in Kazakhstan, with every one out of three women suffering from a form of physical, sexual or other form of violence.<sup>42</sup> In 2010, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 4, 2009 "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence" came into effect. Special units have been

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<sup>34</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=KZ>

<sup>35</sup> Kazakhstan Human Development Report, UNDP (2016)

<sup>36</sup> World Bank, Despite Gains, Women Face Setbacks in Legal Rights Affecting Work Reforms have improved women’s economic inclusion, but gaps remain, ten-year study shows, February 27, 2019

<sup>37</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>38</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>39</sup> Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, statistical collection “Women and Men in Kazakhstan”, Astana 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Helen Dubok, Dilbar Turakhanova, Kazakhstan Final Report, Gender Study for Central Asia November 2017 Framework Contract EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/Multi Lot 7: Governance and Home Affairs Letter of Contract N° 2016/379003, 2017, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/kazakhstan\\_final\\_report\\_16.11.2017\\_approved\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/kazakhstan_final_report_16.11.2017_approved_0.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>42</sup> Gender highlights Kazakhstan. OECD. 2017

set up in the country to protect women from violence; the number of restraining orders to protect victims of domestic violence is growing.

Political representation of women is still low. As a result of 2016, elections, women attained 27% of seats in the lower house of the bicameral Parliament (the Majhilis) and 10.6% of the seats in the Senate. Within oblast-level elected assemblies (maslikhats), women made up only 12% of all deputies in 2014, with figures ranging from a high of 35% in Mangistau oblast to a low of 2% in East Kazakhstan oblast. Representation is somewhat higher in local elected bodies, with women representing 21% of all municipal deputies and 19% of district deputies<sup>43</sup>.

At the same time, curiously, there is a perception that women have already attained equal status. For example, during key informant interviews conducted for ADB's Country Gender Assessment, many government respondents stated their belief that actions to further remove barriers to inequality were not as high a priority for Kazakhstan as for other countries in the region given the progress already made<sup>44</sup>.

In the context of gender, it should also be mentioned that some social norms also negatively affect men who face enormous pressures to be a 'real man', to demonstrate physical and emotional strength, and to provide financially as the family 'breadwinner'. The pressure to remain emotionally resilient often prevents men from seeking help when they experience anxiety, depression and other mental-health issues and they often resort to drinking to address the challenges they face.<sup>45</sup> There is a difference in life expectancies for males and females. For males, the life expectancy is around 68.85 years, while the females have a life expectancy of 77.19 years.<sup>46</sup>

Kazakhstan managed to reduce child and infant mortality. The under-five mortality rate was reduced from 53 in 1990 to 9.9 per 1,000 live births in 2017.<sup>47</sup> There is a notable decline of underweight and stunting prevalence rates among children under five. 8% of children are stunted or too short for their age and 3.1 % are wasted or too thin for their height.<sup>48</sup> Stunting varies significantly by region, with 11.8 % for Atyrau region and 2.3 % for North Kazakhstan<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, almost 20 % of children aged 6 to 9 years suffer from excessive weight or obesity<sup>50</sup> that is mostly a result of unhealthy eating habits and insufficient physical activity.<sup>51</sup> Obesity is most common in children from high-income families or with relatively few children and is often linked to excessive consumption of sugar, sweets, commercial sweet drinks, saturated

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<sup>43</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>44</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>45</sup> A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019).

<sup>46</sup> Министерство национальной экономики Республики Казахстан, Комитет по статистике, Дети Казахстана 2014-2018 Статистический сборник, 2019

<sup>47</sup> Revision United Nations, World Population Prospects, 2017 Revision; United Nations, Levels and Trends in Childhood Mortality 2018, September 2018

<sup>48</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016

<sup>49</sup> A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019).

<sup>50</sup> WHO, Улучшение питания в Казахстане: ключ к достижению целей в области устойчивого развития, 2019

<sup>51</sup> Баттакова Ж.Е., Мукашева С.Б., Слажнева Т.И., Абдрахманова Ш.З., Буонкрисиано М., Адаева А.А., Акимбаева А.А., Эпидемиологический мониторинг детского ожирения и факторов, его формирующих, в Республике Казахстан, 2015-2016 гг. Национальный отчет

fats and trans fatty acids.<sup>52</sup> The rate of birth given by adolescent girls aged 15-19 years remains high at around 25/1,000 live births in 2018<sup>53</sup>. A 2018 survey of 4,360 adolescents aged 15-19 showed that about 30% were sexually active, with over 40% of these having had more than one partner and not all using protection. Only about 9% of the total number of adolescents surveyed had a comprehensive knowledge about HIV<sup>54</sup>.

National budget, user fees and voluntary health insurance are the main sources of financing for healthcare, although the share of out-of-pocket-pay are on the rise<sup>55</sup>. According to the Ministry of Health, 3.3 % of GDP was allocated to health sector in 2018, which is modest relative to the OECD average of 8.9 %. Total private expenditures were 627 bn KZT in 2018, in comparison with the state expenditure of 940 bn KZT.<sup>56</sup> As a legacy of the Soviet period, the structure of service delivery remains hospital-centric, although primary health care (PHC) services in urban and rural areas are provided through an extensive network of more than 520 PHC facilities (29 % of them are private),<sup>57</sup> which offer diagnostic procedures; treatment of the most common illnesses and injuries; curative and preventive measures; immunization; community awareness raising and health education; and mother-and-child health protection measures. Implementation of the Compulsory Social Health Insurance is under way and will be fully operation from 2020<sup>58</sup>.

Kazakhstan is one of 18 countries worldwide with a high burden of multiple-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB): about 5,000 cases annually (out of 19,000 total TB cases in Kazakhstan). The spread of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is also taking a toll socially and economically: NCDs contribute to 84 % of deaths in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has almost eliminated transition of HIV from mother to child, however most vulnerable groups, among them youth and migrants, remain at high risk due to limited access to health services.<sup>59</sup> According to UNAIDS 2019 estimates, Kazakhstan shows an increase of 35% of new infections and a 10 for incidence to prevalence ratio that puts Kazakhstan among the countries with some of the worst dynamic of the epidemic<sup>60</sup>.

Kazakhstan has the second highest road crash fatality rate (17.6 fatalities per 100,000 population – as estimated by the WHO for 2016) next to Tajikistan, among all Central Asian countries. Pedestrian fatalities comprised of 31 per cent of all road crash fatalities in 2016 which got increased from 23 per cent in 2013.

The country enjoyed strong progress in the area of education. Almost all children of a given class age were enrolled in primary and secondary education with ratios approaching, or above, 100 %.<sup>61</sup> Gender

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<sup>52</sup> WHO, Monitoring food and beverage marketing to children via television in the Republic of Kazakhstan National Center of Public Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Republic of Kazakhstan), 2019

<sup>53</sup> <sup>53</sup> Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, statistical collection “Women and Men in Kazakhstan”, Astana 2018.

<sup>54</sup> [Социологическое исследование по репродуктивному здоровью подростков 15-19 лет](#)

<sup>55</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.OOPC.CH.ZS?locations=KZ>

<sup>56</sup> Министерство Здравоохранения Республики Казахстан, Деятельность Министерства Здравоохранения Республики Казахстан: Итоги за 2018 год Задачи на 2019 год отчет

<sup>57</sup> За полгода услуги первичной медико-санитарной помощи получили более 9 миллионов человек — Минздрав РК, <https://primeminister.kz/ru/news/zasedanie-pravitelstva-rk/17078>

<sup>58</sup> <http://dsm.gov.kz/ru/kategorii/o-vnedrenii-obyazatel'nogo-social'nogo-medicinskogo-strahovaniya>

<sup>59</sup> Final Evaluation of the UNPFD, 2019

<sup>60</sup> [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data_en.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016

parity is also high for both enrolled and achieved rates. Early childhood education (ECE) programs benefited from extensive public investment and a strong policy focus. As a result, the great majority of children over the age of 3 receive some form of early education. In general, 90.8 % of children who are currently attending the first grade of primary school were attending pre-school the previous year<sup>62</sup>. The number of years of schooling a child of school entrance age can expect to receive has increased from 12.3 years in 2000 to 15.1 in 2017.<sup>63</sup> The literacy rate of young people aged 15–24 years in Kazakhstan is 99.9%.<sup>64</sup>

Student learning outcomes, as measured by PISA, demonstrate improvements over the last years but remain below the OECD average.<sup>65</sup> According to PISA data, the language of instruction in schools (Kazakh or Russian), school location (urban or rural), and the socio-economic background of students and schools make a difference in students' performance. Performance in math does not vary by gender but reading remains a major challenge for boys.<sup>66</sup> In 2015 Kazakhstan showed higher PISA scores than in 2012<sup>67</sup>, however according to OECD “the national coders were found to be lenient in marking. Consequently, the human-coded items did not meet PISA standards and were excluded from the international data. Since human-coded items form an important part of the constructs that are tested by PISA, the exclusion of these items resulted in a significantly smaller coverage of the PISA test. As a result, Kazakhstan’s results may not be comparable to those of other countries or to results for Kazakhstan from previous years”<sup>68</sup>.

The number of inclusive schools in Kazakhstan that are fully accessible and have properly trained educators is growing but their numbers are insufficient to support all children with special education needs. There were 102,610 7-18 years old children and adolescents with special educational needs, but only 23,940 of them were enrolled in mainstream schools in 2017 despite the fact that conditions for inclusive education were created in 3,873 or 55 % of all schools.<sup>69</sup> Over 15,000 children with special learning needs received their education at home<sup>70</sup>. One recent survey has found that 2,523 children (27.6 % out of the total number surveyed) were not studying anywhere.<sup>71</sup> Psychological-medical-pedagogical consultations (PMPCs) are a key barrier to children with disabilities studying in mainstream schools, as they follow

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<sup>62</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, UNICEF, UNFPA, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016

<sup>63</sup> UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update, Briefing note for countries on the 2018 Statistical Update

<sup>64</sup> UNESCO, <http://uis.unesco.org/country/KZ>

<sup>65</sup> The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations intended to evaluate educational systems by measuring 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading.

<sup>66</sup> OECD, Starting Strong IV, Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. Country Note. Kazakhstan, 2017; and Министерство Образования и Науки Республики Казахстан АО «Информационно-аналитический центр» основные результаты международного исследования PISA-2015 [http://iac.kz/sites/default/files/nac\\_otchet\\_pisa-2015\\_final.pdf](http://iac.kz/sites/default/files/nac_otchet_pisa-2015_final.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>68</sup> OECD (2016), PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>69</sup> Статистика системы образования Республики Казахстан, Национальный сборник, 2018

<sup>70</sup> [https://bnews.kz/news/svyshe\\_15\\_tysyach\\_detey\\_v\\_kazahstane\\_obuchayutsya\\_na\\_domu/](https://bnews.kz/news/svyshe_15_tysyach_detey_v_kazahstane_obuchayutsya_na_domu/)

<sup>71</sup> A Situation Analysis of Children’s Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019).



Box 1. “You are a girl”

“Why do you need so much education? It would be difficult for you to marry”.

“Domestic violence is becoming a norm”

“You are a girl. Why do you want to know about sex? You should be ashamed.”

“It is difficult to get quality education and skills. Especially, if you do not read Russian. Good text-books in the universities are not available in Kazakh.”

Source: Discussion with activities of Y-Peer network.

medical model of disability in assessing the children with disabilities to make a recommendation on the forms of their education.<sup>72</sup>

The share of children and adolescents in Kazakhstan is high at 31.4% of the total population. In 2017 9.5% of 15-24 years old were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET).<sup>73</sup> There is an increase of urban young people over rural, from 54.9 % in 2014 to 56.5 % at the beginning of 2018.<sup>74</sup> This growth of the urban youth could indicate the migration of the youth to the cities in search of better opportunities. According to sociological survey by the Research Centre ‘Youth’ in 2018, 42,2% of the young people permanently experience the problem of unemployment, 30,5% - while applying for certain specialties, and only 8,5% don’t experience any difficulties. Young women are likely to face additional problems (see Box 1).

Regional disparities could also be traced in unemployment, when the most young job seekers live in particular regions of the country - Aktobe (53,1 %), Atyrau (58,0 %), Mangistau (73,3 %), Turkestan (51,4 %), as well as in Nur-Sultan (73,4 %).<sup>75</sup> These regions are also register the increase of religious radicalism which could be assumed having economic and social roots.<sup>76</sup>

Kazakhstan employs a comprehensive set of social protection policies which includes both social insurance programs (e.g., pensions and unemployment benefits) and social assistance. Social assistance includes a number of poverty-targeted benefits, a set of categorical benefits to cover vulnerable groups and a set of universal benefits. Universal benefits include one-time

allowance for each birth and a benefit for parents caring for children with disabilities. Categorical benefits, supporting specific groups without a means-test, include the state benefit for childcare up to 1 year (for those who not insured in compulsory social insurance system), disability benefit, loss of breadwinner allowance and special benefits for families with many children and for children with disabilities<sup>77</sup>. Coverage of social assistance is generally pro-poor and contributes to lowering income poverty, especially for persons with disabilities and those unable to work. Almost half of households in the bottom income quintile receive a social transfer, compared with one in five in the top three income quintiles.<sup>78</sup> Households across all income quintiles receive poverty-targeted transfers. Although the inclusion error for poverty targeted social transfers is rather small, there is a large exclusion error. This means that while a relatively small share of high-income earners receives poverty-targeted social assistance, a large share of low-income households does not receive the transfers they are entitled to<sup>79</sup>.

The amount of universal transfers is more generous than that of targeted transfers that are less effective in guaranteeing the minimum subsistence levels of poor households with children, particularly in rural

<sup>72</sup> “On the Margins”, Education for Children with Disabilities in Kazakhstan, Human Rights Watch report, 2019

<sup>73</sup> ILO (International Labour Organization. ILOSTAT database. [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat).

<sup>74</sup> National Report “Youth of Kazakhstan – 2018», Astana, 2018, p. 288.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 248.

<sup>76</sup> National Report “Youth of Kazakhstan - 2018”. Astana, 2018, p. 216.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Babken Babajanian, Jessica Hagen-Zanker and Heiner Salomon, Analysis of Social Transfers for Children and their Families in Kazakhstan, UNICEF 2015

<sup>79</sup> Analysis of Social Transfers to Children and their Families in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2015)

areas. Overall, the level of benefits targeting children in low-income families is too low.<sup>80</sup> In 2018, targeted social assistance system was improved and combined three existing social benefits for low-income families such as special benefits for families with four or more children, benefits for children under 18, and targeted assistance for families with incomes below 50 % of the subsistence minimum (previously 40 %) in the form of unconditional and conditional cash assistance. In 2018, there were 1,006,748 childcare benefits recipients and 86,856 children with disabilities were receiving cash assistance.<sup>81</sup>

Five regions of Kazakhstan are recognised by World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as free of FMD with vaccination, 9 other regions are free of FMD without vaccination<sup>82</sup>. Kazakhstan is also officially free of AHS (African horse sickness) and African swine fever<sup>83</sup>.

### 1.5 Environmental Challenges

Kazakhstan inherited significant environmental challenges from the Soviet past, such as the drastic contraction of Aral Sea and industrial and nuclear waste. This legacy, coupled with the resource-dependence for economic growth, create a complex picture. More than 75 % of Kazakhstan's territory is exposed to a range of natural hazards with floods having the major share, followed by extreme temperature events, earthquakes, landslides, mudflows, storms and wildfires. Specific environmental tasks also include improving the efficiency of energy use, waste management, addressing the shortages of water resources and the increase in air pollution<sup>84</sup>.

The area of the Forest Fund (area under the responsibility of forest authorities, although much of it does not have forest cover) is 29.4 million ha, just over 10% of the country's land area. Of this, 3.4 m ha are considered as "forest" by the international definition (crown cover over 10%) and 9.5 m ha "other wooded land", with crown cover between 5 and 10%, which includes notably the large areas of semi-desert saxaul forest. The total of "forest and other wooded land" (FOWL), or "land with forest cover" in the national terminology is 12.9 m ha. FOWL accounts for just under 5% of the total area of Kazakhstan, although forest, strictly defined, accounts for only 1.2%<sup>85</sup>. Over 1.5 million ha of forest landscape will be restored by Kazakhstan under the Bonn Challenge by 2030<sup>86</sup>.

Kazakhstan is a large emitter of greenhouse gases (national emissions amounted to 353.2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2017).<sup>87</sup> Air pollution is particularly severe in larger urban areas, such as Almaty and Nur-Sultan; and air quality is becoming a serious health issue<sup>88</sup>. Industrial air emissions have been decreasing since 2008, despite a constant increase in total industrial output. The highest emissions are of SO<sub>2</sub>, TSP and NO<sub>x</sub>, which totalled 761,500 tons (53.5 per cent), 349,200 tons (24.5 per cent) and 249,300

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<sup>80</sup> Ludovico Carraro, Jo Rogers, Svetlana Rijicova for UNICEF, Technical support to improve design of targeted cash transfer program to be more responsive to the needs of families with children, 2017

<sup>81</sup> Министерство национальной экономики Республики Казахстан, Комитет по статистике, Дети Казахстана Статистический сборник, 2019

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/official-disease-status/fmd/list-of-fmd-free-members/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/official-disease-status/african-horse-sickness/list-ahs-free-members/> <https://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/self-declared-disease-status/>

<sup>84</sup> A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019)

<sup>85</sup> State of Forests in the Caucasus and Central Asia, UNECE (2019)

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.bonnchallenge.org/content/kazakhstan>

<sup>87</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>88</sup> Asian Development Bank (2012). Kazakhstan: Country Partnership Strategy (2012-2016), <https://www.adb.org/documents/kazakhstan-countrypartnership-strategy-2012-2016>.



tons (17.5 per cent), respectively, in 2017. Air emissions from industry are responsible for significant air pollution, notably in urban centres where industrial facilities are located, such as Termitau, Karaganda, Pavlodar and Aktobe. These emissions are potential sources of health problems for industrial workers and the population living nearby (e.g. respiratory diseases), especially when they contain heavy metals (e.g. arsenic, cadmium, lead).<sup>89</sup>

Progress in improving energy efficiency has been relatively slow and uneven. New projects in non-resource sectors such as renewables and other forms of clean energy have been limited; involvement of private sector is challenged due to serious barriers to investment<sup>90</sup>. Kazakhstan subsidizes the use and production of fossil fuels, such as coal, gas and oil, as well as electricity, which are consumed directly by end users or as inputs to electricity generation. It is among the 15 countries with the highest subsidies in the world but is number one in subsidizing coal. The Government undertook some reform of subsidies: most of the direct support for electricity and heat consumers was eliminated, while the Government still provides indirect support by maintaining electricity and heat tariffs at low rates<sup>91</sup>.

Kazakhstan is highly prone to droughts, earthquakes, river floods, mudflows and landslides. Earthquakes are a risk especially in the south and south-east of the country, affecting an annual average of about 200,000 people and about \$1 bn in GDP. On an average annual basis there are 3,000-4,000 emergency situations in Kazakhstan resulting in about 3,000-5,000 injuries and several dozen fatalities and estimated losses of 16 bn KZT.<sup>92</sup> In 2017, 10,509 persons had dwellings damaged or destroyed by disasters.<sup>93</sup> Flood hazards, including those originating from glaciers melting, pose a significant and more frequent risk and have resulted in widespread displacement and secondary impacts such as mudflows and landslides. Currently, over 26% of the population lives in areas prone to mudflows, including the nearly 1.4 million residents of Almaty City. Based on climate projections, an increase in torrential rains as well as formation and outburst of glacier lakes will bring more frequent mudflow events<sup>94</sup>. In addition, natural hazards could trigger technological disasters (so-called “NaTech” events). This increases the accident risks for numerous hazardous industrial facilities in Kazakhstan, such as tailing management facilities, which hold the waste resulting from mining operations.<sup>95</sup>

Since the mid 30's of the last century, the average annual air temperature in Kazakhstan has increased by an average of 0.26°C for each 10 years. The climate has become warmer, and the dynamics of its change is largely synchronous with global climate change. The main consequence of the changes in temperature and precipitation regimes will be the shift to the north of the humidity zones boundary. Therefore, the most vulnerable sectors to the climate change will be agriculture and water management.

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<sup>89</sup> Kazakhstan Environmental Performance Review, UNECE, 2019

<sup>90</sup> OECD (2018). Reforming Kazakhstan: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities, <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/countries/OECD-Eurasia-Reforming-Kazakhstan-EN.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Kazakhstan Environmental Performance Review, UNECE, 2019

<sup>92</sup> UNICEF, Assessment and documentation of good practices on disaster risk reduction for children's resilience in Kazakhstan

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Sendai Framework Monitor (2018)

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.gfdrr.org/en/kazakhstan>

<sup>95</sup> See “Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents” and “UNECE pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia” on <http://www.unece.org/env/teia>

Specific increase of aridity is reported in Southern Kazakhstan with serious implications for food security.<sup>96</sup> Kazakhstan will be also impacted by changes in river run-off due to glacier melting.

Climate change has a negative impact on water resources, crop production (Kazakhstan being a major supplier of wheat), natural grazing land, cattle and sheep breeding and forestry. This, of course, will affect food security and water supply, energy security, human health and could lead to an increase in poverty in the country.<sup>97</sup> Droughts are already a significant challenge in Kazakhstan, where up to 66% of the total land is affected. Water availability in the medium and long term is likely to be the most strongly impacted climate risk, with important repercussions for both domestic and industrial needs<sup>98</sup>.

One of the most significant effects of global warming in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, is glacial melting and the associated formation of glacial lakes. Around the beginning of the 1970s, accelerated glacier mass loss has been reported in the region<sup>99</sup>. Today's rate of glacier loss in CA is 0.2–1% per year in volume. Due to glacier melting and lake formation, there is an increased danger of glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs), which confound and exacerbate water-related threats to mountain communities, their settlements, livelihood, and infrastructure located on river floodplain areas.

#### 1.6 Interlinkages among the three dimensions of sustainable development.

In Kazakhstan, the economic, social and environmental challenges are intrinsically interlinked. Its spectacular economic growth since independence depended largely on exploiting its fossil fuel wealth. Kazakhstan reached the upper middle-income level and is likely to stay at this level of income. It was able to significantly reduce poverty levels. However, recent social unrest has demonstrated that Kazakhstan was unable to redistribute the newly acquired wealth fairly. Given that the economic growth is expected to remain flat and the population is projected to grow (see Table 2 above), the fiscal space to provide social assistance may be narrower and the country will need to use a more sophisticated policy mix to ensure that ‘nobody is left behind’.

Environmental and climate change issues may result in decreasing water availability and quality as well as the need to adapt agricultural practices. Given that 42.1% of the of the population resides in the rural areas, the impact of climate change might acquire a social dimension. An example of the poorest region of Kyzylorda, which is also the location of the Aral Sea disaster, is a lesson that policymakers are well-advised to heed.

Table 5 highlights the priority issues, how they are interlinked and shows corresponding SDGs. One of the main priorities would be to tackle inequality and vulnerability of large parts of population in Kazakhstan. Data overwhelmingly suggests that the economic development and social situation in the regions within Kazakhstan is uneven. Figure 2 plots proportion of people living under minimum subsistence line and economic growth by region (both data for 2018). It shows that only Atyrau (richest) and Turkestan (poorest) regions demonstrate a correlation of economic growth and poverty levels. In most other regions there are no such correlations, suggesting that the economic growth alone is not expected to

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<sup>96</sup> Managing disaster risks and water under climate change in Central Asia (Swiss Agency for Dvpt and Cooperation)

<sup>97</sup> Baisholanov, B.S. Agrometeorological Support of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Prepared for UNDP /USAID project “Improving the Climate Resiliency of Kazakhstan Wheat and Central Asian Food Security” (2013)

<sup>98</sup> Climate Risk Profile Central Asia, USAID

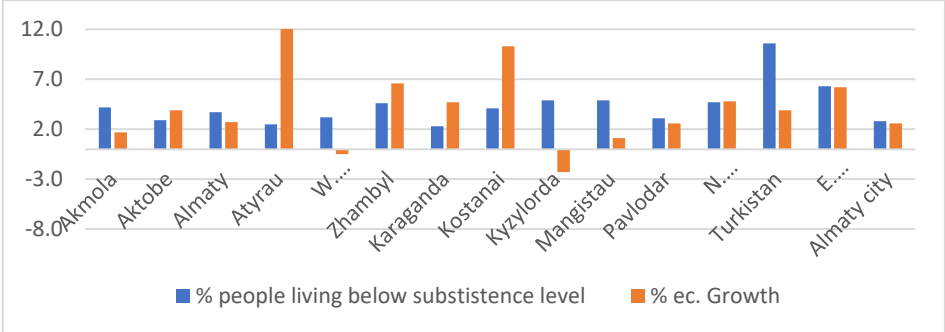
<sup>99</sup> Sorg et al., 2012; Farinotti et al., 2015; Hoelzl et al., 2017

even out social challenges. Regional inequalities exacerbate the existing gender inequalities and access to medical services and energy.

Access to quality education including life skills and skills necessary for the economy of the XXI century is a challenge that drives both inequality of opportunities and creates problems for economic diversification, which is difficult to achieve without a productive and skilled labour force. People are increasingly concentrated in urban settings due to internal migration. In 1996-2015 the number of migrants increased 2-fold. Cities of Almaty and Astana, Atyrau and Mangystau regions are the most attractive regions. Migration outflow of population from villages and small and middle towns to the capital, large and big cities is related to social and economic factors<sup>100</sup>.

Equal access to quality education is particularly important as it is related to the second main challenge – economic diversification. According to WTO, fuel and mining products constituted 79.6 of Kazakhstan’s export in 2017, while agriculture and manufacturing accounted for just 5.2 and 15.2 respectively. This suggests that the labor productivity of the 42.1%<sup>101</sup> of the rural population remains low. Skilled and productive labour force is an essential ingredient of economic diversification.

Figure 2 Regional Economic Growth and Poverty Levels



Source: economy.kz and stat.gov.kz

A set of forward-thinking demographic/migration policies is needed in Kazakhstan - certain encouragement of internal migration may be needed to ensure that the disproportionate level of population density does not result in lack of skilled labour force where it is most needed and thus influences economic development.<sup>102</sup>

Management of migration flows is an issue interrelated with the third main challenge of Kazakhstan – how to respond to regional (Central Asia and beyond) challenges. Migration from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan exceeded 1,265,000 by the end of 2016. The highest concentrations of migrants are in South Kazakhstan, Almaty, Mangystau and Nur-Sultan, where they are mostly employed in construction (Nur-Sultan, Almaty, South Kazakhstan region), agriculture (South Kazakhstan region, Almaty region) and trade (other regions)<sup>103</sup>. This adds to already existing economic pressure on these regions.

Transboundary nature of Kazakhstan’s water reserves means that challenges in availability of water should be tackled at the regional level. In the past water has been a difficult issue, given the differences between

<sup>100</sup> National Report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Housing and Sustainable City Development HABITAT III (2016)

<sup>101</sup> Kazakhstan Population Situation Analysis, UNFPA (2019) – figure for 2017

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Migrant Vulnerabilities and Integration Needs in Central Asia: Assessing Migrants’ and Community Needs and Managing Risks, IOM (2017)

the states - Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are short on water, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan short on electricity. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have argued over the hydropower projects, which Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan needed to keep the lights on. At various times, shared resources have been used as a political tool – Uzbekistan by switching off power grids, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by threatening to block the downstream flow of water<sup>104</sup>. A 2018 summit (15-16 March) of four Central Asian leaders brought hope that these issues can be resolved<sup>105</sup>.

Water, along with land degradation and threats to biodiversity, constitute a climate change-related issue, which requires a global, multi-lateral response. Kazakhstan is, on one hand a large emitter of green-house gasses and, on the other hand, needs to adapt its agricultural and water use practices.

**Table 5 Main Priorities and Corresponding SDGs**

Main Priorities	Sub-issues	Corresponding SDGs
Inequalities	Regional inequalities	1, 2, 3, 4, 5,7,10,11
	Gender inequality	
	Equal access to services	
Economic Diversification	Access to quality education	4,8,9, 10, 11, 12
	Demography/Urbanization	
	Labour Productivity	
Regional Challenges	Migration/refugee issues	6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
	Prevention of radicalization	
	Water Issues	
	Adaptation to climate change	

## 2. National vision for sustainable development

The overarching objective of Kazakhstan is to reach the group of the 30 most developed countries by 2050. Government strategies and programmatic document reflect actions aimed at reaching this goal. The country enjoys a well-functioning national planning system - the Government’s vision and priorities are outlined in documents such as the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, the “100 Concrete Steps” to achieve the five institutional reforms, Strategic Development Plan to 2025. This plan aims at modernizing economy, institutions and society and includes specific indicators of achievement for 2021, 2025 and 2050. The plan 2025 also contains important gender initiative to be implemented through gender-sensitive programming. The government is keenly promoting several flagship policy areas, notably increasing renewable energy supply, improving water efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The green economy agenda is reflected in the Green Economy Concept (2013), the subsequent launching of a Green Bridge initiative and of the International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects (ICGTIP) in 2017-2018<sup>106</sup>.

In October 2018, President Nazarbayev made an important speech outlining the development priorities for the country<sup>107</sup>. The bulk of priorities were social in nature, underlying the need for the growth of incomes through increase of salaries, but also through support to business environment, export-oriented

<sup>104</sup> Dalbayeva, A. End the Weaponisation of Water in Central Asia, Crisis Group, 2018.

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/central-asian-summit-astana-kazakhstan-uzbekistan-tajikistan-kyrgyzstan-turkmenistan/29101686.html>

<sup>106</sup> Final evaluation of the Partnership Framework for Development (PFD) 2016-2020.

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.kz/en/beijing/content-view/growing-welfare-of-kazakh-citizens-increase-in-income-and-quality-of-life>

industries, labor productivity and modern technologies for agriculture, innovations; improvement of quality of life through increasing expenditures and improving the quality of education and health care; creating comfortable living environment through affordable housing and better territorial development; improvements in governance by transforming and modernizing law enforcement and judicial system, increasing the effectiveness of government agencies and fighting corruption.

After the elections, the new President made some changes in the composition of government<sup>108</sup> and announced his working priorities at a Government meeting on 15 July. Some of these priorities include increased productivity of agricultural output, together with creation of jobs; enterprise development; stable macro-economic environment that would encourage FDI; improved quality of governance and of use of budget allocations; strengthening education and healthcare; improved territorial development.<sup>109</sup> Priorities have not changed substantively between the two speeches and are in line with the strategic development agenda of Kazakhstan.

### 3. Country progress towards the 2030 Agenda

The Government of Kazakhstan has created a high-level institutional mechanism to oversee the implementation of the SDGs. A Coordination Council on Sustainable Development Goals was established, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, with five inter-sectoral working groups, dedicated for the “5 Ps” of SDGs - People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnership, each enjoying participation of civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. The Ministry of National Economy is the coordinating body of the Council, supported by the JSC Economic Research Institute, which provides expert and analytical support, serving as the Secretariat<sup>110</sup>.

Two different analyses were made to gauge the integration of SDGs into the national planning system. The MAPS mission that took place in 2016, concluded that 77 of 126 SDG issue targets (61 %) were covered in national and sectoral plans. JSC Economic Research Institute, after training by the UN, performed an analysis of all existing NPS documents, including concepts and doctrines, ahead of VNR preparation in 2019 and found that the level of SDG incorporation in strategic documents and programs was 79.9%<sup>111</sup>.

Kazakhstan’s Voluntary National Report was presented to the HLPF in July 2019. It contains the analysis of all the 17 SDGs and discusses the next steps the government of Kazakhstan intends to take for the implementation of the goals. The report includes selected indicators for all 17 Goals (many of them disaggregated by sex) and provides data for 2010, 2015 and 2018. The report identifies crucial next steps for implementation of Agenda 2030, among them defining both baseline and forecast SDG indicators up to 2030; creation of a monitoring and reporting system for SDG indicators; completion of the process of nationalizing SDG objectives and indicators taking into account the national priorities and the “leaving no one behind” principle; harmonizing budget planning with the SDG objectives and indicators.<sup>112</sup>

The process of nationalizing SDG Targets is already under way. A total of 297 indicators were included for monitoring - 163 global indicators adopted without change; 58 global indicators included with small

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<sup>108</sup> [http://www.akorda.kz/en/legal\\_acts/bylaws](http://www.akorda.kz/en/legal_acts/bylaws)

<sup>109</sup> [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal\\_political\\_affairs/in\\_speeches\\_and\\_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-k-tokaeva-na-rasshirennom-zasedanii-pravitelstva](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-k-tokaeva-na-rasshirennom-zasedanii-pravitelstva)

<sup>110</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>111</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>112</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

changes; 41 alternative/proxy indicators were approved, and 35 national indicators were added<sup>113</sup>. The Government plans to mainstream indicators into the documents of the National Planning System and into the official statistics<sup>114</sup>. This will lead to creation of SDG database; creation of data sources and calculation methodology on one hand and regular (annual) monitoring and assessment of strategic documents and programs, on the other hand<sup>115</sup>. The Committee of Statistics<sup>116</sup> and the JSC Economic Research Institute<sup>117</sup> created websites that contain specific information on goals.

#### 4. Leave No One Behind

The concept of “leaving no one behind” goes beyond traditional notions of poverty and requires deeper analysis to identify those people who either already are, or are at risk, of being excluded and discriminated against. This concept calls to identify the patterns of exclusion, vulnerability and inequality and support legal, policy, institutional and other measures to tackle these patterns.

In Kazakhstan, the proportion of people living below the poverty line has remained relatively stable (both living under SML and under 5.5 USD PPP). However, given the devaluation of KZT, the expected flattening of economic growth and persistent regional inequalities, there is a need to identify the determinants of vulnerability that are important to watch over time.

*Location and access to services.* Regional disparities are considered one of the root causes of inequalities in Kazakhstan. NHDR 2016 found that in terms of Sustainable Development there are four groups of regions: Nur-Sultan city, Almaty city, Pavlodar and East Kazakhstan region are leaders (Tier 1), followed by Kostanay, Karagandy, Almaty region, Akmola regions (Tier 2). Tier 3 regions are: North Kazakhstan, Aktobe, Atyrau, Jambyl. West Kazakhstan, Mangystau, South Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda constitute Tier 4 regions. In terms of economic prosperity, the regions have also been uneven in the last decade (see Figure 3). Most of the country’s GDP is concentrated around the administrative cities of Nur-Sultan and Almaty, the main oil-extracting region of Atyrau and the industrial regions of Karagandy and South Kazakhstan. These regions and cities accounted for 55% of the cumulated GDP in 2013<sup>118</sup>. Inequality in access to energy is also an important factor. In 2018, the gasification rate in the country was 50%. 10 out of 17 regions were gasified: 1. Atyrau Region 2. Mangystau region 3. Kyzylorda region 4. Turkestan region 5. Shymkent city 6. Jambyl region 7. Almaty Region 8. Almaty city 9. West – Kazakhstan region 10. Kostanay region.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>114</sup> 54 gender-related indicators have been identified by UN Women

<sup>115</sup> Since 2017, Kazakhstan is already reporting against DRR related indicators of SDGs 1, 11 and 13 through the Sendai Framework monitoring process.

<sup>116</sup> The independence of the Committee on Statistics, the main provider of official statistics for Kazakhstan, was raised as a concern in the recent Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of Kazakhstan, conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), in partnership with the European Commission (Eurostat) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). See p. 7

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/technical\\_coop/GA\\_Kazakhstan\\_Final\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/technical_coop/GA_Kazakhstan_Final_Report_EN.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> <https://sdgs.kz/>

<sup>118</sup> UNDP, National Human Development Report (2016).

<sup>119</sup> Promotion of Clean and Available Energy to Expand the Rights and Opportunities of Women and Girls in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, Astana, 2018.



The density of physicians per 10,000 population increased from 38.8 in 2010 to 39.7 in 2018, while the density of nursing and midwifery personnel increased from 87.5 per 10,000 population in 2010 to 96.5 per 10,000 population in 2018.<sup>120</sup> Despite these improvements, shortages of medical personnel in rural areas and their inadequate support, a high turnover of staff and difficulties in retaining qualified staff in remote areas,<sup>121</sup> poor transportation services, and lengthy travel times to health care facilities are likely to undermine access to services in remote areas across the country.

Energy security and access to utilities is also more available in urban settings, where most households have access to central heating (64.2%), network gas (46%), central hot water supply (52.9%), centralized water supply (80.3%), sewerage (73, 9%). In the countryside, only 4% of rural households have central heating, 75.7% use stove heating. Only 16.4% of rural households use gas (cooking and heating their houses go on gas), the practice of cooking on gas stoves using liquefied gas in cylinders is mostly common - 69.3% of rural households (along with stove heating fuel). Rural residents mostly take water from a column or a well (55% of households), 11% use imported water, and only 18.7% use running water to the house, and 14.2% running water outside the house<sup>122</sup>.

*Gender* disparities also remain a strong predictor of inequality. It should be acknowledged that Kazakhstan made progress in many gender-related indicators – its Gender Inequality Index (GII) for 2018 stands at 0.197 (rank 58). At the same time, Kazakhstan has fallen on GGI over the last 5 years, from 32nd place (with the GGI 0,7218) in 2013, to 52nd place (0.7130) In 2017, and 60th place (0.7120) in 2018.<sup>123</sup> In Kazakhstan, 99.7% of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared with 100% of their male counterparts. The country also succeeded in reducing its maternal mortality from 60.9 for every 100,000 live births in 2000 to 14 by 2018<sup>124</sup>. At the same time, only 27% of parliamentary seats are held by women (lower house), and female participation in the labor market is at 66.1% compared with 77% for men. Women’s participation in the labor force remains concentrated in service sector, where 71.4% of women are employed compared to 52% of the men. Women and men are evenly represented in agriculture, forestry, and fishery, where 17.1% of women are employed compared to 18.9% for men. The percentage of women employed in agriculture declined by 34% from 2006 to 2016. However, as women move out of agriculture, they remain in lower-paying service sector positions rather than accessing higher-paying industrial jobs.<sup>125</sup> Some of these and similar issues came up in several conversations held with local NGOs during the preparation of this document (see Box 2).

Violence against women is prevalent in Kazakhstan. According to a survey by the Committee of Statistics 17% of ever-partnered women aged 18-75 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, 21% of such women have experienced psychological violence and 7% report experiencing economic violence.

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<sup>120</sup> Министерство национальной экономики Республики Казахстан, Комитет по статистике, Казахстан в 2017 году, Статистический ежегодник, 2018 and Министерство Здравоохранения Республики Казахстан, Деятельность Министерства Здравоохранения Республики Казахстан: Итоги за 2018 год Задачи на 2019 год

<sup>121</sup> UNICEF Programming in Health Systems Strengthening – A Formative Evaluation. Kazakhstan 2017 Visit Report, UNICEF 2017

<sup>122</sup> Promotion of Clean and Available Energy to Expand the Rights and Opportunities of Women and Girls in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, UNDP, GEF, UNECE, 2018

<sup>123</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KAZ>

<sup>124</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>125</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment, ADB (2018)

Figure 3 GDP per capita in 2004 and 2015



Source: modified from NHDR 2016

In 2017 domestic violence and gender-based violence was decriminalized. A law was adopted which moved the Articles 108 and 109 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (“Intentional infliction of light bodily harm” and “Beating”) moved from the criminal to the administrative code. With the changes in the legislation, a husband/partner who has beaten his wife/partner can be sentenced for 15 days or pay a \$122 fine. CSOs working in the sphere of domestic violence and managing crisis centres indicate an increase in number of women (about 30%) receiving social services in crisis centres after decriminalization.<sup>126</sup> There are several other factors that are encouraging violence against women: a) control by men over partnered women – every third woman mentions at least one such case in lifetime; b) existing legislation does not criminalize domestic violence, causing the feeling of impunity and signaling tolerance; c) children witness violence and it might cause a trauma and/or encourage the attitude towards violence as a norm; d) lack of access to specialized services, which makes it difficult for women to seek help.<sup>127</sup>

The number of dissolved marriages is steadily increasing, in 2000 a third of marriages broke up – about 30%, by 2018 almost 40% of all marriages break up<sup>128</sup>. A number of single-parent families is growing. Every 5th child lives in a single-parent family; only 6.6% of children under the age of 5 receive support from their fathers in their early education, and 50.7% of children receive support from their mothers<sup>129</sup>.

*Income/Household Composition.* Low income and/or having 4 or more children can be a cause of vulnerability in Kazakhstan. While many families in Kazakhstan receive Targeted Social Benefits (TSA), the targeting of this benefit could be improved. It would be expected that more beneficiaries would be found where the more poor are. But, while according to the statistical agency 32% of the poor

<sup>126</sup> UN Women Country Office Kazakhstan the analytical note regarding decriminalization in Kazakhstan, 2019.

<sup>127</sup> Выборочное Обследование по Насилию в Отношении Женщин. Казахстан, 2017

<sup>128</sup> Kazakhstan Population Situation Analysis. UNFPA 2019

<sup>129</sup> MICS Kazakhstan 2015



Box 2 – Voices of the NGOs

“Inequality is linked to industry. If industry closes in your town, then you have nothing.”

“Social services are available if you are registered (‘propiska’). The rules have been made stricter recently.”

“Some Uralmans (especially from China, Mongolia) do not speak Russian, but have to face officials who sometimes do not speak Kazakh. This hampers their integration.”

“Unregistered religious entities are considered illegal, but sometimes it is difficult to find even 50 people to apply”.

“Environmental literacy of the population is low- in Semey 80% of the families do not know where to get information.”

“Announcements about public hearings are often made inadequately and many people cannot attend.”

“Disabled people have difficulties of access – even in Nursultan, where 70% of buses are accessible, bus-stops often are not.”

“Financial services are often inaccessible for rural women.”

*Quotes from discussion with various NGO groups.*

are found in South Kazakhstan, the percentage of TSA beneficiaries in the same oblast is only 6%, and conversely 10% of TSA beneficiaries are from Mangystau oblast, whose percentage of people below the Subsistence Minimum Level (SML) is only 3%. Differences between eligible and recipients appear to be explained by difficulty of access/lack of information (whereby eligible in rural areas are relatively less likely to receive), by the way agricultural income and assumed income is imputed in the administrative calculation of income and in some cases also by the relative short-term and seasonal need, which does not materialise in requests to support. At the same time, if families receive unconditional cash benefits because they have children under 7 years of age, they are not being supported with other measures to address the needs of household members, including child focused social support or measures that could support adults in the household in to employment<sup>130</sup>. A mix of additional services and integrated approaches would need to be introduced in Kazakhstan to include training and skills development, micro-enterprise support, support in returning to work for women who have been on maternity leave for extended periods and/or, support with childcare.

*Age.* Children face increased risks of poverty if they live in families residing in rural areas, in single-headed households, in households with low-levels of education, unemployment or being out of labour force, in large households, in families with many children, or in households where a family member has disability. For example, for each child in the household the risk of living in poverty rates increase. In 2018, 4.3 % of children aged 0-17 years living in urban areas had income below subsistence minimum (%) in comparison with 10.3 % of children living in rural areas.<sup>131</sup> Overall, there is almost three time

<sup>130</sup> Carraro, L., et al. Technical support to improve design of targeted cash transfer program to be more responsive to the needs of families with children, Final Report, 2017

<sup>131</sup> The Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Children of Kazakhstan. Statistical Yearbook 2019

difference in incomes for children living in rich and poor families<sup>132</sup> that affects their access to quality food, quality healthcare, education, and extracurricular activities.

According to available data, in 2015, 6 % of young girls age 15-19 were married or in union, with 5.8 % of these with a spouse of 10 or more years older.<sup>133</sup> 0.1 % of women age 15-49 also reported to have married before the age of 15 (this figure was 0.2 % in 2010-2011).<sup>134</sup> The marriages of young girls under the age of 18 is prevalent in some rural areas and among some ethnic groups.<sup>135</sup> Slightly higher rates are reported for East Kazakhstan (1.3 %), Kostanay (0.3%), and Atyrau (0.2%).<sup>136</sup>

Violence against children is widespread and can be to some extent attributed to social acceptance of violence in families. In 2017, 39.5 % of surveyed general public adults reported using some form of physical violence; children in institutions were two times more likely to experience physical violence from parents/adults (39.5%), compared to children in schools (17.6%).<sup>137</sup> According to the 2016 survey, the following groups of children are the most vulnerable and are at greater risk to experience violence: a) Children in residential institutions; b) Children from families with less than primary or only primary school education. Children whose aggressors have no or primary level education are almost double as likely to suffer from physical punishment than children whose aggressors have a higher education; c) Children with disabilities living with their families or in institutions; d) Children living with parents consuming alcohol or abusing substances.<sup>138</sup>

Although the numbers of children left without parental care have declined considerably, the number of cases of removal of parental rights remains high and was 2,874 in 2018.<sup>139</sup> There is a number of external factors such as economic hardships, changes in social norms and values, and family crisis that may result in social orphanhood. Children can be removed from their families because of parents' alcoholism, drug addiction, imprisonment, asocial way of life, violence against women and children or simply because

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<sup>132</sup> Центр исследований Сандж, Независимый мониторинг и анализ ситуации в области защиты прав детей: доклад, Астана, 2017

<sup>133</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016. This rate was 6.1% in 2011 according to The World Bank, Sustainable Development goals.

<sup>134</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016; The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2010-2011 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2011.

<sup>135</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2015

<sup>136</sup> The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, 2015 Kazakhstan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Final Report, 2016.

<sup>137</sup> Robin Haarr, Violence Against Children in Families in Kazakhstan: 2016 Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices, 2017

<sup>138</sup> UNICEF and UNFPA, Making the Connection, Intimate partner violence and violence against children in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2018

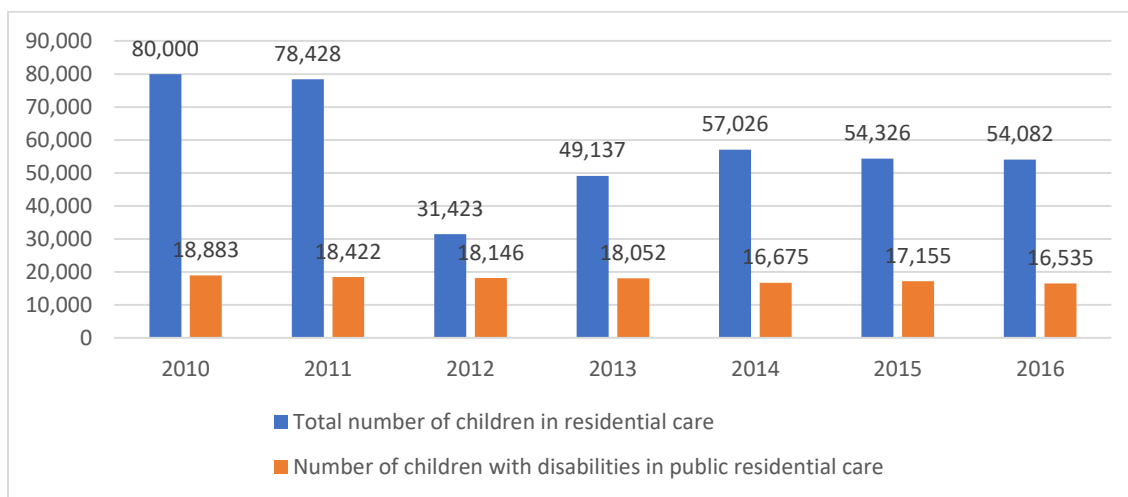
<sup>139</sup> The Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Children of Kazakhstan. Statistical Yearbook 2019

parents neglect their children. The number of social orphans (children left without parental care) in 2017 was 16,218 children (60% of the total number of children left without parental care).

*Disability.* Kazakhstan’s relevant laws refer to persons with disabilities as “invalids<sup>140</sup>”. This is contrary to the human rights-based understanding of disability and perpetuates a negative social perception of persons with disabilities and fails to take into account attitudes and environmental barriers that hinder their participation in society. There is no official deinstitutionalization strategy in the country; in fact, the national disability strategy and action plan provides for the creation of more small-scale institutions, rather than encouragement of services for independent living<sup>141</sup>. Figure 5 illustrates that although the numbers have declined, there are still substantial numbers of children, with and without disabilities in residential care.

*Gender identity.* LGBT community remains vulnerable in Kazakhstan. The concluding observation of the CESCR note that “neither the Constitution nor the domestic legislation of the State Party explicitly prohibits some of the existing grounds of discrimination, such as gender identity and sexual orientation, which contributes to the persistence of discrimination on those grounds in access to employment, health care and education.. It is also concerned by the lack of tailored legal protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons against attacks and harassment.”

Figure 4 Total Number of Children in Residential Care and the Number of Children with Disabilities in Residential Care (year-end)



Source: UNICEF, TransMonEE, Monitoring the situation of children and women in Europe and Central Asia, <http://transmonee.org/>

The discrimination is often manifested in negative attitudes in the general population, medical organizations and law enforcement bodies, e.g. against MSM, among whom self-stigmatization is also widespread. Social stigma against MSM and transgender people increases the vulnerability of these groups to HIV infection. The study of the PLHIV stigma index level in Kazakhstan shows that denial in medical care is a common form of stigma and discrimination. Because of negative experience in the medical institutions and widespread homophobia in the society, MSM often hide their identity from medical

<sup>140</sup> According to the definition provided in article 1 of the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities, an “invalid” is a person with a “permanent medical condition” that prevented the person from functioning independently when support and assistance were not provided.

<sup>141</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her mission to Kazakhstan, 2018

professionals. Gender identity is a major factor in denying access to health care. In 2009, the “Soros-Kazakhstan Foundation” study found that 66% of LGBT people hide their identity from the medical workers. In 2012, researchers from Johns Hopkins University conducted a survey among 400 MSM in Almaty and recorded that only 3% of respondents informed medical workers about their same-sex relationships. A study among transgender people in Kazakhstan showed that the fear of non-compliance with confidentiality, the lack of qualified doctors, and the difficult availability of such services for transgender people are the barriers for transgender people for HIV testing or information support on these issues.<sup>142</sup>

Based on the above, it can be discerned that a woman receiving basic pension living in a rural setting in a relatively poor non-gasified region is at high risk of being left behind. Women with disabilities or HIV, experiencing domestic violence, unemployed are also at risk. Families with four or more children are probably also vulnerable - the issue of families with many children and the inadequate assistance they receive from the state has become a subject of recent public confrontation. Rural population (42.1 % of total) has higher poverty rates, although only about a quarter of rural households receive social assistance transfers, compared to over 40 % in the large cities of Nur-Sultan and Almaty.<sup>143</sup> Despite improvements in mortality figures and education attainment, children, especially those with disabilities, face disadvantages in terms of access to services.

## 5. Commitments under international norms and standards

### 5.1. Human Rights Commitments

Kazakhstan has ratified most of the International Human Rights Treaties, with the notable exception of the Second Optional protocol of CCPR on the abolition of death penalty, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (see Annex 1)<sup>144</sup>. Kazakhstan noted during the discussion of the UPR in 2014<sup>145</sup> that it has been moving towards gradual abolition; has declared a moratorium on the death penalty and has utilized life imprisonment as an alternative. The country participated in several reporting cycles. Its most recent review took place on 27-28 February 2019 when its second report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was considered. Up to twenty NGOs (international and local) provided information. Kazakhstan has made the pledge to uphold the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1998) and signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (2001). In 2018 the Government submitted its 5<sup>th</sup> periodic report to CEDAW.

In 2017, in compliance with its reporting obligations under the Convention, the Government submitted its first comprehensive report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/KAZ/1)<sup>146</sup>. UN Human Rights Committee’s report (CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/2) on Kazakhstan’s compliance with its obligations pursuant to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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<sup>142</sup> Brief on HIV among MSM in Kazakhstan, Eurasian Coalition (2018)

<sup>143</sup> Babajanian, B., J. Hagen-Zanker and H. Salomon, Analysis of Social Transfers for Children and their Families in Kazakhstan, UNICEF in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2015

<sup>144</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child was the first international HR instrument that Kazakhstan ratified after gaining independence (1994).

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/KZindex.aspx>

<sup>146</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her mission to Kazakhstan, 2018

(August 2016) noted concerns in relation to torture and ill-treatment, freedom of expression, the independence of the judiciary and fair trial<sup>147</sup>.

In February 2018, Kazakhstan submitted its 5th periodic report to CEDAW to be heard in the 74th session in October 2019. Despite recognition of Kazakhstan's achievements in protecting the rights of women, children and eradication of violence, the Committee has noted that further action is required with regard to: low quality of public services provided to victims of domestic violence; weak effectiveness of state measures to prevent domestic violence; lack of programs and information campaigns at the local and national level aimed at promoting harmonious relations in the family and preventing domestic violence; low level of preparedness of state bodies for the implementation of normative legal acts in the field of preventing domestic violence; insufficient number of state shelters for rendering services to victims of domestic violence; limitation of the national legislation for the prevention of domestic violence; insufficient level of interaction of public organizations, NGOs and state bodies in identifying and responding to domestic violence and supporting the victims of this type of violence, including the lack of a regulatory framework. Women's sexual and reproductive health are still issues of concern. Child marriage, bride kidnapping, teenage and unwanted pregnancies, pressure to have many children, lack of access to contraceptives and lack of comprehensive sexual education to support informed choices, all hinder women's equality and rights protection.

In 2019 Kazakhstan submitted the comprehensive National Review on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action which gives updates on key changes, progress and challenges experienced by Kazakhstan in enforcing economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of women over the 2015–2019 reporting period. In 2016 Kazakhstan submitted National Report on implementation of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2012–2016 period (for the third review and appraisal) outlining its policies and practical measures to addressing population ageing.<sup>148</sup>

In terms of institutional capacity, the Institution for Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) was established in 2002. It currently has “B” status and is therefore not in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).<sup>149</sup> UPR Review has recommended Kazakhstan to bring the mechanism into line with the Paris Principles. The office of Ombudsman for Children's Rights was established in 2016. The mandate of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights is to ensure and protect children's rights and interests, as well as to restore their infringed rights and freedoms in co-operation with state and civil institutes. It has some degree of formal independence from the executive but its compliance with the Paris principles has yet to be achieved. The functions of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights are undertaken on a pro bono basis and does not have an office supporting its work, lacks dedicated funding and regional representation.<sup>150</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child urged the Government to take immediate measures to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all its forms in the home, care institutions and day care facilities and ensure that those who violate the law are held accountable.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Final Evaluation of the Partnership Framework for Development Kazakhstan 2016-2020, 2019

<sup>148</sup> [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/country\\_rpts/2017/KAZ\\_report.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/country_rpts/2017/KAZ_report.pdf)

<sup>149</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her mission to Kazakhstan, 2018

<sup>150</sup> A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019).

<sup>151</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Kazakhstan, October 30, 2015

## 5.2. Other International Commitments

Kazakhstan is a party to the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions on the management of hazardous waste and chemicals. The country is in the process of modernizing its waste management system in order to move to sustainable production and consumption patterns. Since 2016, Kazakhstan has maintained the state register of industrial and consumer wastes within the Unified Information System for Environmental Protection. It has ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Kazakhstan is a member of 5 Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements: Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in Transboundary Context, Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.<sup>152</sup>

Under Paris Agreement Kazakhstan pledged an unconditional 15% reduction in GHG emissions by 31 December 2030 compared to the base year and a conditional 25% reduction in GHG emissions by 31 December 2030 compared to the base year, subject to additional international investments, access to low carbon technologies transfer mechanism, green climate funds and flexible mechanism for country with economy in transition<sup>153</sup>. According to a paper by Nazarbayev University the target of 25% GHG emissions reduction pathway appears ambitious compared with the current energy policies and mitigation actions. Such a reduction requires an almost full phase-out of coal consumption in power generation by 2050. The share of renewable energy (including hydro) could represent half of the electricity generation mix, the other half being attributed to gas-fired power plants. A coal ban alone is not sufficient to reduce GHGs, additional actions are needed to promote renewables<sup>154</sup>. Climate Action Tracker, a watch-dog, asserts that “while Kazakhstan recognises the need to transition into a greener future, currently implemented policies are not yet sufficient to meet its targets and would lead to emissions of 324 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2020 (a reduction of 11% compared to 1990 levels) and 362 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030 (an increase of 3% reduction below 1990 levels). The current policy landscape prioritises energy sector emissions, which is feasible given that energy-related activities account for 85% of the country’s annual GHG emissions.”<sup>155</sup> Kazakhstan committed in 2018 at a Ministerial Roundtable, to restore 1.5 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge and an additional 300,000 hectares subject to funding support.<sup>156</sup>

Kazakhstan is a State Party to several Conventions in the field of Culture: Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954); Fighting against the illicit trafficking of cultural property (1970); Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972); Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). There are 5 sites included in UNESCO’s World Heritage List and 10 elements in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. However, the awareness about the responsibility and capacities to implement the 1972 and 2003 Conventions remain limited. This is testified by concerns expressed by the World Heritage Committee as regards the World Heritage properties in Kazakhstan.

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<sup>152</sup> <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/envtreatieswelcome/about.html>

<sup>153</sup> Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, Kazakhstan

<sup>154</sup> <https://research.nu.edu.kz/en/publications/long-term-climate-change-mitigation-in-kazakhstan-in-a-post-paris>

<sup>155</sup> <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/kazakhstan/current-policy-projections/>

<sup>156</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/2018/20180621/Astana\\_Roundtable\\_Summary\\_Report\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/2018/20180621/Astana_Roundtable_Summary_Report_ENG.pdf)

## 6. Cross-boundary, regional and Sub regional perspectives

### 6.1 Regional Challenges and Opportunities

Water. Cross-boundary and regional challenges of Kazakhstan (including ongoing issues with Aral Sea) are well-documented. One of the biggest challenges of the whole region of Central Asia is the issues of water management. In addition to ‘traditional’ on-going trans-boundary water management issues, climate change is expected to impact the availability of water resources, including the increased frequency and intensity of floods and droughts, heightened water scarcity, intensified erosion and sedimentation, reduced glacier, permafrost and snow cover, poorer water quality and degraded ecosystems<sup>157</sup>.

Kazakhstan has been very active in international cooperation on water issues in the past decade. It remained a “stability factor” in the regional cooperation among Central Asian countries in the framework of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and took an active role in activities under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). Landmark achievements include the conclusion of two new bilateral agreements with the Russian Federation (2010 and 2016) and a new bilateral agreement on water quality with China (2011)<sup>158</sup>. Specific arrangements exist for the Chu and Talas River Basins, and for the Amu Darya and Syr Darya River Basins<sup>159</sup>; and bilateral agreements on the other basins have been entered into with China and Russia<sup>160</sup>. Kazakhstan reports that none of its 15 transboundary aquifers are covered by an operational arrangement<sup>161</sup>.

Trade. Given its location, Kazakhstan could be a significant transit country. Currently, this potential is not been fully exploited. In 2018, it took 50 minutes on average for transit customs clearance<sup>162</sup>. At present, Chinese transit through Kazakhstan is small, since the bulk of imports from China to the European Union follow the southern sea route. Calculations show that only 1% of cargo from China to Europe uses the land route (about USD 7bn out of a total of some USD 697bn)<sup>163</sup>. This is likely to change soon - Kazakhstan is the critical pillar in two of the proposed six economic corridors under China-led Belt and Road Initiative, namely the New Eurasian Land Bridge, connecting China and Europe via Central Asia, and the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor. The Initiatives foresee investments up to the USD 40bn until 2020 in logistics, public services, SMEs and other infrastructure. Kazakhstan hopes to project the dry land port of Khorgos located 350 km north-east from Almaty as a transit hub for freight traffic flowing between China and Europe<sup>164</sup>. Kazakhstan is also according priority treatment to reducing the cost of trade as a pre-requisite for achieving economic diversification.<sup>165</sup> The focus has been on

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<sup>157</sup> Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation, UNECE (2018)

<sup>158</sup> Kazakhstan Environmental Performance Review, UNECE (2019)

<sup>159</sup> Agreement between the Government of the Kazakh Republic and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the Use of Water Management Facilities of Intergovernmental Status on the Rivers Chu and Talas, 21 January 2000; and Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on Cooperation in the Field of Joint Management on Utilization and Protection of Water Resources from Interstate Sources, 18 February 1992

<sup>160</sup> Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on Cooperation in the Use and Protection of Transboundary Rivers, 12 September 2001; Agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan on Joint Use and Protection of Transboundary Waters, 7 September 2010.

<sup>161</sup> Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation, UNECE (2018)

<sup>162</sup> UNCTAD Report on ASYCUDA project in Kazakhstan

<sup>163</sup> Logistics and Transport Competitiveness in Kazakhstan, UNECE, 2019

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.beltandroad.news/2019/02/18/impact-of-belt-road-initiative-on-kazakhstan/>

<sup>165</sup> Removing Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Kazakhstan, UNECE and the International Trade Centre (2014)



modernizing customs clearance and border control procedures in fulfilment of the country's commitments under the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation.<sup>166</sup> The Government is also developing the national quality control and quality assurance system (standards, technical regulations, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology) so as to enable enterprises to attain and prove compliance with health, safety and environmental protection requirements in domestic and international markets.<sup>167</sup> According to the World Bank Doing Business Report, Kazakhstan improved from 123rd to 102nd place in international trading after introducing the ASTANA-1 IS electronic customs declaration system and reducing customs administrative fees, making trade across borders easier<sup>168</sup>.

By 2021 Kazakhstan plans to build and reconstruct 5,703 km of roads of republican significance and 1,124 km of roads of regional and district significance, and to increase to 48% the share of category I and II highways. In addition, it is planned to build 1,302 km of railway sections, electrify 522 km of railway lines and modernize 6,925 km of the upper track structure, which will further increase the importance of Kazakhstan's railways in the region<sup>169</sup>. In 2016, railway transport comprised 46 per cent of total freight turnover representing 33 per cent of overall transport revenue. Kazakhstan economy's is expected to benefit from the increasing Asia- Europe overland transport. Coupled with its own initiative Nurly Zhol<sup>170</sup>, the China's one belt one road initiative could contribute between 0.7 to 1 percent annually to its GDP creating 200,000 jobs and investment of more than USD 7 billion annually<sup>171</sup>. Its railway network comprises of 15,530 kms of track out which 4,217 km is electrified and 4,900 kms is double track. There are 16 border crossing stations, 11 of them are with Russian Federation, two with China one each with Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Three major international corridors run through Kazakhstan. One of which is north south also called Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Islamic Republic of Iran or KTI corridor.

Kazakhstan is a party to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, a United Nations treaty developed by more than 25 countries at very different stages of development. A recent ESCAP study finds that, if Kazakhstan implements WTO TFA together with cross-border paperless trade measures, it could achieve trade cost reductions of 30%, instead of only about 10% if it aims at basic compliance with the TFA.<sup>172</sup> This amount to potential trade transaction cost savings of more than USD 0.5 billion per year.

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<sup>166</sup> Kazakhstan ratified the agreement on 26 May 2016. As of August 2019, Kazakhstan has implemented 44.5 % of its commitments under the Agreement (<https://www.tfadatabase.org/members/kazakhstan>)

<sup>167</sup> Report on implemented and planned reforms for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade as per ECE's recommendations, [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/SCTCS\\_2017/ECE\\_CTCS\\_2017\\_05E.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/SCTCS_2017/ECE_CTCS_2017_05E.pdf)

<sup>168</sup> <https://astanatimes.com/2018/11/kazakhstan-jumps-8-points-in-world-banks-doing-business-ranking/>

<sup>169</sup> State programme for the development and integration of the infrastructure of the transport system of Kazakhstan until 2020

<sup>170</sup> Nurly Zhol is USD 9 billion domestic economic stimulus plan to develop roads, ports, railway, iT infrastructure in Kazakhstan and was announced in 2014 by President of Kazakhstan

<sup>171</sup> <https://sk.kz/upload/iblock/4f8/4f820a420251411cc1a3437cdd678a35.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> ESCAP (2017). Digital Trade facilitation in Asia and the Pacific. Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation, No. 87. Available from <https://www.unescap.org/publications/digital-trade-facilitation-asia-and-pacific-studies-trade-investment-and-innovation-87>. See also ADB (2017) "Trade Facilitation and Better Connectivity for an Inclusive Asia and Pacific", available from <https://www.adb.org/publications/trade-facilitation-connectivity-inclusive-asia-pacific>



## 6.2. National participation in subregional, regional and global mechanisms

Kazakhstan is a founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which formed after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. In fact, the founding protocols of the CIS were signed in Kazakhstan and are known as Alma-Ata protocols<sup>173</sup>. Kazakhstan is also a member of OSCE, which it chaired in 2010. Kazakhstan's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018 bolstered its image as a responsible regional and global player. As a member of CIS, Kazakhstan is a founding member of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Since 2001, Kazakhstan, together with China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, became a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Kazakhstan is a member of CIS Free Trade Agreement since 2012 and a member of WTO since 2015. In addition, the treaty to create Eurasian Economic Union was signed between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia in 2014 (Kyrgyzstan and Armenia also joined), effectively creating a single market for 183 million people. Nevertheless, of the partners of the Eurasian Economic Union only Russia is among the biggest trading partners – in 2017 Russia was the fourth biggest partner in terms of exports and the biggest in terms of imports<sup>174</sup>. Kazakhstan is part of Incheon Strategy to Make the Right real for persons with disability and Regional Roadmap for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Kazakhstan participates in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs) aimed at strengthening subregional cooperation in Central Asia and its integration into the world economy. It addresses subregional co-operation in such areas as water, energy, environment, sustainable transport, transit and connectivity, trade, statistics, knowledge-based development and gender.<sup>175</sup>

## 6.3. South-South Cooperation and ODA

Kazakhstan has been using its location and weight in the region to encourage cooperation on a number of pressing issues. For example, it supported the Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International migration, which promotes sustained dialogue and exchange of information on migration issues and on refugee protection challenges in Central Asia and the wider region. Seven countries of the region are current members.<sup>176</sup> Another initiative, implemented together with Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan, is the establishment of the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction.<sup>177</sup> Kazakhstan is also an active member of the Vienna Programme of Action, centered upon addressing the challenges faced by landlocked countries, aims to contribute to the eradication of poverty stemming from their landlockedness<sup>178</sup>.

In 2013, Kazakhstan together with 40 other countries, founded the Astana Civil Service Hub. The mission of the Hub is to assist in promoting civil service effectiveness by supporting the efforts of governments of countries of the region and beyond in building institutional and human capacity<sup>179</sup>. This Hub has been an important avenue for Kazakhstan both to learn from other countries and to share its own experience in a) partnerships and networking; b) capacity building and peer-to-peer learning and c) research and knowledge management. The Hub is viewed by participating countries as an effective

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<sup>173</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alma-Ata\\_Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alma-Ata_Protocol)

<sup>174</sup> <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/KAZ/textview>

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.unecce.org/speca/welcome.html>

<sup>176</sup> <https://www.iom.int/almaty-process>

<sup>177</sup> <http://cesdrr.org/en/page/>

<sup>178</sup> <http://unohrrls.org/about-llacs/programme-of-action/>

<sup>179</sup> <http://www.astanacivilservicehub.org/en/>

platform to create triangular and South-South Partnerships and it can play an effective role to assist member states in reaching their SDG commitments. The Government of Kazakhstan has recently provided the UN agencies based in Almaty a large and modern building to operate in, with a vision that the UN could strengthen its effort to promote SDGs at the regional level and beyond.

Kazakhstan started to work on ODA issues with the approval of the ‘Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020’. In December 2014 a Law on Official Development Assistance was approved<sup>180</sup>, outlining the objectives, principles, competencies as well as sectoral priorities of Kazakhstan’s ODA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the designated authority to implement Kazakhstan’s official development assistance (ODA) policy and the draft decree on establishment of KazAID was published in 2018. The total amount of assistance provided by Kazakhstan through bilateral and multilateral channels, including humanitarian aid, was \$49.4 million (including ODA \$42.9 million) in 2015, \$38 million (including ODA \$30.83 million) in 2016 and \$43.3 million (including ODA \$35.23 million) in 2017. In 2017, net ODA provided by Kazakhstan was USD 35.2 million. 67% of gross ODA was provided bilaterally, of which 81% was channelled through multilateral organisations (multi-bi/non-core contributions primarily through the United Nations). In general, over the period 1996–2017, Kazakhstan allocated about \$485.23 million for objectives similar to ODA.<sup>181</sup> Kazakhstan allocated 33% of total ODA as core contributions to multilateral organisations.<sup>182</sup> Bi-lateral assistance was provided to Afghanistan (infrastructure, humanitarian aid and gender equality, scholarships for students), Tajikistan (humanitarian aid) and Ukraine.<sup>183</sup> The main sectors for Kazakhstan’s bilateral development co-operation were humanitarian aid, governance and civil society, and education.<sup>184</sup>

## 7. Risk mapping

The risk factors are adapted from “UN Common Country Analysis Companion Paper to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance” and assessed in terms of their impact on SDG implementation. Likelihood of change is also assessed (see Annex 2).

## 8. Gaps and Challenges

### 8.1 Gaps in Data

Kazakhstan approved 297 indicators for monitoring<sup>185</sup>. The website of the Committee of Statistics<sup>186</sup> list a total of 244 indicators. Out of these - 149 indicators included data up to 2018 and in many cases the data was disaggregated by gender, age as well as by region. The tables include information on the source of data, agency responsible for the compilation of the data and agency responsible for policy implementation. The remaining 95 indicators (39%) did not include any data. None of the data tables included values for years of 2020, 2025 or 2030. It is interesting to compare the data from the Committee of Statistics with the dashboard prepared by UNESCAP (see Annex 3)

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<sup>180</sup> [https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc\\_id=31639794](https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=31639794)

<sup>181</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>182</sup> [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/7da178e1-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&\\_csp\\_=b14d4f60505d057b456dd1730d8fcea3&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=chapter](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/7da178e1-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&_csp_=b14d4f60505d057b456dd1730d8fcea3&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=chapter) (Kazakhstan is an invitee at OECD-DAC since 2015).

<sup>183</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/how-costly-is-kazakhstans-foreign-policy/>

<sup>184</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/kazakhstan-official-development-assistance.htm>

<sup>185</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

<sup>186</sup> [http://old.stat.gov.kz/faces/wcnav\\_externalId/R\\_SDG\\_goals-3?\\_afzLoop=15883260972372669#%40%3F\\_adf.ctrl-state%3D15fyvgnxhc\\_69\\_\(1\\_August,\\_2019\)](http://old.stat.gov.kz/faces/wcnav_externalId/R_SDG_goals-3?_afzLoop=15883260972372669#%40%3F_adf.ctrl-state%3D15fyvgnxhc_69_(1_August,_2019))

Comparison of data availability demonstrates the difficulties in obtaining reasonable and reliable data and shows that sometimes national and international information are not in sink. This is an important consideration for the future of monitoring of SDGs (see table in Annex 4). The first column of the table (yes/green) shows that there are 24 indicators for which data is available and UNESCAP assesses them as green, or on track to achieve target. These targets are presumably global, as Kazakhstan has not set its national targets yet (see section 3.1). The second column (yes/yellow) shows 37 indicators for which data is available and UNESCAP assesses them as yellow, or in need to accelerate progress to achieve target. The third column (yes/red) shows that there are 23 indicators for which data is available and UNESCAP assesses them as red or having a reverse trend for achieving target. There are quite a few indicators, for which there is no data at the Committee of Statistics, but UNESCAP assessment is available, presumably because data is available from line ministries as well as at the regional and local levels. 13 such indicators are assessed as green; 15 indicators are assessed as yellow and 5 indicators are assessed as red.

In addition, there are 74 indicators for which Committee of Statistics does have data, but UNESCAP does not, 4 indicators for which Committee of Statistics does have data but are not included in UNESCAP dashboard and finally there 50 indicators for which neither Committee of Statistics, nor UNESCAP have data. Kazakhstan plans to conduct a census in 2020, which could become a good opportunity to collect some of the missing data.

#### Box 3. Data on the most vulnerable

- The official statistics report continuous reduction of the numbers of out of school children, but the data on the numbers of neglected, abused and runaway children aged 3-18 years placed in Centers for the Adaptation of Minors (CAM) present a serious problem requiring cross-sectoral solutions. The numbers of children placed in CAM was growing from 6,356 in 2014 to 6,953 in 2018 which can be an indicator of improved CAMs' capacities to timely identify and support vulnerable children. It can be argued that many children did not attend school or attended it only part time before placement into CAMs.
- Kazakhstan has a sturdy administrative data collection system and collects figures on number of persons with disability, but demographic data on persons with disabilities is lacking. The Government did not disaggregate data on the basis of disability in the 2009 national population census.
- There is no data on women involved in unpaid domestic work to develop informed social protection policies in the field of pensions, employment opportunities etc.
- According to UNESCO, the State Party has no available data to measure SDG Targets 8.9 by 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products; 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. For example, there is no data available regarding SDG 4.7 regarding education for sustainable development and global citizenship education; Most of SDG 4 indicators are partly monitored from only 'access' perspective and limited data on the 'quality' part. Moreover, non-formal and adult education is not monitored and regulated, there is almost no data and limited policies.

*Source: A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan, UNICEF (2019); Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her mission to Kazakhstan, 2018*

The gaps in national data persist for some of the most vulnerable groups (see Box 3). The data relevant to children's rights in Kazakhstan is relatively extensive - the statistical data covering such diverse areas as education enrolment and graduation rates, mortality and morbidity, poverty rates, children in contact and conflict with law is available in various publications and resources produced by the Committee on Statistics, Ministry of National Economy. Some child-relevant statistical indicators disaggregated by sex, age, and geographical territory are available as well.<sup>187</sup> Kazakhstan also has a fairly developed system of information management in its health sector. Its network covers a whole healthcare system, but there are some capacity and reporting issues that limit its ability to provide accurate information. Digitalization of personal records will most likely improve the quality and accuracy of data. The data collected is not comprehensive and not systematically used however to measure, compare, and improve performance of health services.<sup>188</sup> Kazakhstan collects data regarding disaster impacts and losses (indicators related to Sendai Framework for DRR and SDGs), but gaps remain in terms of systematic report of events from different types of hazards, as well as impact of extensive and slow-onset events. Availability of disaggregated data focusing on vulnerable groups is also a challenge.

In Kazakhstan, effective developmental programming in cities is curtailed by the paucity of reliable and meaningful urban and city level data. Several guided steps to enhance urban data collection and evidence compilation will require that as part of the implementation, the country sets up urban monitoring committees or observatories; undertake a review and selection of relevant targets that matter most to the cities monitoring agenda in the country; refine and agree on methodologies and definitions that fit the local context from the menu of the many available global sets of indicators and; identify sources of information and collect the baseline urban data.

At the same time, Kazakhstan has made important progress in the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics and is the only country in Central Asia to have a specialized division managing gender statistics and indicators. Despite this achievement, the gender equality strategy highlights that reliable sex-disaggregated data remains insufficient to fully monitor progress on gender equality across all sectors. The sharing of gender-sensitive information and data are not well coordinated among government agencies, and not all data are made available to the public<sup>189</sup>.

## 8.2 Financing

Kazakhstan is an upper middle-income country. 79.9% of SDGs are incorporated in national strategies and programs<sup>190</sup>, largely financed from public resources. Kazakhstan's budget for 2019-2021 assumes GDP growth of 3.9 in 2019, 4.1 in 2020 and 4.3 in 2021. Table 6 shows that about a third of government revenues will be coming from oil and oil revenues cover large amount of budget deficit, although budgets are still planned with some deficit. With its flat economic growth, Kazakhstan might struggle to increase expenditures on human capital (which include social assistance, healthcare, education, culture and sport) beyond the declared 7.4% of GDP.

**Table 6 Selected Public Finance Indicators**

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<sup>187</sup> Министерство национальной экономики Республики Казахстан, Комитет по статистике, Дети Казахстана Статистический сборник, 2019; Министерство национальной экономики Республики Казахстан Комитет по статистике, Молодежь Казахстана, Статистический сборник, 2018

<sup>188</sup> OECD, OECD Reviews of Health Systems: Kazakhstan 2018, 2018.

<sup>189</sup> Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment. ADB (2018)

<sup>190</sup> Voluntary National Review, Kazakhstan (2019)

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021
GDP volume (billion. KZTs)	58 493,1	64 145,7	69 079,6	74 497,9
Real GDP growth (%)	3.8	3.9	4.1	4.3
Revenues % to GDP (oil revenues)	15,3 (6.0)	15,2 (5.4)	14,6 (4.8)	14,1 (4.1)
Deficit in % of GDP (non-oil deficit)	-1.5 (-7.6)	-1.5 (-6.9)	-1.4 (-6.3)	-1.3 (-5.3)
Expenditure on Human Capital Development in % of GDP	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.4

Source: *minfin.gov.kz*

National debt of Kazakhstan stands at 40.7 bn USD as of July 2019, according to the Ministry of Finance (including 14.3 bn USD external debt). This is about 26% of GDP – a manageable level. Various taxes from the oil sector go to National Fund – as of 1 August 2019 the stock of its funds stood at 26,062,038,092 thousand KZT.<sup>191</sup>

In terms of international development cooperation, Kazakhstan receives a rather modest amount - a net total of 64 million USD from various donors in 2016 and 59 million in 2017. Being an ‘emerging donor’, the country itself provided ODA worth around 23 million USD in 2017.<sup>192</sup> Most of the development financing to Kazakhstan comes in the form of loans from large IFIs, such as ADB, EBRD, World Bank and others. According to the World Bank, foreign direct investments in Kazakhstan constituted 2.9% of GDP in 2017 and 0.1% in 2018, a sharp drop from 12.5% of GDP in 2016.<sup>193</sup>

Kazakhstan would benefit from the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) to identify opportunities to mobilize additional sources of finance and use existing financial resources more efficiently to achieve the SDGs. This assessment would entail strengthening the link between planning and finance policy functions; supporting multi-stakeholder dialogue on financing; identifying solutions for mobilizing resources and effectively manage financing for results.

<sup>191</sup> [minfin.gov.kz](http://minfin.gov.kz)

<sup>192</sup> <https://www2.compareyourcountry.org/aid-statistics?cr=613&lg=en&page=20>

<sup>193</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.WD.GD.ZS?end=2018&locations=KZ&start=1992>

Annex 1 Ratification and Reporting on International Human Rights Instruments

Treaty Name	Ratification Date	Reporting cycle/Date of the last cycle
Beijing declaration and platform for action	1995	V/2019
CAT	26 Aug 1998 (a)	III/2014
CAT-OP	22-Oct-08	I/2018
CCPR	24-Jan-06	II/2016
CCPR-OP2-DP		n/a
CED	27 Feb 2009 (a)	I/2016
CEDAW	26 Aug 1998 (a)	V/2019
CERD	26 Aug 1998 (a)	VI-VII/2014
CESCR	24-Jan-06	II/2019
CMW		n/a
CRC	12-Aug-94	IV/2015
CRC-OP-AC	10-Apr-03	I/2006
CRC-OP-SC	24-Aug-01	I/2006
CRPD	21-Apr-15	n/a
UPR		II/2014

*Source: ohchr.org*

Annex 2 Risk Mapping

#	Risk factors	Brief description	Impact	Likelihood
1	Political Stability	After the managed leadership transition in 2019 (see 1.1), political system in Kazakhstan appears to be stable. There are no discernible outside threats to the country. However, social tensions are brewing and come up to the surface with some regularity.	High	Low
2	Democratic Space/Civil Society Voice and Participation	At the moment, the authorities appear to have heard the demands for creating more space for the civil society (e.g. creation of the Council of Public Trust). However, it is too early to say whether this will lead to substantive reforms.	Medium	Medium
3	Internal Security	At the moment, there are no issues of internal security in the country. The Global Counter-Terrorism Index ranks Kazakhstan in a lower risk category for terrorism (2.23), with an average of 1.21 risk from 2002-2017. In May 2019, 231 people were returned from Syria and Government is closely monitoring their reintegration <sup>194</sup> .	High	Low
4	Justice and rule of law	Although justice reform has been announced, courts appear to be weak and security services have a certain degree of impunity, especially with dealing with 'extremist' suspects <sup>195</sup> .	High	Low
5	Economic stability	Kazakhstan's economy continues to depend on fossil fuels. The economic growth will be stable, although the lack of economic diversification presents challenges. Low level of growth does have an impact on the fiscal space for social spending.	High	Medium
6	Infrastructure and access to soc. services	Access to social services and utilities tend to be uneven in Kazakhstan. Regional inequality is pronounced and needs to be tackled.	Medium	Medium
7	Displacement and migration	Large-scale displacement of population is not expected. At the same time, Kazakhstan has become a destination country from migrants from neighbouring CA countries. A severe economic downturn in these countries might increase the number of migrants, with negative economic and social consequences.	High	Medium
8	Public Health	Recent epidemiologic review and projections (2018 and 2019) show a continuous increase of HIV, especially among MSM and transgender groups. There has been a 35% change in new HIV	Medium	Medium

<sup>194</sup> <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-evacuates-citizens-from-syria-arrests-some>

<sup>195</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24637&LangID=E>

		infections since 2010 and Incidence: prevalence ratio stands at 10%, putting Kazakhstan globally among countries with the most rapidly evolving HIV infection. <sup>196</sup> The high burden of multiple-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and the spread of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is also taking a toll socially and economically. Kazakhstan is among top 10 countries on suicide rates among adolescents, indicating lack of skills to overcome depression and mental problems. <sup>197</sup>		
9	Food security, food safety, agriculture and land	Kazakhstan remains the important supplier of grains, oilseeds and legumes in the region, but agriculture is prone to low productivity. There is considerable land degradation and risks related to veterinary and phytosanitary safety	Medium	Medium
10	Environment and climate	Kazakhstan is one of the biggest emitters of CO2 and, at the same time, needs to adapt to climate change, especially with regards to agriculture	High	Medium
11	Social cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination	Despite Gini coefficient at 27.5, social cohesion in the county shows signs of strain. Regional inequality is high, gender inequality is noticeable in terms of wages, labour force participation, unpaid domestic work, employment and economic opportunities, domestic violence, among other issues. There are big groups of population at a risk of being left behind (see section 4)	High	Medium
12	Regional and global influences	Kazakhstan is the richest country in the Central Asia region and biggest by territory. Regional challenges related to water management are likely to continue, despite recent rapprochement among Central Asian states. Kazakhstan intends to continue its activities in ODA, aiding neighbouring countries and supporting regional initiatives.	Medium	Medium

Annex 3 Dashboard for SDGs - Kazakhstan

(Source: UNESCAP)

[Attached Separately]

<sup>196</sup> [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data_en.pdf)

<sup>197</sup> World Health Statistics Data, Kazakhstan, 2018





Annex 4 Comparative Table of Data Availability

(Committee of Statistics/UNESCAP)

yes/green	yes/yellow	yes/red	no/green	no/yellow	no/no	no/no	yes/no	yes/no
1.1.1	2.3.1	1.3.1	3.8.1	1.a.1	1.4.1	16.3.1	1.4.2	14.3.1
1.2.1	2.5.1	2.4.1	3.8.2	1.a.2	2.b.1	16.4.1	2.c.1	14.4.1
1.2.2.	2.5.2	2.a.1	3.9.1	1.a.3	5.3.2	16.7.1	3.a.1	14.5.1
2.1.1	3.3.1	2.a.2	8.5.1	1.b.1	5.6.1	16.7.2	4.4.1.	14.7.1
2.1.2	3.3.2	3.7.1	8.5.2	2.3.2	5.6.2	16.10.1	4.6.1	14.b.1
2.2.1	3.3.4	3.7.2	8.6.1	3.3.3	5.c.1	17.5.1	4.7.1	15.3.1
2.2.2	3.3.5	4.5.1	8.8.1	3.5.2	7.a.1	17.13.1	4.b.1	15.7.1
3.1.1	3.4.1	6.4.1	8.8.2	5.1.1	7.b.1	17.15.1	5.2.1	15.a.1
3.1.2	3.4.2	6.4.2	10.2.1	8.4.1	8.3.1	17.18.1	5.2.2	15.b.1
3.2.1	3.5.1	7.1.2	10.c.1	8.4.2	8.7.1	17.18.1	5.3.1	15.c.1
3.2.2	3.b.1	7.2.1	16.1.2	8.10.1	8.9.1		5.4.1	16.2.1
3.9.2	3.b.2	9.2.1	16.1.3	8.10.2	8.9.2		5.5.2	16.2.2
3.9.3	3.b.3.	9.2.2	16.b.1	9.1.1	8.a.1		5.a.1	16.3.2
4.c.1	3.c.1	11.2.1		12.2.1	8.b.1		5.a.2	16.4.2
6.2.1	4.1.1.	11.5.1		12.2.2	9.3.1		5.b.1.	16.5.1
7.1.1	4.2.1	11.6.1			9.3.2		6.1.1	16.5.2
9.b.1	4.2.2	11.6.2			10.7.1		6.3.1	16.6.1
9.c.1	4.3.1	13.1.1		no/red	10.7.2		6.3.2	16.6.2
10.1.1	4.a.1	13.1.2.		3.d.1	11.7.1		6.4.1	16.8.1
14.6.1	5.5.1	13.1.3		8.1.1	11.7.2		6.4.2	16.9.1
16.1.1	6.6.1	15.5.1		8.2.1	11.c.1		6.5.1	16.10.2
16.1.4	7.3.1	17.1.1		9.4.1	12.1.1		6.5.2	16.a.1
17.4.1	9.1.2.	17.1.2		13.2.1	12.3.1		6.a.1	17.2.1
17.8.1	9.5.1				12.6.1		6.b.1	17.3.1
	9.5.2				12.7.1		9.a.1	17.3.2
	12.4.1				12.8.1		10.3.1	17.7.1
	12.4.2	yes/no info			12.a.1		10.4.1	17.10.1
	15.1.1	1.5.1			12.b.1		10.5.1	17.11.1
	15.1.2	1.5.2			12.c.1		10.6.1	17.12.1
	15.2.1	1.5.3			13.3.2		10.a.1	17.14.1
	15.4.1	1.5.4			13.a.1		10.b.1	17.16.1
	15.4.2				13.b.1		11.1.1	17.17.1
	17.6.1				14.1.1		11.3.1	17.18.2
	17.6.2				14.2.1		11.3.2	17.18.3
	17.9.1				14.a.1		11.4.1	
	17.19.1				14.c.1		11.a.1	
	17.19.2				15.6.1		11.b.1	

					15.8.1		11.b.2	
					15.9.1		12.5.1	
					16.2.3		13.3.1	

Note: yes/ and no/ indicate whether the data is available at the website of the Committee of Statistics. Colors (green, red, yellow) denote the assessment given by UNESCAP to the achievement of SDG targets. /no UNECSAP deems the data unavailable.