Tajikistan

ACTE

Training on SDG and SDG 4 of ACTE's members

Civil Society Spotlight Report on SDG 4 for HLPF 2021

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES

Population:	9.314 million (Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020)
Population aged 14 years and younger:	3.474 million (37.3%) (UN DESA Population Dynamics, 2020)
2021 Global Index Score:	69.76/100 (SDR 2021)
2021 Global Index Rank:	78/165 (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Dashboard:	● SDG achieved (SDR 2021)
SDG 10 Dashboard:	● Significant challenges remain (SDR 2021)
2019 HDI Value/Rank:	0.668, 125 out of 189 (HDRO, 2020)
GNI per capita (PPP$):	3,954 (HDRO, 2020)
Gini Index:	34.82 (Statista, 2020)
Income Group:	Lower-Middle Income Status (WB, 2020)
Education Expenditure:	5.2% of the GDP and 16% of the total budget (UNESCO, 2019)

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I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Republic of Tajikistan is a country in the southeast of Central Asia bordering Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. More than 90 per cent of its territory is mountainous with limited access to certain regions. The resident population of Tajikistan at the beginning of 2020 reached 9.314 million people[1] and more than 89 per cent of the population is Tajik. More than 73 per cent of the population of Tajikistan lives in rural areas, and the ratio of men and women is approximately the same.

Tajikistan has a high level of natural population growth (coefficient 22-24 per 1,000 population), and is characterised by a young population structure (34.3% under 14 years old), where 60 per cent of the population is of working age and only about 6 per cent of the population are pensioners. The average age of the population is 26.5 years.

Due to the growth of the economy by an average of 7 per cent a year in Tajikistan between 2000 and 2019, the poverty rate fell from 83 per cent to 26.3 per cent.[2] But the World Bank predicts that the poverty reduction rate in Tajikistan is expected to slow in the coming years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[3]

Tajikistan, as a former republic of the Soviet Union, inherited an education system that now provides compulsory education for 99.8 per cent of children ages 7 to 16.[4] This right is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan.

II. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 (QUALITY EDUCATION) AND LINKAGES TO OTHER SDGS

Public monitoring of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) indicators in Tajikistan[5] revealed that at the national level, the long-term strategy of the education sector is based on the economic and social development priorities of the Republic of Tajikistan, reflected in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period until 2030 (NDS - 2030),[6] and is

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1   From www.stat.tj – TAJStat
2   From https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview
3   From https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2020/10/15/poverty-in-tajikistan-2020
4   From https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview
5   AEAT, LWD «Ishtirok», Independent monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4 indicators in the Republic of Tajikistan, December 2020, working version of the report
6   National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tatarstan until 2030, available in three languages, from www.medt.tj

consistent with the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The development of human capital is identified as a priority area for the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in the framework of the NDS-2030. The priorities in the development of human capital in relation to the various Goals of the 2030 Agenda are:

- reforming the system of education and science (SDG 4);
- food security and ensuring a decent living standard (SDG 1);
- ensuring public health in the context of improving the quality of life (SDG 3);
- ensuring gender equality (SDG 5);
- the expansion of productive employment and the rapid industrialisation of the country (SDG 8);
- reducing social inequality (SDG 10); and
- ensuring energy security through the development of hydropower and creating a favourable environment for life (SDG 13).
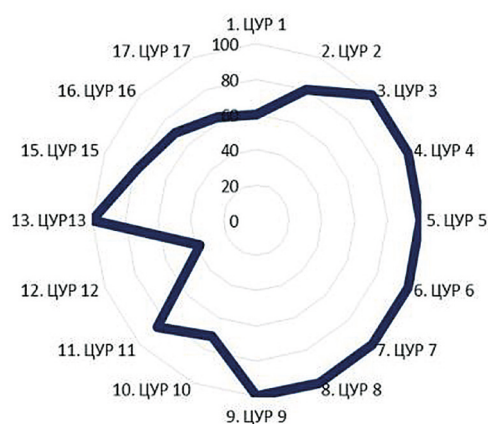
Picture 1. Integration of SDGs into the strategic documents of Tajikistan[7]

Currently, work is underway to concretise the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the national system of indicators for sustainable development. The process of mandatory inclusion of the SDGs in national, sectoral, and regional programmes has been launched in 2020.

The prerequisites for monitoring assessments for the implementation of SDG 4 are at the stage of formation. Accordingly, the measurement of progress towards SDG 4 still faces information and statistical gaps. The principle of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind" requires the use of data that must be disaggregated by vulnerability criteria.

In 2018, a national report[8] on the implementation of the country's strategic documents in the context of the SDGs, including SDG 4, was prepared and presented, which highlights the importance of solving the problem of gender imbalance between men and women in primary vocational education and low education levels among the labour force, among others. Analysis showed that this report includes a limited set of indicators recommended by UNESCO[9] to assess progress towards achieving Goal 4. Out of 17 indicators for monitoring the implementation of SDG 4 in the country, data on 10 indicators are still unpublished, which limits the ability to fully assess progress.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on achieving the SDGs in Tajikistan has not been assessed, but there are indirect indicators that may affect this process even though no lockdown was declared in the country. In August 2020, the World Bank conducted an assessment of the impact of the pandemic and found that at the peak of the pandemic, 40 per cent of families reduced food consumption, 20 per cent of families were unable to receive medical care, and only 5 per cent of families reported receiving government assistance.[10] A decrease in income, as well as a decrease in remittances from overseas migrant workers, may affect the population's access to education in the near future.

III. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

In 2019, a monitoring review of the implementation of the Medium-Term Development Programme of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016-2020 was prepared by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, including the development of the education system at the national and regional levels. The assessments showed what remains problematic, which include the expected coverage of preschool and vocational education, support for the development of non-state educational institutions, the development of a system for monitoring the quality of education, weak interdepartmental coordination of actions, and statistics on adult education (AE) have yet to be improved and further developed.

Despite the fact that secondary education in Tajikistan is free, enrolment rates for students ages 16 to 17 (Grades 10-11) declined sharply after school attendance is no longer compulsory. More girls are out of school than boys- only 64 per cent of girls move from lower secondary school to senior, compared with 86 per cent of boys. This has implications for girls' preparedness for social and economic engagement as adults.[11]

Learners with disabilities are the most vulnerable group in the education system. In 2013, only 19 per cent of learners with disabilities ages 7 to 18 attended general education schools. Adults with disabilities also face barriers to access vocational education and the scale of this problem has not yet been assessed.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) to build the capacity of schools and district governments to create a learner-friendly environment that is gender-sensitive and participatory. The organisation continues to work with authorities to identify out-of-school children and children at risk of expulsion and to promote appropriate absenteeism prevention measures with education authorities and parents. This includes scaling up experimental interventions to prevent and respond to suspension, including the introduction of an in-service early warning teacher training course.

Adult learning centres in the country, with the Ministry of Labour, Migration, and Employment (MOLME) structure and the support of development partners, offer programmes to improve literacy for adults. Within the framework of the European Union (EU) project, measures are being implemented to develop vocational education for adults with disabilities in three pilot regions of the country.

7   MAPS Mission Review: Tajikistan, 2016.
8   From the National Progress Report on the implementation of strategic country documents in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, www.medt.tj
9   UNESCO. (2016). "Unpacking" Objective 4 in the area of sustainable development, Education-2030.
10   See https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2020/10/15/poverty-in-tajikistan-2020
11   From https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/ru

Capacity building of ACTE_s members on policy review

It is essential to develop the information and communications technology (ICT) literacy skills of many, especially in Tajikistan where a large number of people do not have these skills. Especially in the education system, this lack of knowledge among teachers is a significant constraint on the development of the quality of education.

To improve the quality of education, expanding the coverage of education, increasing its flexibility, and taking into account the various needs of the population are imperative. In Tajikistan, the opportunities for the development of ICT in education, public administration, and social services remain underestimated. Since 2010, the indicators of Tajikistan in the field of information technology have been deteriorating. In 2018, Tajikistan was ranked 131st in the e-government development index (0.422), which is 9 positions[12] lower than in 2012. And the level of ICT literacy is not measured in the country, which is one of the recommended indicators for achieving SDG 4.

The development of ICT literacy is a good tool for solving the problems of communication deadlock, which is one of the priorities of the NDS-2030. After all, training can also be available online, anywhere in the country, provided that an inexpensive and fast Internet network is developed and appropriate resources and software products are created. But so far, the technical potential of educational institutions and the high cost of Internet connections in the country are serious obstacles to this form of education. For example, the cost of the Internet in Tajikistan is almost 10 times more expensive than in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. Many educational institutions do not have access to a stable Internet connection or do not use it in the educational process.

Other options include creating a variety of educational lessons and videos and expanding the boundaries of formal standardised teaching. This could become one of the priorities of the work of education authorities, especially in world practice. Many products have been developed, it is enough to adapt them to local conditions and launch the appropriate content.

For the development of the digital economy, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan[13] adopted the Concept of the Digital Economy of the Republic of Tajikistan in December 2019, where one of the important priorities is the training of specialists. It will be very important to provide full funding for the activities of this Concept.

IV. KEY EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTORAL LINKAGES AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Achieving the SDGs is not only a responsibility of the state. It also requires the active and meaningful participation of all at various levels.

At the regional level, the direction of the development of the education sector is determined and assessed both in the context of the implementation of national priorities and the needs of local development. It is expected that there would be a gradual integration of SDG 4 into medium-term programmes for the development of cities and regions of the republic. This process, however, is still in its early stages and there are still no examples of a full indicative reflection or integration of SDG 4 in regional programme materials and initiatives. Accordingly, city and district monitoring assessments and reviews face information gaps due to the lack of data.

A multi-stakeholder approach is expected to be developed over the course of 2021 for localising the SDGs to help ensure the full ownership of the SDGs in Tajikistan. To support this initiative, it is necessary to institutionalise the localisation of the SDGs, in particular, to modernise the methodology for planning the development of regions, since the current development programmes for the country's regions are mainly based on planning methodology without taking the SDGs into account. An important element in this process is the activity of civil society and the expert community in initiating the process of monitoring the implementation of SDG 4.

In 2019, the National Educational Coalition, Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education (ACTE), coordinated by the Association of the scientific and technical intelligentsia of Tajikistan, with the support of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) through the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) programme, initiated "Analytical review of district programs of socio-economic development in the context of the implementation of the mechanisms of SDG 4" to evaluate district socio-economic development programmes based on seven pilot districts for the integration of SDG 4[14]. In 2020, two NGOs – the Adult Education Association of Tajikistan and the League of Women with Disabilities 'Ishtirok'– carried out independent monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4 indicators in three project regions and at the national level.[15]

12 From: https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/168-Tajikistan/dataYear/2018

13 Approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on December 30, 2019 No. 642. Available on www.medt.tj

14 Babajanov R., Kuddusov J. "Analytical review of district programs of socio-economic development in the context of the implementation of the mechanisms of SDG 4", ASTI, 2019

15 AEAT, LWD «Ishtirok», Independent monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4

On April 30, 2021, the Medium-Term Development Programme of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025 was adopted, in which the emphasis on the mechanisms of advancement within the framework of the implementation of SDG 4 was strengthened, including at a disaggregated level, taking into account the above recommendations of civil society.

In 2018-2019, the Adult Education Association of Tajikistan conducted a comprehensive analysis of the adult education statistics in the country in the context of the analysis of SDG 4 indicators,[16] and proposed a specific solution to this problem for key ministries and the Statistics Agency. The proposed solution involves expanding the scope of collecting adult education statistics based on the adaptation of the EU experience. On this basis, a process of consultations with key government agencies has been opened.

So far, the available adult education statistics estimate that only 2.77 per cent of adults are enrolled in education, although the country's adult population (25 years and older) makes up 47 per cent of the total population. This statistic characterises the participation of adults only in vocational training. At the same time, other types of adult education (e.g. short-term courses: formal and informal; professional and non-professional- language courses, driving courses, various courses for personal growth; re-training and professional development) that are developing in the country are not taken into account by the statistical system.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of public monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4 indicators in Tajikistan[17] and analysing the available data, the following recommendations are offered:

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indicators in the Republic of Tajikistan, December 2020, working version of the report.
16   Kuddusov D., Analytical report "Indicators for the Adult Education Sector: Opportunities for Developing ALE Statistics in Tajikistan", AEAT, 2019. Russian translation is available on:http://aeat.tj/ru/analiticheskij-otchet-indikatory-dlja-sektora-obrazovanija-vzroslyh-vozmozhnosti-razvitija-statistiki-ov-v-tadzhikistane/
17   AEAT, LWD «Ishtirok», Independent monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4 indicators in the Republic of Tajikistan, December 2020, working version of the report.

1. Scale-up education financing to achieve SDG 4 and allocate a specific budget for SDG 4 at the national and local levels. An SDG-aligned, integrated national and local financing framework needs to be created to help guide effective public spending related to the SDGs. Further, the financing framework needs to prioritise the agenda of "leave no one behind," making sure that financing ensures equity and inclusion in the realisation of the SDGs.

2. The strategic focus of solving the problem of information gaps should involve the following priorities:

   ● *Development of education statistical systems based on disaggregated data on vulnerability criteria.* The key disaggregation criteria recommended for the SDGs include gender, age, location, disability, migration status, and socioeconomic status (e.g. consumption/income quintile, poverty).

   ● *Enhanced coordination of cross-sectoral data.* Data collection systems by the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and line ministries should synergise.

   ● *Support for independent data generation.* This includes improving research and data analysis to complement official data and facilitate independent monitoring and evaluations, such as CSO SDG 4 reports and citizens' watch.

3. Focus efforts to address the problem of "systemic vulnerability" in response to COVID-19 in education by supporting the creation of ICT infrastructure, including the provision of the necessary equipment and devices for distance learning and teacher training and forming online and offline support systems for teachers and learners that will help improve the quality and efficiency of daily educational activities and distance learning.

4. Engage and involve CSOs in the process of monitoring the implementation of SDG 4 indicators at different levels, including representatives of CSOs in thematic working groups at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan. •