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for change

issn 1394-4444

Supplement 2015 to Vol. 21 No. 1 2015

GENDER EQUALITY, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS, AND THE 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: Moving Ahead at the National Level in Kyrgyzstan for Better Financing, Implementation, Monitoring and Accountability

championing
women's
sexual and
reproductive
rights



published by
the asian-pacific
resources &
research centre for
women and forum
of women's ngos of
kyrgyzstan



published with
funding support by



Why Gender Equality, SRHR and Sustainable Development? Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are intrinsic human rights, are critical components of gender equality, and are necessary to achieve sustainable development in Kyrgyzstan and globally.

In Kyrgyzstan, gender equality and SRHR are critical issues. The status of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Kyrgyz Republic is at an unacceptable low level. SRHR of women and youth in particular is a challenge at the state level and requires the State's and other development actors'

actions. For example, maternal mortality in Kyrgyzstan has remained high in the last decades compared to countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and the MDG target of reducing maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 15.7 by 2015 remained unfulfilled,¹ with maternal mortality reported to be 36.0 in 2013.² Moreover, there are big disparities within the country—for example, while maternal mortality is 24.6 in the capital, and 14.8 in Talas province, it is 50.4 in Chui province.³ Kyrgyzstan also has big challenges with provision of accessible and affordable SRHR services to young people aged 14-28 who comprise 30.2% of the total

Notes

¹ Nurgul Djanaeva and Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, *Country Profile on the Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Kyrgyz Republic* (Bishkek: Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, 2014), 27, <http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Country-Profile-SRHR-Kyrgyzstan.pdf> and <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwZfCxsu5INiNFFtaTnJQWJNdVE/edit>

² National Statistical Committee, *Jenshiny I Mushchiny Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2009-2013 (Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2009-2013)* (Bishkek: National Statistical Committee, 2014), 56, <http://www.stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/174173ca-0ef5-4568-aff4-e96d0973ee43.pdf>

³ National Statistical Committee, *Jenshiny I Mushchiny Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2009-2013*, 56.

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⁴ Djanaeva and Racherla, *Country Profile*, 12.

⁵ Djanaeva and Racherla, *Country Profile*, 27.

⁶ United Nations, "A/70/L.1 Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Outcome Document for the UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda" (United Nations: New York, 2015), 3, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

⁷ United Nations, "Transforming Our World," 4.

⁸ United Nations, "Transforming Our World," 3.

population, due to a lack of policy on youth-friendly service provision, compounded by stigma and moral judgements of society.⁴ Inequity is also a big concern, as "the needs of rural women and other marginalised groups like women with disabilities to access information and services on safe motherhood and other SRH services are not adequately met."⁵

A new, long awaited law on SRHR will help address these issues. One of the main gains of SRHR and women's rights advocates recently, the "Law on Reproductive Rights and Guarantees of Its Realisation of Citizens of Kyrgyz Republic," was adopted by the Parliament in May 2015 and finally signed by the President on 4 July 2015. The law recognises sexual and reproductive rights of citizens as an integral part of human rights, and aims to guarantee protection and promotion of these rights. It also recognises the right to equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination, and introduces sexuality education in schools. The law joins other national laws related to gender and women's rights, such as Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women" (2008), and "On the Socio-legal Protection against Domestic Violence" (2003).

Global Commitments. Realising gender equality and SRHR is not only promulgated

in Kyrgyz legislations, it is also supported by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is a new universal global development framework which was approved by States all over the world, including Kyrgyzstan, on September 2015. States resolved, between now and 2030, "to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."⁶

While working at the national level, it is important to remember that the Kyrgyz government committed to a vision where everyone builds "a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realisation of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met."⁷

There is also a global commitment to "a world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured."⁸

Moreover, world leaders agreed to achieve by 2030 various targets on SRHR in two of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). (See Box 1.)

Towards National Level Implementation.

Now that the new sustainable development agenda has been adopted by States at the global level, it is time to work together at the national level to integrate gender equality and SRHR into national plans for adequate, gender-responsive implementation with adequate monitoring and funding.

Box 1. Some SRHR-related Targets of the Sustainable Development Goals⁹

Under Goal 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”:

3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

Under Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”:

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

There are many challenges in this area.¹⁰ Sexual and reproductive health and rights are comparatively new notions in the Kyrgyz social consciousness. They produce significant debates in the society, because they touch the most intimate and private aspects of personal life, such as sexuality, gender issues, and reproductive behaviour. This has been exacerbated by a growing religious fundamentalism and continued influence of patriarchal ideology, leading to legislative initiatives violating gender equality and human rights in the area of sexual orientation and gender identity. While there have been gains like the new Reproductive Rights law, there are also some losses. In 2014, the Kyrgyz Republic national parliament (Zhogorku Kenesh) discussed a draft law “On amendments to some

legislative acts of the Kyrgyz Republic” that violates the rights of persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities.¹¹ It is crucial that this is not passed.

The health system also has many challenges including lower budget allocation for health, lack of quality health services, and lack of trained health professionals. Increasing out-of-pocket expenditures, both formal and informal, are also contributing to inequities in access to health care, including family planning.¹²

Other more administrative challenges of implementation include the lack of intersectoral coordination, continuity and integration, especially in the education and health systems; the lack of state monitoring and evaluation of gender equality and SRHR programme implementation; and the lack of resources for governmental and non-governmental programmes on provision of SRHR services, especially to adolescents and young people. Local authorities do not budget for SRHR because health expenditures are allocated through a national budget.

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Notes

⁹ United Nations, “Transforming Our World,” 16-18.

¹⁰ To see these discussed in-depth, see Racherla and Djanaeva, *Country Profile*.

¹¹ Coalition for Justice and Non-Discrimination in Kyrgyzstan, “Analysis of Amendments to the Legislation ‘On the Creation of a Positive Attitude toward Non-traditional Forms of Sexual Relations from the Aspect of Law and Human Rights.’”

¹² Djanaeva and Racherla, *Country Profile*, 9.

To improve gender equality and the status of SRHR, civil society organisations (CSOs) recommend that the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic should include the following considerations related to means of implementation (MOI):

- Make the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a reality in Kyrgyzstan, leaving no one behind, especially marginalised women, young people and adolescents, through the development of a National 2030 Sustainable Development Plan, and ensure full funding for its implementation.
- Ensure that gender and SRHR indicators are part of the core national indicators being developed, and that Kyrgyzstan proposes these as part of the global indicators being developed by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). (See Factfile of *ARROW for Change* Vol. 21 No. 1 2015 for proposed indicators.)¹³
- Strengthen implementation of existing legislations on gender equality and SRHR and ensure full funding for these;
- Strengthen inter-agency cooperation and determine the obligations of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national strategy for education in the field of gender equality and SRHR;
- Create a consolidated inter-agency system of monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan and gender and SRHR laws and programmes;
- Ensure adequate resources through the state budget, including local budgets, of SRHR programmes, especially for women, youth and adolescents, and the most marginalised amongst them, including the poor, women with disabilities and those most at risk of maternal deaths. Programmes should include the following:

prevention and treatment of HIV and sexually transmitted infections; counselling and voluntary and confidential services on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies; compulsory health insurance mechanisms; and procurement of contraceptives and other SRH services;

- Develop sustainable mechanisms for the involvement of women, adolescents and youth in the process of development, monitoring and evaluation of development plans, programmes, and policies at all levels and in all areas that have an impact on their life and health. This recommendation is further elaborated in the section on the role of women's organisations.
- Other more specific recommendations for further strengthening gender equality and SRHR in Kyrgyzstan to policy-makers were discussed and adopted at the Beijing+20 national conference held by Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan in 2014 in Bishkek. These are available at the Forum's site¹⁴ and in our publications.^{15, 16}

There is a real need to ensure adequate financing, technology transfer, capacity building, and accountability mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan and the rest of Central Asia to address challenges in the area of the gender equality and SRHR.

Gender equality and SRHR advocates assert that the Kyrgyz government and other development stakeholders should also not just concentrate efforts on the implementation and monitoring of specific goals and targets (3, 4, 5 goals). There is a real need to ensure adequate financing,

Notes

¹³ Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, "Achieving SRHR in the SDGs: Proposals for Critical SRHR Indicators to Achieve SRHR Targets," *ARROW for Change*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: ARROW, 2015): 27-31, http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/AFC21.1-2015_web.pdf.

¹⁴ Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, <http://forumofwomenngos.kg/>

¹⁵ Djanaeva and Racherla, *Country Profile*.

¹⁶ Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, *Beijing+20 Review of the Beijing Platform for Action Implementation in Kyrgyzstan* (Bishkek: Forum, 2014), <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwZfCsxu5INiREExZVJIT3pXWEU/edit>

technology transfer, capacity building, and accountability mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan and the rest of Central Asia to address challenges in the area of the gender equality and SRHR.¹⁷

Accountability and Monitoring. Civil society calls for regular, inclusive, and transparent accountability mechanism for SDGs with an adequate space for reporting on gender equality and SRHR. It is important to strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms for gender equality and SRHR at all levels. States must ensure private sector accountability, including transnational corporations, international financial institutions, and multilateral development banks. There should be a legislation binding all types of private sector to implementation of internationally agreed gender equality and SRHR standards. Additionally, at the national level, we need an accountability mechanism with a space for private sector for reporting and compliance with gender equality and SRHR.

The role of the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) should be strengthened; UN Women should play its significant international role, while national gender equality and women's rights state machineries on SDG monitoring in Kyrgyzstan should have a proper mandate and resources.

Role of Women's Organisations. In order to strengthen national democratic ownership, broad participation, and full transparency, women's organisations in the country need to step in this process with their own recommendations, analysis, and set of indicators, including for gender and SRHR. They should provide input to the national sustainable development financing strategies, and participate in various dialogues among relevant government entities, with CSOs and other stakeholders. They must assist to set up a joint accountability framework with broad,

Women's groups at the national and local levels will need to be involved into the review of national strategies and policies to support progress towards the SRHR goals, consistent with peoples' demands. They will play significant role in the success of the agenda 2030 implementation and review if they are effectively engaged from the beginning of the agenda implementation.

multi-stakeholder participation with an institutionalised space for civil society organisations' inputs. Women's groups at the national and local levels will need to be involved into the review of national strategies and policies to support progress towards the SRHR goals, consistent with peoples' demands. They will play significant role in the success of the agenda 2030 implementation and review if they are effectively engaged from the beginning of the agenda implementation. Mechanisms for institutionalised participation of diverse women's organisations in all stages of follow-up and review of the SDG must be created.

This is line with the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where member states are encouraged "to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders."¹⁸

Notes and References

¹⁷ A review of SRHR challenges and recommendations is provided in the country profile by Djanaeva and Racherla and published by the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁸ United Nations, "Transforming Our World," Para 79, 33.

“It is unacceptable that developed countries are not committing to scaling up the share of ODA for achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment, and women’s human rights. ODA must be used to promote development, while reducing structural inequalities including gender inequality.”

Notes

¹⁹ United Nations, Terms of Reference for the Inter-agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. [http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20\(April%202015\).pdf](http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20(April%202015).pdf)

²⁰ Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, “Achieving SRHR in the SDGs: Proposals for Critical SRHR Indicators to Achieve SRHR Targets,” *ARROW for Change*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: ARROW, 2015): 27-31, http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/AFC21.1-2015_web.pdf.

²¹ Letter to National Statistical Officers to influence their position at IAEG meeting in Bangkok, 26-28 October 2015.

²² United Nations, Terms of Reference.

²³ Nurgul Djanaeva, “Women’s Rights and Development Effectiveness in Kyrgyzstan,” in *Reality of Aid 2010 Report: Aid and Development Effectiveness: Human Rights, Social Justice and Democratic Development* (Quezon City: IBON, 2010), 46-52, <http://www.realityofaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Web-English-ROA-Report-2010.pdf>.

²⁴ Nurgul Djanaeva, *Reality of Aid 2010 Report*, 46-52.

In Kyrgyzstan, there is a real possibility to make a contribution to the SDG indicators development. The Kyrgyz Republic is one of the 28 members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The Forum of Women’s NGOs of Kyrgyzstan is setting up a cooperation with the National Statistical Committee, which is representing Kyrgyzstan in the IAEG-SDGs. The IAEG-SDGs is tasked with the development of an indicator framework and a list of indicators for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level, which will be adopted by the Statistical Commission at its 47th session in 2016. To do this, it is mandated to “tak[e] into account existing efforts by different groups of countries and organisations, including regional and international agencies, regional commissions, academia, civil society, and other relevant international organisations.”¹⁹

For this cooperation, women’s organisations are preparing their list of necessary indicators to ensure that women’s rights and SRHR are not left behind.²⁰ For example, the Kyrgyzstan Alliance for Reproductive Rights, as a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, supported Indicator 5.6.1 “Proportion of women (aged 15-49)

who make their own sexual and reproductive decisions” because it “responds to a core element and prerequisite for achieving gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women—the exercise of their reproductive rights.”²¹ It is important for women’s groups to engage in the process as part of “national and international experts that will support the IAEG-SDGs on the selection and definition of indicators and data compilation and reporting to monitor progress in new and emerging areas covered by the new goals and targets.”²²

Financing Our Future. Financial mechanisms for gender equality and SRHR are weak at all levels.

At the level of global partnerships, official development assistance (ODA) needs to play a bigger role for gender equality and SRHR. Analysis of gender equality and aid and development effectiveness in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 showed the following: “Finance is lacking because official aid to developing countries is currently blind to gender equality, human rights, and social justice. The recognition of the need to provide adequate resources for women’s groups and the protection of women’s rights is not translated into practical funding mechanisms and access to resources.”²³ The Forum of Women’s NGOs of Kyrgyzstan has called for financial and political actions many years and within different platforms. The Forum called and continues to advocate that “[g]ender equality should be part of aid goals and of the measurable indicators of aid delivery and aid management.” The Forum asserted: “Women’s empowerment, ensuring women rights, and social justice are at the heart of poverty and human rights concerns.”²⁴

This situation of underfunding of gender equality may occur again in the period from 2015 to 2030, not only in Kyrgyzstan, but globally. As the Women’s Working Group (WWG) on Financing for Development (FfD)

“Women’s empowerment, ensuring women rights, and social justice are at the heart of poverty and human rights concerns.” ... [F]inancing for women’s rights and SRHR organisations should be an integral part of the State budget and overseas development assistance, as lessons from the past have shown.

stated at the Third Conference of FFD in July 2015 in Addis-Ababa, “It is unacceptable that developed countries are not committing to scaling up the share of ODA for achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment, and women’s human rights. ODA must be used to promote development while reducing structural inequalities including gender inequality.”²⁵

At the national level, States must commit to work “for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and

strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels.”²⁶ National gender equality state machineries should have resources. Moreover, financing for women’s rights and SRHR organisations should be an integral part of the State budget and overseas development assistance, as lessons from the past have shown.

Moving Forward. Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights are crucial and should be an essential part of the national 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. CSOs call for reforms in political and financial systems, accountability, engagement of civil society organisations, accountability of local authorities for the implementation of sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and youth, and integration of gender equality and SRHR standards into the operations of the private sector. CSOs plan to build our advocacy on achieved gains. To move ahead at the national level for better financing, implementation, and accountability and monitoring, we need united efforts of the State, civil society, the private sector, political parties, and other development partners, and women’s groups.

Notes

²⁵ Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development, “Reaction to the Outcome Document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda,” July 17, 2015, <https://wwgonffd.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/women-working-group-reaction-to-addis-ababa-action-agenda-17-july-20151.pdf>

²⁶ United Nations, “Transforming Our World,” Para 20, 6.

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This Supplement is developed by the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan with the support of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), as part of the production of the Russian edition of *ARROW for Change* (AFC) bulletin Vol. 21 No. 1 2015. The English edition of AFC Vol. 21 No. 1, the Russian edition, this Supplement, and all past issues of AFC can be downloaded for free at: <http://arrow.org.my/type/arrow-for-change/>

ARROW for Change is a peer-reviewed thematic bulletin that aims to contribute a Global Southern/Asia-Pacific, rights-based, and women-centred analyses and perspectives to global discourses on emerging and persistent issues related to health, sexuality, and rights. AFC is produced twice yearly in English, and is translated into selected languages several times yearly. It is primarily for Asian-Pacific and global decision-makers in women's rights, health, population and sexual and reproductive health and rights organisations. The bulletin is developed with input from key individuals and organisations in Asia and the Pacific region and globally, as well as from the ARROW SRHR Knowledge Sharing Centre (ASK-us!).

This Supplement was published with the support of Sida. Meanwhile, the original English edition has been produced as part of the initiative "Strengthening the Networking, Knowledge, Management and Advocacy Capacities of an Asia-Pacific Network for SRHR," implemented by ARROW with the assistance of the **European Union**. The views expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or of Sida. ARROW's work is also made possible through the core funding support provided by the **Ford Foundation** and **Sida**.



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