

Tajikistan's path towards achieving the SDGs



SDG 'shadow' report version 1

Women2030 Program

by Youth Ecological Club, Tajikistan

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Civil Society Report - Tajikistan and the SDGs

Introduction to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Tajikistan

The level of gender inequality in Tajikistan remains high, despite the minor improvements from the previous year. The country's performance and global ranking as regards economic participation and active involvement of women in policy-making also suffered a blow.

Public trade unions acknowledge the work that the Tajik government has been doing to tackle gender inequality, but stress the set of problems that are hindering the achievement of gender-related SDGs in Tajikistan.

Law implementation mechanisms are weak, the strategies and programs aiming to achieve a de facto gender equality, including gender monitoring and evaluation remain undeveloped, and the statistics are still incomplete. A gender approach has not been adequately introduced in the sectoral legislation and strategic documents, thus gender sensitivity among public servants is low.

Gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles are still prevalent in families and society at large. Women are still uninformed and unaware of their rights to equal access to economic, social, and information resources and energy services. Women from vulnerable groups, i.e. women living with HIV+, abandoned wives of immigrants, women and girls with disabilities.

Women's involvement in the decision-making process is low, and there is still plenty to be done to prevent domestic violence and ensure access to justice and quality services to victims of gender-based violence, as implementation mechanisms of the regulatory frameworks and programmatic policies are imperfect and lack sufficient funding.

As regards the labor market, gender discrimination is still widespread, and women are largely unemployed. Women's educational attainment has dropped over the years, and the efforts to advance public understanding of the importance of access to education and health for girls and women is insufficient. Additionally, the education system lacks gender-oriented approaches at all educational stages.

Statistics:

- Gender inequality: 0.322
- Multidimensional Poverty Index (education, health and living standards): 0.031

Tajikistan's progress on SDG Commitments

Civil Society Engagement in Agenda 2030

Tajikistan's coalition of public organizations (POs), "From equality *de jure* to equality *de facto*" in partnership with governmental structures contributed to the achievement of sustainable goals in Tajikistan. Civil society's active participation in the process of nationalization, implementation and monitoring of gender-related SDGs was discussed during the consultative meeting "Implementation of Development Agenda up to 2030 in Tajikistan" which took place on July 4, 2017 in Dushanbe. Around 50 representatives of public organizations from Sughd and Khatlon, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), districts of republican subordination and the city of Dushanbe, members of the governmental agencies, development partners, donors and international organizations, discussed gender dimensions of the SDGs, approaches to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, SDG nationalization process in Tajikistan, integration of commitments on implementation of gender related goals in the national and sectoral policies, possibilities to involve POs into the monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation in Tajikistan based on international experience. As a result of this consultative meeting, public organizations undertook the nationalization process as well as the reporting tasks on the implementation progress of gender-related SDGs. By expressing commitment to the efforts of the Tajik government towards SDGs, the "From equality *de jure* to equality *de facto*" coalition and other public organization are ready to actively cooperate with all stakeholders and use their capacity to effectively implement the 2030 development agenda in Tajikistan.

Progress on selected Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1: poverty in Tajikistan was significantly reduced from 83,4% to 30,3% in the period from 1999 to 2016 as a result of implementation of the poverty reduction strategies.

Goal 2: "the largest number of the undernourished people was founded in Tajikistan – 2,6 mln. people or more than 30% of population". Food security problems are becoming the priority in Tajikistan.

Goal 4: due to measures taken, such implementing the recommendation of the UN Committee on CEDAW to increase the marriage minimum age from 17 to 18 years, the gender disparities gap was reduced at different levels of education. The share of girls among the students of secondary vocational education and training institutions from 2000/2001 to 2015/2016 has increased from 44,3% to 60%.

While in 2000/01 the share of girls among all university students was 24%, this increased to 34% in 2015/16, thus enabling the country to restore levels comparable to those seen in 1991.

Goal 5: the government has taken a number of positive measures promoting gender equality and implementing recommendations. A governmental working group on improvement of the national legislation to ensure gender equality was established in the country.

Goal 6: the country has been successful in raising awareness of water and sanitation challenges. Youth Ecological Centre of Tajikistan has contributed to this process and has worked on creating better water facilities as well.

Goal 7: Tajikistan has adopted the long-term program for construction of small Hydropower plants for 2009-2020.

Goal 8. Government of Tajikistan, starting from 2003, adopted programs facilitating employment for the next two years, which provides for measures facilitating employment of women, aiming at removing imbalance in the labor market. Presidential grants for women-entrepreneurs has positively contributed to female employment in the country.

Goal 13. Pilot Program on Climate Change Resilience has gathered positive experience in the field of adaptation to climate change; nevertheless, the experience gained is not yet widely spread and applied.

Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty

As stated in the Tajikistan Progress Report (2010), poverty has a woman's face, as 22.9% of people living in extreme or absolute poverty are women, compared to 16% men. Additionally, the majority of

the unemployed are women; this is primarily due to the increased scope of labor migration involving 90% of male population. Women are characterized by lack of professional and qualification levels as compared to men, and, as a result by low wages. Households headed by single women with many children fall under the vulnerable category and are at a greater risk of poverty.

The role of women in achieving food security (SDG 2) is defined first of all by the prevailing number of female employees in the agricultural sector. According to the population census of 2010, out of all population employed in agriculture, forestry and fishery - 59% are women, with almost every second women working in the agricultural sector (47%). An additional factor contributing to women's significant role in the achievement of food security is the leading role of the households of population in total volume of agricultural production. In 2014, this indicator was 63,4%. The majority of people working on the household plots are namely women.



When looking into factors that correlate with the poverty level, the following are the most significant:

- a. large number of children in Tajik families, especially in rural areas;
- b. high level of employment in agriculture, where earned incomes of population are very low;
- c. low education level of population;
- d. unfavorable geographic conditions, including high mountainous territories of the country»¹

As a result of the implementation of poverty reduction strategies, poverty in Tajikistan was significantly reduced from 83,4%² to 30.3%³ in the period from 1999 to 2016. With such progress in the implementation of MDG, this goal could be considered as achieved. Nevertheless, poverty levels in Tajikistan remain high, with one third of the population living below the poverty line. The government of Tajikistan aims to halve poverty levels and develop a middle class.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education

Disparities in access to quality education services remain for the following reasons:

- a. place of living (city/rural area),

¹ Millennium development goals: achievements in Tajikistan – Dushanbe, 2010. p.18

² See the same source, p.13.

³ Voluntary National Review Improving living standards through mainstreaming of sustainable development goals into the national development policy in Tajikistan. Dushanbe, 2017. C.9

- b. social status of the family,
- c. health status.

The number of girls choosing to leave school prematurely is on the rise due to economic reasons and early marriage. According to the findings of some studies carried out in Tajikistan and the analysis of factors responsible for girls lagging behind boys in school attendance, gender stereotypes imposed by parents and the society at large, also contribute to the rate of girls ceasing with their education. In this respect, rural households are more affected than urban households. In a study of 1500 households in all districts of the country, only 23% of urban households cited “education received so far is enough” as the reason behind girls not attending schools. The percentage of households stating the same reason was more than twice as high (around 54%) in rural households.⁴

Given the limited financial capacity of households to provide quality education for their children, parents prefer to advance their sons’ educational attainment rather than their daughters’. Official statistics reveal that while in public education institutions, girls make up 50% of the student body, this ratio drops to 33% in private education institutions (which are generally believed to offer better education).⁵



⁴ See: PF «Panorama». Report on the results of the study «Households of Tajikistan in the period of financial and economic crisis». Dushanbe, 2010, p.60. total number of respondents: 1500 households in all districts of the country.

⁵ See. Agency for statistics under the President of Tajikistan, Education in the Republic of Tajikistan. 25 years of state independence, Dushanbe 2016, p.57.

Case example, bad practice

Presidential quotas for higher education have been used since 1997 to increase the number of rural girls' accessing higher education. Quotas are aimed at school dropouts from remote rural regions to support their intergration into higher educational institutions.

Case example, good practice

The implementation of the UN Committee's recommendation on CEDAW to increase the minimum age of marriage from 17 to 18 years played a significant role in improving access to education for girls. In autumn 2006, dormitories were opened to provide safer circumstances for girls graduating from boarding schools and to improve their access to further education.

Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality

Women and girls do not enjoy equal opportunities for engagement in the political, economic, and social spheres. Considering that only about 10% of all administrative and management positions are occupied by women, there's still a long way to gender equality at all levels of decision-making processes. Women constitute the majority of rural populations and they make up a significant part of the labor force in the agricultural industry, however they generally occupy low-skilled and low-paid positions. Rural women enjoy far less productive resources, social services and accessible assets than men and urban women. Additionally, rural women's participation in the social sphere shrank over the last decades⁶.

The following are some of the barriers to attaining gender equality:

- Poor regulatory framework for the promotion of gender equality and weak introduction of gender-based approaches in sectoral legislation.
- Lack of gender expertise in newly adopted laws and bylaws.
- Constraints and weaknesses in institutional mechanisms of gender policy.
- Lack of continuous monitoring and a limited system of indicators for the enforcement of the Law on State guarantees of equality, promotion of women, changing gender relation.
- Low gender sensitivity among civil servants of different sectors. The Civil Servant Training Institute offers courses on gender issues, but these are not included in the mandatory training program for civil servants. The number of civil servants attending these specialized trainings is insubstantial, and chief executives rarely participate.
- Limited financial resources for gender equality promotion and empowerment of women and girls.
- Poor prioritization of the planned activities and measures.

⁶ «Gender equality, social protection and rural development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Insights from the region» FAO 2017

Case example, bad practice

Although, at the legislative level, women's rights are not infringed and there are almost no cases of direct gender-based discrimination, cases of indirect discrimination against women are common. This is due to the fact that, for various reasons, women do not enjoy opportunities equal to men's in realizing their granted rights (according to Tajik laws). Indirect discrimination refers to situations when a law, regulation, criterion, custom or decision, appears as fair and gender neutral, yet in reality leads to women being subject to a particular disadvantage. This means that indirect discrimination of women is not manifested in constrained rights of women specifically, but in the equal requirements for both men and women which show no consideration for the different existing opportunities for women and men. As a result, women and men face different consequences for the same regulation/law/decision, etc.

On a different note, the first woman to ever run in a presidential race was Oinihol Bobonazarova. She is the director of Perspective-Plus, a non-governmental organisation advocating for the rights of prisoners, labour migrants, and women. In 1990, she was placed under house arrest for her active opposition and in 1993 she was jailed for her work with the Democratic Party. In the 2013 elections, the Tajik opposition nominated Bobonazarova to run for president. A woman running for office and publicly advocating for the empowerment of women in Tajikistan raised some eyebrows among conservatives in the country. Eventually, Bobonazarova dropped out of the race, claiming that the police interfered with her campaign and that governmental institutions stopped her from registering as a candidate. The number of women in the parliament was below 5 until 1999, and still below 20 in 2016.

Case example, good practice

The government of the Republic of Tajikistan has taken a number of positive measures to promote gender equality and implement recommendations made following the previous national report. Specifically, the law of the Republic of Tajikistan «On the prevention of domestic violence», the state program on the prevention of domestic violence for 2014-2023 and the Action plan for its implementation were adopted in this effect. Additionally, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-OP) was ratified and the Land Code of Tajikistan was amended to ensure equal access to land for women and men. Presidential grants to support female entrepreneurs and higher education enrollment quotas for rural girls and boys are allocated on an annual basis.

In 2014, the National Action Plan of the Republic of Tajikistan for the implementation of the UN CEDAW Committee recommendations and the National Action Plan of the Republic of Tajikistan for implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2122 were developed and approved.

A governmental working group on the improvement of the national legislation to ensure gender equality was established.

Means of Implementation

In the implementation of SDGs in Tajikistan, it is important to pay attention to the vulnerability of populations in the mountainous region to changes in the environment, including climate change.

- gender changes,
- environmental safety,
- adaptation to new conditions taking into consideration the SDGs.

As of 2003, the government of Tajikistan has adopted programs facilitating employment for the next years, which provide for the measures facilitating employment of women and removing imbalance on the labor market. Support to female entrepreneurs through presidential grants contributes to women's employment in the country. The public organization "Youth Ecological Center of Tajikistan" has been working towards achieving SDG 6 on water and sanitation whilst empowering women and girls:

- building new water pumps to improve access to potable water;
- assisting in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of water related infrastructure;

- running public information campaigns for better practices of water collection, storage and distribution;
- Supporting the construction of eco-toilet facilities.

The restructured Coalition of Public organizations of RT: “From equality *de jure* to equality *de facto*” was established to implement the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee and prepare alternative reports on CEDAW implementation in RT. As of 2017, the Coalition consists of about 70 public organizations from the city of Dushanbe, the regions of Sughd and Khatlon, GBAO and the Districts of Republican Subordination. Ten working groups work on different areas related to the promotion of gender equality. The reorganization of the Coalition aims to facilitate the promotion and implementation of gender-related SDGs in Tajikistan through the alignment of efforts of all stakeholders among the country’s public organizations. The main objective of the Partnership Agreement is to strengthen the contribution of public organizations on CEDAW, the process of nationalization, the implementation and monitoring of gender-related SDGs, and the promotion of gender equality in Tajikistan.

Key areas of current and future activities are as follows:

- the participation of civil society partners in the processes of nationalization and implementation of gender-related SDGs;
- participation of civil society partners in the preparation and discussion of the National Reports of Tajikistan on the SDG progress, especially on gender-related goals, including the preparation of alternative (shadow) reports on SDG;
- participation of civil society partners, in conjunction with the government, in the monitoring and the evaluation of gender-related SDGs, including independent monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Success in achievement of SDGs to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is only possible with continuous partnership and coordination of activities with government structures, especially with the Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, line ministries, deputies of different levels, local government authorities, coalitions, associations, public organizations, independent Tajik experts, international organizations, and alliances promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

The civil society met on July 4, 2017 in Dushanbe, in a consultative meeting aiming to initiate the activity of civil society organizations in the process of nationalization of SDGs. They recommended:

- the reorganization and expansion of the public organization coalition of the RT “From equality *de jure* to equality *de facto*” by including new partners from the public and other non-for profit organizations into the SDG implementation activities;
- the mapping out of the parties of the Partnership Agreement and all interested public organizations on the areas related to the achievement of gender-related SDG tasks;
- the implementation of information and education programs for public organizations on SDG implementation and nationalization in Tajikistan;
- the training of experts of public organization on the development of alternative ‘shadow’ reports on the implementation of SDGs in Tajikistan;
- the training of monitoring teams of public organizations on conducting independent monitoring and evaluation of SDGs in Tajikistan.