

CHILDCARE, WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND THE COVID-19 IMPACT AND RESPONSE: THE CASE OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



UNECE - UN Women series:
Rethinking Care Economy and
Empowering Women for Building
Back Better

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRI	International Republican Institute
KGS	Kyrgyzstani soms
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VAT	Value Added Tax
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 has had a devastating economic impact. The current crisis in the Kyrgyz Republic has exacerbated already existing gender inequalities with extensive implications for women. With the closure of day cares and other social service premises and with a shift to working from home and online education, the need to perform unpaid chores in the household has increased. The higher burden of care duties and difference in employment rates contribute to the increasing labour inactivity of women. The policy and business measures that were introduced by the Kyrgyz Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic remain gender-insensitive and fail to address the existing income disparities.

Some key findings emerged in the areas discussed below.

Childcare provision

- There is a continued predominance of informal care provision, especially for preschool-age children (aged 0–7 years).
- In 2019, only about 37 per cent of preschool-age children were covered by preschool education, and the preschool coverage was almost twice higher in urban areas (34 per cent) than in rural areas (18 per cent). This low coverage rate, which is pronouncedly worse in rural areas, leaves a massive gap of 63 per cent of children not being taken care of by the preschool educational institutions across the country.
- The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) also found that the coverage of early childhood development for children at the age of 3 (36 per cent) was lower than that for children at the age of 5 (64 per cent). Most children under the age of 3 are being taken care of by mothers or other family members.
- The lack of infrastructural capacity is only one of the main factors contributing to the problem of low coverage in rural and urban areas. Private and public kindergartens face such issues as insufficient safety and nutrition provision and the lack of checks, regulation and control. There has been no survey to understand how preschool education providers are viewed by the parents, but there is a

sense that there is a general positive attitude towards the institutions.

- The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic remained socially oriented in its public expenditures and dedicated the largest portion of its budget to education. Thus, the share of expenditures to education grew from 19 per cent in 2010 to 26.4 per cent in 2019 and to 26.6 per cent for the first nine months of 2020. Private education providers make up only a small fraction of education services.
- Inefficient use of the currently allocated expenditures, as well as weak institutional and management capacity in the public preschool educational system, prevents the system from using the funding to introduce equitable, inclusive education and improve the quality of education.

Women's employment

- The labour force participation rate of women in Kyrgyzstan is the lowest among the Member-States of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The gender gap in the employment rates is the highest among the age group of 20-to-29-year-olds, when most women get married and have their first child.
- In general, 38 per cent of economically active women quit their jobs due to personal family reasons, with care taking responsibilities being one of the main reasons (the corresponding value among males is 11 per cent). Thus, the likelihood of quitting a job and caring for family needs is four times greater for women than for men.
- Despite progressive legislation and programmes as well as wage adjustment policy in 2011 that focused on the wages of education, healthcare and social service workers (i.e. positions that are predominantly occupied by women), the gender pay gap continues to grow. The biggest gaps are registered for the Issyk-Kul and Osh regions.
- The hurdles faced by women when establishing and running a business are vast and often differ from those encountered by their male counterparts. Thus, women have limited access to financing,

information and technology, they lack access to business networks, and they have to reconcile business and family issues.

- According to the Joint Report on Migration in Kyrgyzstan of the Kyrgyz State Migration Service, more than 50,000 people leave the country as labour migrants annually. Of them, 76 per cent are under the age of 35, and about 40 per cent of labour migrants are females.
- Employment in Kyrgyzstan is characterized by a high degree of informality. According to the official data, the volume of the informal economy is KGS 130 billion, or 23.6 per cent of GDP. A typical employee in the informal economy is a young female with limited education.
- Large-scale informal sector employment often leaves women without any legal protection, trapping them in low-paying, unsafe working conditions and without access to social benefits such as a pension, medical insurance or paid maternity and sick leave.

Impact of COVID-19

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already existing structural and gender inequalities in employment, making occupational segregation and the uneven distribution of care provision more pronounced.
- Women's employment rate has been negatively impacted as there was a wide-scale reduction in working hours and increase in unpaid care labour. Moreover, 52 per cent of low-income families reported a deterioration in their financial situation. Quarantine orders, which forced many people to stay home and spend more time with their families, led women to spend 3.6 times more time on unpaid work than men and two times more time on childcare.
- In addition, children had to share in the increased burden of performing household duties during the pandemic, affecting their remote schooling performance.

Response and recovery

- The Republican Task Force was established in early 2020. However, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, which is responsible for establishing a social protection system and implementing gender policy in Kyrgyzstan, was not included in either of the COVID-19 Task Force groups.
- In May 2020, an anti-crisis fund, amounting to 2 per cent of GDP in 2020 and 7 per cent of GDP in 2021, was established to support enterprises in the hardest-hit sectors. One of the main measures that were funded was the concessional financing of support businesses in several sectors of the Kyrgyz economy; this included those fields with high rates of women's employment, such as tourism, light industry, agribusiness, education, services, trade and others. Additional support measures include taxation and debt-service relief, a moratorium on business inspections, a temporary ban on bankruptcy procedures of businesses until 2021 and an exemption from paying rent on state/municipal-owned property.
- The Government introduced compensation schemes (usually one-off payments or a small increase in salary payments) to healthcare, social and education employees. From a care and employment perspective, however, the response was minimal. No measures were introduced that were specifically intended for working parents who were affected by the closure of childcare services and schools.
- Overall, COVID-19 policy responses have not addressed gender inequalities. To counterbalance the trend towards exacerbating existing inequalities, the most pervasive of which has been gender inequality during COVID-19, policies must focus on the vulnerabilities created or deepened by the pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Kyrgyzstan, like many others across the region, responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020 with lockdown and restrictive measures to contain the spread of the virus. Measures included border closures, travel restrictions, school shutdowns, a ban on large gatherings, transport restrictions, the introduction of curfews that spread over several days and closure of non-essential services. The pandemic and subsequent shutdown response has had a serious impact on the economy, with GDP falling by 8.1 per cent from January to November 2020 on an annual basis,¹ as well as a drop in remittances by 25 per cent and a rise in the unemployment rate to 21 per cent.²

In addition to such devastating economic disruption, it has been widely recognized that the current crisis in Kyrgyzstan has exacerbated already existing gender inequalities with extensive implications for women. With the closure of day cares and other social service premises and with a shift to working from home and online education, the need to perform unpaid chores in the household has increased.

Women in Kyrgyzstan carried a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from a time-use survey in 2015 show that females spend 1.3 hours less each day on paid work, while at the same time, they also spend 2.75 hours more per day on unpaid work than men on household work, work in the garden or orchard, and parenting. The discrepancy in the amount of time spent on unpaid reproductive labour does not depend on the employment status of women. The work and care loads are even higher for self-employed women, who work about 30 minutes more per day but still spend about two hours more per day than men on unpaid work. The gap in care responsibilities has significant consequences on women's economic

empowerment. Following the global trends, the economic activity rate is lower for women (45 per cent) than it is for men (75.4 per cent).³ The difference in the employment rates is mainly due to the marked higher inactivity of women in the labour market. Inactivity rates in Kyrgyzstan are significantly higher for women, with the inactivity rate for women in 2019 at 57.3 per cent, against 28.1 per cent for men.⁴

Women in the country also take on more part-time employment and casual roles in the family. According to 2017 data from the National Statistical Committee, about 38 per cent of economically active females have quit their jobs due to personal family reasons (the corresponding value among males is 11 per cent).⁵ They are living in a society significantly influenced by traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The roles are divided into 'masculine' and 'feminine', with the latter being less paid and precarious. The conflicting demands on women's time for care (whether it is care for elderly members, the sick or young children) and paid work activities represent a fundamental barrier to their economic participation and contribute to the dwindling rate of labour-market involvement. Women are largely recognized as being primary care providers, and this societal expectation creates an unbalanced sharing of family responsibilities at home. Women invest more in childcare roles, and this has been especially true during the pandemic. These factors perpetuate gender-based inequalities and women's economic vulnerability.

This report explores links between childcare provision and women's labour-market participation in Kyrgyzstan in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the report provides an overview of care provision in the country and explores the extent to which available services meet the care needs of families with children, especially women with children of preschool

1 <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/v-noyabre-tekushego-goda-prodolzhaetsya-spad-ekonomiki-kotoryj-sostavil-bolee-8-procentov/>.

2 ADB 2020.

3 Ibid.

4 National Statistical Committee data retrieved from <http://www.stat.kg>.

5 National Statistical Committee 2018b.

age. The report discusses the framework of formal childcare services in Kyrgyzstan, its legal and financing model, its current provision and the extant gaps. It examines the barriers to the use of quality formal care in Kyrgyzstan and explores the reasons for the continued predominance of informal care provision, especially for preschool-age children (aged 0–7 years). The report also looks at the linkages between the employment situation of women and the provision of childcare in the country. It reports empirical evidence based on available data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in terms of the closure and reopening of preschool and school facilities, including the direct and indirect effects on women’s labour market participation. Lastly, the report discusses the measures that were introduced as part of the pandemic response with a gender lens, revealing their gender-insensitive content. The report concludes with key recommendations for policies and measures on childcare and women’s employment in general, as

well as on the steps needed to mitigate the negative effects of the crises driven by COVID-19 on women with childcare responsibilities.

Political and socioeconomic context

As of 2020, the permanent population of the Kyrgyz Republic was about 6,523,000 people. One third of the resident population (34 per cent) live in urban areas, while two thirds (66 per cent) live in rural areas. The population distribution by sex is heterogeneous across the country. In urban areas, the proportion of women is higher than men, amounting to 52.5 per cent. On the contrary, in rural areas, where the birth rate is higher, the number of men is slightly higher, at 50.6 per cent. The composition of the country’s population is notable for its young people: 35 per cent of the total population are children and adolescents under the age of 16, about 57 per cent are part of the working-age population, and 8 per cent are retirees.

TABLE 1:
Key economic indicators, 2020

Indicator	Total	Women	Men
Population (millions)	6.523	3.286 (50.4%)	3.237 (49.6%)
GDP per capita	US\$1,070
Poverty rate	20.1%
Fertility rate	3.3
Death rate	5.9
Employment rate	56.0%	42.7%	71.9%
Activity rate	59.8%	45.0%	75.4%
Unemployment rate	6.2%	6.9%	5.7%

Source: National Statistical Committee.

In the 1990s, the transition to a market economy led to the formation of a new labour market, new forms of economic relationships, new types of employment and a rapid growth of unemployment at the same time. Large-scale political and economic reforms affected the whole national economy and resulted in drastic lowering of the living standards of the population. People were pushed out of the labour market,

losing their secured jobs and sustainable income. Many found themselves in the category of the poor. There was even a more pronounced negative effect on the economic position of women, including a decline in labour force participation and employment rates. Therefore, one of the main priorities of the modern social policy of the country is to reduce poverty and improve the living standards of the population.

The main indicator of poverty (i.e. the poverty level in the country) is the proportion of poor people, defined as the proportion of the population whose per capita consumption is below the poverty line. The poverty rate for 2019 stood at 20 per cent of the total population. The poverty rate among men and women across the country, in general, is not strongly differentiated and corresponds to the demographic structure of the population. The level of poverty in 2015 in

female-headed households was lower (15.2 per cent) than in male-headed households (27.1 per cent), and the level of extreme poverty was 0.8 per cent and 0.9 per cent, respectively. The poverty rate in rural areas in 2015 had increased by 1.0 percentage points compared to 2014, while urban areas saw an increase of 2.4 percentage points. In 2019, there were 1,312,808 people below the poverty line, of whom 67.7 per cent were rural residents

2. OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Overall, women in Kyrgyzstan face a double challenge: relatively low levels of childcare provision and low rates of female labour force participation. Given the demographic and economic trends (among which are the high birth rate, high labour force migration, an increasing poverty rate and economic deprivation), the improvement of accessible, affordable and quality formal care options is a crucial element for economic growth. Enhanced choices for formal care options would allow mothers who are currently busy as informal caregivers to reallocate their time to formal labour market activities, thereby contributing to economic output and family well-being.

Participation in the labour market

The labour force participation rate of women in Kyrgyzstan is the lowest among the Member-States of

the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).⁶ Despite the high education level of females in Kyrgyzstan, the difference in the labour force participation rate between males and females increased from 23 percentage points in 2010 to 29 percentage points in 2019. The econometric analysis undertaken by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2015 revealed that the “Kyrgyz GDP would have grown by between 0.2 and 0.4 percentage points faster each year between 1990 and 2013 had the gender gap in labour force participation stayed at its 1990 level.”⁷

The employment rate is higher in rural areas, where the gender gap is larger.⁸ The gender gap in the employment rates is the highest among the age group of 20-to-29-year-olds, when most women get married and have their first child.⁹

TABLE 2:
Employment, unemployment and activity rates, by gender, 2019

Total	Men	Women
Employment rate		
56%	71.9%	42.7%
Unemployment rate		
6.2%	5.7%	6.9%
Activity rate		
59.8%	75.4%	45%

Source: National Statistical Committee.

6 According to data retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

7 EBRD 2015.

8 The employment rate of males in rural areas and urban areas is 71 per cent, whereas the employment rate of females is 39 per cent in rural areas and 46 per cent in urban areas (National Statistical Committee 2018b).

9 The average woman in the Kyrgyz Republic first gets married at the age of 23 or 24 and at the same age gives birth to her first child. The average number of children she has is three. For more information, see <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/8-marta-kyrgyzstan-otmechaet-mezhdunarodnyj-zhenskij-den/>.

TABLE 3:

Breakdown of the employment rate, by gender and age, 2020 (percentage)

Year	Total	Aged 15-19	Aged 20-29	Aged 30-39	Aged 40-49	Aged 50-59	Aged 60-69	Aged 70+	Within working age
Males									
2010	70.7	31.2	76.2	90.2	88.4	82.0	48.3	10.9	76.1
2011	71.6	28.5	77.3	92.2	90.1	81.1	52.7	13.2	77.1
2012	71.3	25.5	77.0	91.4	91.7	81.3	51.1	10.6	73.1
2013	70.7	31.4	77.8	89.9	87.2	77.4	39.8	9.3	76.0
2014	69.7	27.3	74.9	90.4	87.0	77.9	38.5	9.8	74.9
2015	70.6	25.9	75.3	90.8	88.7	78.9	41.0	10.2	75.8
2016	70.7	22.0	76.9	89.3	88.6	79.7	42.5	11.1	76.1
2017	70.8	22.4	77.4	88.6	88.0	79.3	44.1	8.1	76.3
2018	71.1	24.6	77.2	88.8	87.2	78.7	48.4	6.9	76.5
2019	71.9	21.7	76.8	90.1	87.8	80.1	55.8	11.8	77.2
Females									
2010	47.1	16.7	45.8	63.8	73.9	55.9	20.2	4.9	53.3
2011	47.6	16.9	46.0	63.1	74.4	59.2	21.0	4.7	53.8
2012	46.9	15.8	44.2	61.5	75.6	58.4	20.2	4.9	49.9
2013	44.4	17.3	45.9	58.6	65.8	51.3	16.9	3.8	50.4
2014	45.6	15.3	44.9	62.3	68.4	54.0	17.1	4.5	51.5
2015	45.4	14.7	43.7	60.4	68.4	55.7	19.5	4.8	51.2
2016	44.1	13.5	41.9	57.9	67.3	54.2	20.4	4.1	49.6
2017	41.8	8.8	39.3	55.0	64.8	53.9	18.7	3.2	47.6
2018	41.9	9.0	37.6	56.4	64.9	55.3	19.4	3.4	47.7
2019	42.7	10.3	36.8	55.6	66.1	59.2	22.0	3.7	48.1

Source: National Statistical Committee.

The gender gap decreases for persons in their 40s. This is the age at which many women return to their workplaces. The gap increases slightly for the 55–64 age group, when women usually retire and become involved in the second reproductive cycle – taking care of their grandchildren or older family members. In addition to age, other personal characteristics such as having young children (under the age of 4), living with a spouse in the same household or being a member

of a minority ethnic group (e.g. Dungan, Kazakh, Tajik or Uighur) decreases the likelihood that a woman will participate in the labour force.¹⁰ According to 2017 data from the National Statistical Committee, about 38 per cent of economically active women have quit their jobs due to personal family reasons, with care work being one of the main reasons (the corresponding value among males is 11 per cent).¹¹

¹⁰ EBRD 2015.

¹¹ National Statistical Committee 2018b.

Despite progressive legislation and programmes¹² as well as wage adjustment policy in 2011 that focused on the wages of teachers, healthcare workers and social service workers (i.e. positions that are predominately

occupied by women), the gender pay gap continues to grow. The biggest gaps are registered for the regions of Talas and Djalal-Abad.

TABLE 4:
Ratio of women's wages to men's, by territory, 2015–2019 (percentage)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Kyrgyz Republic	75.5	75.3	72.5	71.6	77.0
Batken oblast	76.9	82.0	75.2	78.3	80.7
Djalal-Abad oblast	75.4	64.6	61.1	60.7	63.4
Issyk-Kul oblast	86.4	86.1	76.5	86.7	93.1
Naryn oblast	84.9	82.8	87.7	81.1	83.6
Osh oblast	80.3	82.7	90.9	82.8	91.7
Talas oblast	81.3	81.0	73.1	63.0	62.5
Chui oblast	74.7	75.9	71.6	70.1	74.1
Bishkek city	77.0	79.7	75.9	76.2	82.9
Osh city	78.8	81.9	79.1	80.8	85.1

Source: National Statistical Committee.

Women's entrepreneurship

The hurdles faced by women when establishing and running a business are vast and often differ from those encountered by their male counterparts. Thus, women have limited access to financing, information and technology, they lack access to business networks, and they have to reconcile business and family issues. Consequently, women-owned businesses are still in the minority: women head only 28 per cent of private-operating business entities in Kyrgyzstan.¹³ The share of women among the heads of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) registered as legal

entities is 30 per cent for small businesses and 43.5 per cent for medium-sized enterprises. The share of women among individual entrepreneurs is 35 per cent, while they comprise 19.6 per cent of the heads of rural farms. While the number of men engaged in individual entrepreneurial activity in the past 10 years has increased by almost 100,000 people, the number of women entrepreneurs has not changed. It is worth mentioning that the lack of a legislative definition of women's entrepreneurship and the absence of gender-disaggregated statistics make it difficult to assess the level of women's participation in the management of business enterprises and organizations.

12 Commitments of the Kyrgyz Republic on gender equality are ratified in the universal conventions of the United Nations on human rights, enshrined in the declarations and international commitments, and are specifically emphasized in the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Following international and national commitments, the Kyrgyz Republic develops a policy and adopts special programmes that ensure gender parity in all areas of development, including in the political, economic, marital and family spheres. In 2012, the Kyrgyz Republic approved a long-term document for the first time – the National Strategy for Gender Equality until 2020, outlining development priorities such as women in the economy, education for girls and women, access to justice and political equality. To improve the role of women in peace and security, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2013, and later in 2015, approved the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Largely due to the efforts of various state institutions and society, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in 2008, banning gender discrimination and guaranteeing equal opportunities for persons of a different sex to participate in public administration by ensuring gender representation of persons in all branches of state power through legal, organizational and other mechanisms.

13 National Statistical Committee 2020.

In Kyrgyzstan, as in other countries in Central Asia, female entrepreneurs earn less than their male colleagues and tend to concentrate in a limited number of activities, such as catering, tailoring, wholesale and retail trade, beauty and food processing; their activities also lag behind those of men in terms of size and productivity. Female-owned businesses in Kyrgyzstan are more likely to be smaller and less profitable than male-owned businesses. Women receive lower incomes than men because of the specifics of their time budget – they have to devote more time on care work at home. In addition, women have fewer opportunities to dispose of their income and tend to spend the profit on the needs of the family rather than on expanding their business.¹⁴ Furthermore, women engaged in entrepreneurial activities do not receive the necessary support from their family members: husbands, children and relatives. Thus, women are 1.7 times more likely than men to close a business due to the lack of time to manage the business (24 per cent) and the need to deal with family matters and child-care (14 per cent).¹⁵

Impact of migration on women and care work

The difference between the employment rates of men and women and the gender pay gap created tension in the labour market, which was alleviated by high migration rates. According to the Joint Report on Migration in Kyrgyzstan of the Kyrgyz State Migration Service,¹⁶ more than 50,000 people leave the country as labour migrants annually, and the total number of Kyrgyzstani citizens living abroad is more than 750,000. It is estimated that about 76 per cent of migrants are under the age of 35 and that about 40 per cent of labour migrants are females.¹⁷ The vast majority of labour migrants (more than 95 per cent) work on the territory of the EAEU Member-States.

Studies conducted by Russian researchers report that about 74 per cent of Kyrgyz women migrate for work alone and live in the Russian Federation independently, with about 82 per cent of surveyed female migrants answering that their husbands were left behind in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁸ The report also noted that the share of women migrants who left independently are predominantly from northern oblasts of Kyrgyzstan and from urban areas. The migration of females without husbands is met with disapproval by other family and community members in rural areas and in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan.

The impact of women's earnings has a stronger effect on the quality of nutrition and education of children than men's earnings.¹⁹ Since women prioritize the household expenses more than men, they spend more money from their earnings on entire family health-care needs and children's education expenses. Mass migration has a negative effect on the development of human capital since children are left without a primary caretaker and do not receive as much social and psychological development as they require for their adequate growth.

The high rate of women's labour migration creates a substantial care deficit for children who are left behind. According to experts' estimates, based on official figures of the number of migrants who went abroad, about 200,000 children in Kyrgyzstan were left without parental care and are often described in the media as "social orphans".²⁰

Furthermore, the intensification of labour migration is a major cause of the increasing number of female-headed households. The lives of wives left behind remain largely confined to housekeeping, child-rearing and caring for elderly family members. NGOs' reports reveal that a significant number of such households have problems with housing and live in poor housing condition with limited access to heating, lighting, fuel,

14 UNDP and ADB 2014.

15 <http://mineconom.gov.kg/ru/post/6827>.

16 State Migration Service 2018.

17 State Migration Service 2015.

18 State Migration Service 2014.

19 UNDP and ADB 2014.

20 https://www.gezitter.org/migranty/60351_migrantskie_deti_sostavyat_tseloe_pokolenie/.

safe sanitation and drinking water. This increases the burden of household chores on rural women and children and hinders women's opportunities for income-generating activities.²¹

Informal employment

Employment in Kyrgyzstan is characterized by a high degree of informality. According to the official data, the volume of the informal economy is KGS 130 billion, or 23.6 per cent of GDP.²² Economists, however, acknowledge that these data are far from reality and that the level of the shadow economy is higher. Such a large informal economy has a destabilizing effect on the national economy.

A typical employee in the informal economy is a female young person with limited education and works in small-scale subsistence farming as an unpaid family worker. In 2009, about 36 per cent of those engaged in the informal economy in Kyrgyzstan were women. According to an ADB report, 374,000 (of which 40 per cent were women) were employed in retail and services; 54,000 individuals were working at the Dordoi Bazaar²³ and 16,000 individuals at the Karasuu Bazaar.^{24,25} According to the study conducted by ADB in 2018, 218,000 individuals were informally employed in the clothes manufacturing sector, of which 44 per cent were women; and 247,000 Kyrgyzstanis were employed in the construction sector. Women made up 50 per cent of informally employed workers in the hospitality sector (143,000 total unofficial workers). ADB estimated that these four sectors employ 41–42 per cent of the total active labour force of the Kyrgyz Republic, with an estimated 1 million workers.

In addition, the economically inactive population includes women who run households and who were forced out of the labour market. In urban areas, they find work in the shadow sector of the economy and

are hired as care workers (e.g. tutors, nannies, housekeepers, etc.) in other households.²⁶

Employment in the informal economy leaves women often without any legal protection, trapping them in low-paying, unsafe working conditions and without access to social benefits such as a pension, medical insurance or paid maternity and sick leave. Such unsatisfactory employment conditions for women perpetuate the gender pay gap and gender inequality at large.

Women's unpaid care work

Although legal provisions are mostly gender-neutral,²⁷ current trends suggest an ongoing polarization of men and women's traditionally assigned roles in everyday life.²⁸ A time-use study in 2015 found that many women are mainly responsible for unpaid domestic work; men, for paid employment. On average, women and adolescent girls spend 4 hours and 30 minutes per day on household chores (18.8 per cent of their time every day), whereas men and adolescent boys spend 1 hour and 34 minutes (6.5 per cent of their time) on these activities. It also found that women living in rural areas spend around 293 minutes per day on household chores, 1.15 times more than women in urban areas. Furthermore, females and adolescent girls in households spend three times more minutes per day on childcare than males and adolescent boys.

The discrepancy in the amount of time spent on unpaid reproductive labour does not depend on the employment status of women. A time-budgeting study conducted in 2015 indicated that self-employed women work about 30 minutes more per day but still spend about two hours more on unpaid work. Thus, gender expert Anara Niyazova noted: "The labour activity overlaps the reproductive activity and a woman should have time to pay the reproductive tax, i.e. to

21 Djanaeva 2015.

22 https://rus.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan_tenevaya_ekonomika_rost_ekonomiki/30400573.html.

23 The Dordoi Bazaar is a large wholesale and retail market in Bishkek that targets northern Kyrgyzstan as well as Kazakh and Russian markets.

24 The Karasuu Bazaar is a highly important centre of import of Chinese consumer goods into southern Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It is located in the Kyrgyz town of Kara-Suu.

25 ADB 2020.

26 Savin and Gapurbaeva 2017.

27 For example, according to article 137 of the Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, parental leave can be used fully or partially by the mother and father of the child or the grandmother, grandfather, or another relative or guardian who actually takes care of the child.

28 Ibraeva, Moldosheva and Niyazova 2011.

give birth. Our women are traditionally taking care of children and other family members, for example, with disabilities, and old family members.”²⁹

Research on the intersection between care and employment indicates that for women, having children

impacts gender inequality in two ways: unpaid labour becomes more unequally distributed while, at the same time, labour participation and employment competitiveness decreases. This trend worsens with the increase in the number of children in a household.³⁰

TABLE 5:
Daily time distribution of household members, by gender and settlement type, 2015 (minutes)

	Both genders			Males			Females		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Number of minutes per day	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440	1,440
Working hours	142	166	115	186	215	156	104	128	76
Outside working hours, work-related	23	29	16	30	38	22	17	22	11
Homemaking	189	180	200	94	87	101	271	254	293
Education, training	46	42	50	50	46	55	42	40	45
Work on the farm, cottage, gardens	24	6	45	35	10	62	14	3	28
Education of children	13	13	13	8	8	8	17	17	17
Leisure time	340	341	339	371	374	369	313	315	311
Satisfaction of physiological needs	652	654	649	652	652	651	652	655	648
Helping relatives and friends	7	5	8	9	7	11	5	4	6
Other time-consuming activities not specified above	4	3	6	5	4	5	4	3	6

Source: National Statistical Committee.

TABLE 6:
Daily time distribution of household members on homemaking, by gender and settlement type, 2015 (minutes)

	Males			Females		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Homemaking	59	54	87	197	180	303
Purchasing goods and services	18	16	24	23	21	28
Purchasing food	12	10	13	16	14	17
Purchasing non-food goods	5	4	8	6	5	9
Purchasing personal services	1	1	3	1	1	1

²⁹ <https://cabar.asia/en/gender-based-opinion-of-labour-market-in-kyrgyzstan>.

³⁰ UN Women 2016.

Working at home	41	38	63	173	159	275
Cooking	3	2	3	64	63	78
Washing dishes	1	1	1	22	22	31
Laundry, ironing	1	1	1	22	16	45
Sewing, needlework, knitting, clothing care (including underwear and shoes)	1	1	1	10	9	18
Cleaning of the apartment	2	2	2	26	23	39
Repairing household appliances/furniture/housing, cleaning the area around the house, heating	21	20	38	4	4	12
Caring for children and grandchildren	7	7	6	21	19	41
Caring for needy family members	1	0	2	1	1	4
Other types of unrecorded household work	5	4	8	3	3	7

Source: National Statistical Committee.

Social norms and gender stereotypes

Gender norms are very unequal in Kyrgyzstani society, as are beliefs with respect to the division of labour within households. Ibraeva (2006) wrote that “once a woman gets married, she becomes part of [her] husband’s family, an asset and property belonging now to a different tribe.”³¹ She pointed out that Kyrgyz society is patriarchal, male-dominated and conservative (considering that the primary function of marriage is to raise children). Kyrgyz women have to “conform to the traditionally accepted Kyrgyz script that includes marrying on time, having children, having a husband, and being a wife and mother”.³² It is worth noting that marriage and family relations in the country are characterized by an increasing number of juvenile, unregistered marriages, as well as forced marriages, including through the forced abduction of women.

The Gender in Society Perception Study (GSPS) has reported that around 81 per cent of men and women agree with the statement that “the woman should take care of the house and children, and the man should earn”. Moreover, 84 per cent of respondents agreed that “a real woman is willing to do housekeeping – it is a pleasure for her”. At the same time, more than half of respondents (51 per cent of women and

61 per cent of men) believe that “a wife’s career is less important than the career of her husband”, and even fewer respondents agree that “a woman’s work has a negative impact on the family and children”, including 38 per cent of women and 43 per cent of men.³³

Expectations that women will combine household duties with employment limit their employment opportunities and push them to choose work that is close to home with flexible working hours.³⁴

Existing gender norms restrict women’s activity choices and result in vertical and horizontal labour market segregation. More than a quarter of women are employed in low-return jobs, such as those in the education, healthcare and social work sectors. Mining, electricity, gas and other energy, IT and communications industries have the fewest number of female employees as these professions are considered ‘not feminine’.³⁵ However, the average wages are the highest in those sectors. The lower share of females employed in high-return technical jobs can be attributed to the gender specialization of women at the tertiary and higher education levels. In addition to gender differences in choice of education major, there are a number of legal barriers that limit labour opportunities for women. For example, various legal documents prohibit women from working or undertaking 400 occupations and have set clear restrictions on the

³¹ Ibraeva 2006.

³² Kleinbach and Salimjanova 2007.

³³ UN Women 2016.

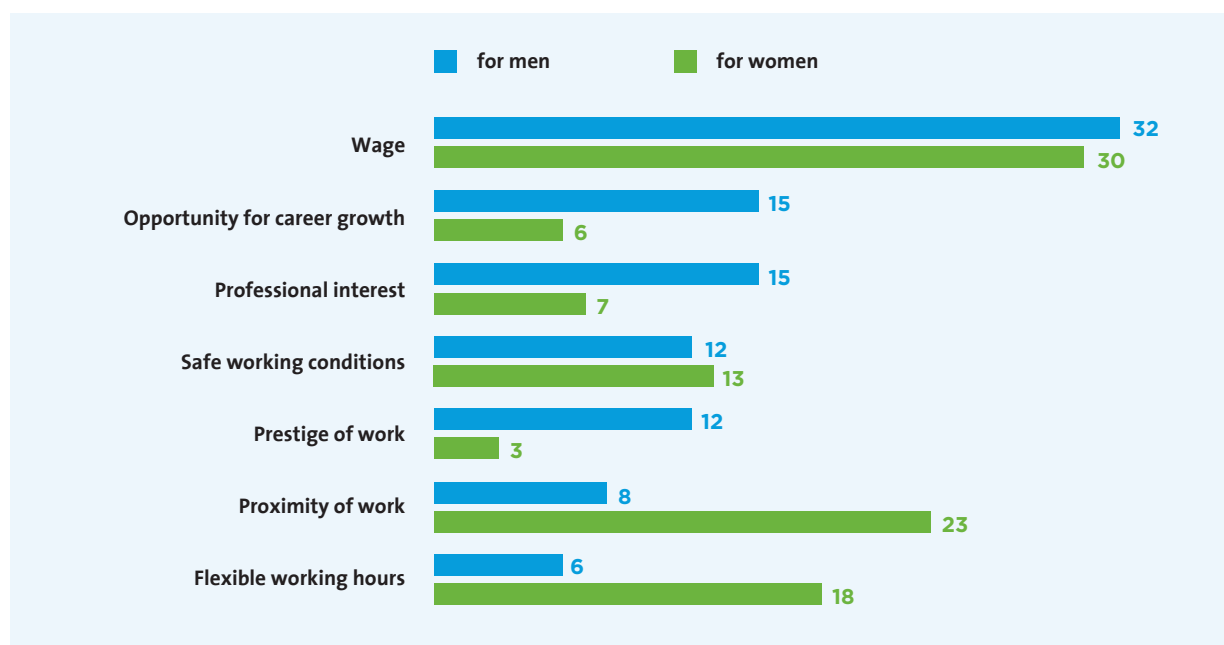
³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ <http://kloop.media/educationwomen>.

length of women’s working weeks and the extent of their workloads.³⁶ Legally enacted working conditions in some construction, factory and mining jobs are discriminatory to females.³⁷ Lower labour participation rates of women as compared to men and wage disparities between men and women are also due to considerable vertical segregation patterns. For example, overall, only 27 per cent of managers at state institutions, organizations and enterprises were females in 2017.³⁸ Despite measures taken to ensure gender parity in the political sphere, the target recommended by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and

the Beijing Platform for Action – “at least 30 per cent of women in the legislative body of the country” – has not been reached yet. Moreover, since 2007, there has been an annual decline in the number of women in the highest representative body of the country – the Jogorku Kenesh. Religious extremism and terrorism are among the new challenges faced by the Kyrgyz Republic that involve not only men but also women from the country. International development that is based on the principle of gender equality requires a clear understanding of its preconditions and threats.

FIGURE 1:
Reasons for choosing a job, by gender, 2016 (percentage)



Source: UN Women.

36 EBRD 2015.

37 World Bank 2015, cited in Khitarishvili 2016.

38 National Statistical Committee 2017.

3. PROVISION OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

The development of free public infrastructure for early childhood care is believed to decrease the burden on females for unpaid reproductive labour and to increase their rate of participation in the labour force.³⁹ A recent analysis of the Chinese labour market situation shows that the presence of day care in the community is positively associated with a mother's labour force participation and labour hour supply and that the rising costs of hired caregivers reduce the mother's labour hour supply.⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that in China and Kazakhstan, a gradual increase in preschool coverage has boosted the female labour participation rates.⁴¹

The provision of social services in Kyrgyzstan has been characterized as eroded, especially the system of free preschool care and education, which poses a substantial barrier to the employment of women.

- Early childhood education and care services are predominantly publicly provided. Only 6 per cent of children were enrolled in private preschool centres in 2019.
- Public spending on education has historically been high, including preschool education. Approximately 22 per cent of GDP is spent on education, of which about 14 per cent is spent on providing preschool.
- Kyrgyzstan continues to have low preschool attendance due to supply-side challenges and high disparities in coverage, particularly between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, insufficient numbers of affordable childcare centres create an overfilling problem; in rural areas, except for compulsory preschooling, the provision of childcare services is either very limited or absent.

- The affordability, safety and adequacy of preschool facilities, the lack of capacity and poor quality due to overcrowding and the lack of experienced educators appear to be the most pressing problems regarding the provision of formal childcare in Kyrgyzstan.
- Most childcare needs are met by informal care or a combination of formal and informal care.

Types of care

Childcare in Kyrgyzstan is generally understood as care for children up to primary school (aged 0–7 years). Informal care usually refers to unpaid and generally unregulated care, usually provided by family members such as elderly members, although informal care can also be paid (e.g. babysitters, home educators, etc.). Formal care is defined as care that is paid and is thus regulated by some type of contractual arrangement. There are no official estimates on the breakdown as to what proportion of care needs are met by the informal or formal sector and what the arrangements are in terms of paid/unpaid care.

The Law on Preschool Education of the Kyrgyz Republic legitimized new emerging forms of early learning and preschool education and recognized at least 12 types of preschool educational institutions, including the following:

- Nurseries for children aged 6 months to 3 years
- Nursery-kindergartens for children aged 6 months to 7 years
- Kindergartens for children aged 3–7 years
- Specialized kindergartens for children with disabilities

39 EBRD 2015.

40 Du 2020.

41 Khitarishvili 2016.

- Orphanages for orphans and children left without parental care (aged 3–18 years), where upbringing and education are carried out entirely at the expense of the State
- Orphanages for medical and social protection of orphans and children deprived of parental care, as well as for children with special needs up to 3 years of age, kept at the expense of the State
- Child development centres, which provide physical and mental development, early detection of the child’s individual developmental needs, diagnosis and the provision of special education and related services, as well as the health of children attending other educational institutions or being brought up at home
- Family orphanages, which bring up orphans and children deprived of parental care, aged 2–18 years
- Gymnasiums that ensure the comprehensive development of a child for training in innovative schools
- Mother schools with a short-term and full-day stay for children who do not attend kindergartens, including interactive education for children and adults
- Community kindergartens, which are a structural subdivision of local governments intended for children aged 6 months to 7 years where care, education and training of children are provided full-time or part-time⁴²
- Kindergartens with a short stay (3–5 hours per day), which is an additional model and type of preschool educational organization that was created with the aim of optimizing the use of resources and increasing the coverage of children in preschool education programmes.

Childcare coverage

In 2019, only about 37 per cent of preschool-age children were covered by preschool education (207,884 preschool-age children were enrolled into preschool institutions), and preschool coverage was almost two times higher in urban areas (34 per cent) than in rural areas (18 per cent). This low coverage rate, which is pronouncedly worse in rural areas, leaves a massive gap of 63 per cent of children not being taken care of by the preschool educational institutions across the country.

In the past six years (from 2013 to 2019), there has been a 63 per cent increase in public preschool institutions, from 865 institutions in 2013 to 1,406 in 2019. The private sector has experienced substantial growth with a threefold increase in the total number of preschool institutions operating across the country (from 62 institutions in 2013 to 211 in 2019⁴³). Despite the positive trends in both the public and private sectors, preschool institutions still have not reached 1990 levels although the number of children under the age of 6 has increased 1.3 times, from 431,319 children in 2011 to 563,470 children in 2019. It is also a well-reported fact that public preschool institutions are overfilled beyond their original capacity⁴⁴ and that there is a lack of qualified staff there. Private kindergartens also have a few challenges, ranging from safety to nutrition insufficiency. It has been recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science that private kindergartens operate without any regulation or controls.⁴⁵ According to the Ministry, Kyrgyzstan needs to build 1,800 more preschool educational institutions to fill in the extant gap.⁴⁶

Preschool education is organized across 1,617 pre-primary institutions, of which 1,406 are state-owned and 211 are private.⁴⁷ Table 7 shows preschool institutions by ownership and the number of enrolled preschool-age children. There are no available data on children not enrolled due to limited capacities or the enrolled children beyond the average number that is typically enrolled.

42 Community kindergartens are mainly supported by development partners (UNICEF, ADB, the Aga Khan Foundation, OSI, GPCO and the World Bank). They also include tent kindergartens such as *jailoo* in high mountain pastures, organized for children from families who have moved to remote regions to graze cattle and stay there for several months each year.

43 However, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, there are about 500 private preschool educational institutions operating in Bishkek, more than half of which do not have a license to do their work.

44 <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/29776573.html>.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 National Statistical Committee data from 2019.

TABLE 7:
Preschool institutions and enrolled children in Kyrgyzstan, 2019

Ownership type	Number of institutions	Number of enrolled children
Any (total)	1,617	207,884
State-owned	1,406	196,057
Private	211	11,827

Source: National Statistical Committee.

The most common form of preschool education until 2011 was a child’s full-day stay in kindergarten, where comprehensive education and care services were provided, with four hours of play/learning and four hours of rest and eating. Kindergartens operating as independent organizational units usually provided three meals a day and had separate sleeping and study/play areas. Full-day kindergartens usually had pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, with non-pedagogical staff usually exceeding the number of teachers.

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data of 2018, about 39 per cent of children aged 3–5 years attend an organized training programme for young children.⁴⁸ These data reflect a significant increase since the previous MICS (11 per cent in 2006 and 23 per cent in 2014). The 2018 MICS also found that the coverage of early childhood development (36 per cent) for children at the age of 3 was lower than that for children at the age of 5 (64 per cent). Children in urban areas had better access to preschool education (47 per cent of children in urban and 25 per cent in rural settlements); however, there is a tendency for the gap to decrease. No gender inequality was detected at the stage of enrolment for children in preschool institutions.

The reasons for low and unequal preschool coverage in Kyrgyzstan can be found on both the supply and demand sides. While charging fees for childcare is a common practice across public and private preschool institutions, the relatively high poverty rates in Kyrgyzstan – with 20 per cent of the population living in poverty – make it difficult to make payments. According to the 2018 MICS data, the enrolment rate in preschool institutions varies significantly depending on

the level of family income. Thus, 57 per cent of children from the highest income quintile households attend such programmes, compared with 25 per cent in the quintile of the poorest. At the same time, the public education provision sector has several challenges that affect the quality of services, such as the lack of qualified employees with adequate knowledge and skills, poor safety of buildings and structures, insufficient state funding, high corruption levels and poor provision of learning materials.⁴⁹

A key element in expanding access to pre-primary education programmes in recent decades has been the introduction of alternatives to full-day kindergartens in the form of preschool institutions such as community kindergartens for children aged 3–5 and the Nariste one-year pre-primary education programme, which the child attends during the year prior to entering the first grade. The expansion of these programmes was supported by the Global Partnership for Education within the framework of the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the 2012–2020 period, in which preschool education was identified as one of the priority areas. CKs work on a shift basis (each shift lasts three hours) and focuses only on educational activities, while there is only one teacher per group.

Funding model

The state budget in Kyrgyzstan is socially oriented: social expenses, including those for education, health care and social protection, make up about a third of the entire state budget in the seven-year period from 2013 to 2020. The share of the state budget expenditures that were allocated to education, health care

48 National Statistical Committee and UNICEF 2019.

49 <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/kyrgyz-republic/commitments/KG0002/>.

and social protection peaked in 2013, when it equalled 62.3 per cent. In 2019, the share of these expenditures decreased to 37.3 per cent due to cutting total spending on health care and social protection. Until 2019, Kyrgyzstan had dedicated the largest portion of its

budget to education; moreover, the share of expenditures to education grew from 19 per cent in 2010 to 26.4 per cent in 2019 and to 26.6 per cent for the first nine months of 2020.

TABLE 8:
Government expenditures, 2012–2019 (percentage)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Jan–Sept 2020
Total operating expenditure	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
General government services	10.9	12.4	13.1	13.4	13.5	13.7	14.7	38.4	39.2
Defence, public order and security	10.0	13.1	14.2	14.1	13.7	13.2	13.4	13.0	14.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	-	-	-	-	-	1.2	-	-	-
Fuel and energy	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	-	-	-
Mining, manufacturing and construction	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-
Transport	-	-	-	-	-	0.8	-	-	-
Connection	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-
Economic issues not classified elsewhere	22.2	4.4	4.6	5.0	5.3	2.8	4.6	4.2	3.4
Environmental protection	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4
Housing and communal services	3.4	4.1	4.1	3.9	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.4
Health care	11.4	13.7	12.6	12.1	11.5	12.9	10.5	2.4	2.3
Leisure, culture and religion	2.4	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.2	2.9	2.3
Education	21.7	25.1	23.5	24.2	26.2	25.8	25.9	26.4	26.6
Social protection	17.5	23.5	24.4	23.6	21.5	21.5	23.4	8.5	8.4

Source: Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic⁵⁰.

The main types of providers are public, private, community-based and family-based. In 2019, about 87 per cent of all preschool educational institutions were state-owned. In the Bishkek city area, the state-run preschool establishments operate mainly through state funding. In rural areas, the funding obligations were transferred to the local governing bodies.

In 2019, the Government allocated about 5.5 per cent of its GDP to education, which constitutes about 26.4

per cent of all state budget expenditures. The share of governmental expenditure on education expressed in per cent to the GDP is the highest in the Central Asian region and in the EAEU.⁵¹ Total government expenditure on preschool education increased from 11 per cent of government expenditure on education in 2013 to 15 per cent in 2019. This is a substantial share of the budget that is sufficient to achieve high coverage with preschool education.⁵²

⁵⁰ <http://www.minfin.kg/ru/novosti/godovoy-otchet-ob-ispolnenii-byudzheta>

⁵¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS>.

⁵² World Bank 2013.

Over the past five years, the number of preschool institutions has increased by 36 per cent; at the end of 2019, 1,600 preschool educational organizations were functioning in Kyrgyzstan and covered more than 208,000 children (25 per cent of children), which is 29 per cent more compared to 2015. Nevertheless, the demand for preschool institutions continues to grow. For example, in 2019, on average at the national level, there were 123 children per 100 places in preschool educational institutions; in Bishkek, there were 177; in Osh, 161; and in Issyk-Kul region, 131 children.

Inefficient use of the currently allocated expenditures, as well as weak institutional and management capacity in the preschool educational system, prevents the system from using the funding to introduce equitable inclusive education and improve the quality of education.⁵³ According to National Statistical Committee data, the average unit cost (i.e. cost per child per year) for education in state preschool organizations has increased from KGS 6,500 in 2010 to KGS 28,200 in 2017. In response to this high unit cost, it was decided to introduce half-day kindergartens.

In 2019, KGS 5.8 billion was allocated from the state budget to preschool institutions. The largest share of expenses comprised salary payments to educators and staff employed at preschool institutions (61 per cent of total funds used).⁵⁴ About 24 per cent of the funds were spent on food. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, the expenditures on preschool education are estimated based on four variables: the number of children, the number of teaching positions, specific characteristics of the children and the geographic location. However, the equation and detailed procedures of expenditure estimation are not available via open access.

53 Ibid.

54 National Statistical Committee 2018a.

4. IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION

The first case of COVID-19 in Kyrgyzstan was reported on 18 March 2020, and by mid-February 2021, more than 85,516 persons had been infected, with 1,442 deaths reported as of 15 February.⁵⁵ In response, the Government declared a state of emergency and instituted containment measures. These included measures that aimed to combat the spread of the virus (such as border controls, travel constraints, movement restrictions and temporary business and school closures), measures to alleviate the economic consequences (such as fiscal stimuli for export-oriented SMEs, and temporary taxation and debt-service relief measures for all firms), as well as measures related to the health system (such as the provision of appropriate preventive measures; the procurement of essential medicines, supplies and equipment; and bonus payments to health workers).

The pandemic and measures to prevent its spread have deepened the pre-existing gender inequalities in Kyrgyzstan and have resulted in disproportionate and lasting effects on women's work and livelihoods. Women face compounding burdens: they are leading the health response, face a high risk of job and income loss, shoulder much of the responsibility for unpaid care work in households, and experience increased rates of sexual violence and abuse. Yet women are being poorly represented in COVID-19 response leadership and decision-making and have limited opportunities to voice their needs and inform the effective

policy response to the pandemic. As a result, Kyrgyzstan did not introduce gender-responsive measures to COVID-19 in relation to employment and care.

Socioeconomic response and recovery measures

In order to respond promptly and take measures to prevent further spread of the coronavirus infection in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Government established two structures:

- In January 2020, the Republican Task Force (*shtab*) for the Prevention of the Spread of COVID-19 was established and was led by the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic.⁵⁶ The primary goal of the Task Force was to coordinate the activities of government agencies to combat and prevent the spread of the coronavirus infection. The Task Force consists of all ministries and state agencies, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State National Security Agency, the State Committee for Defence, the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Transport and Roads, the State Border Service, the State Customs Service, the Veterinary Service, the Phytosanitary Agency and others.

⁵⁵ <http://med.kg/ru/informatsii.html>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/v-respublike-obrazovan-operativnyy-shtab-po-otslezhivaniyu-situatsii-s-koronavirusom>.

- In March 2020, the Republican Task Force for the implementation of economic measures aimed at minimizing the effects of external shocks and stimulating economic development was formed.⁵⁷ This Task Force was headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic for Economy and two deputy chairmen: the head of the government apparatus and the head of the Ministry of Economy.⁵⁸ The Task Force included the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation; the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of Health; the Chairman of the State Committee for Industry, Energy and Subsoil Use; the Director of the State Agency for Antimonopoly Regulation under the Government; the Chairman of the State Customs Service under the Government; and others.

It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, which is responsible for establishing a social protection system and implementing gender policy in Kyrgyzstan, was not included in either of the COVID-19 Task Force groups. Furthermore, men dominated in the National Task Forces that were established as a response to COVID-19: only 20 per cent of the members were female.⁵⁹

In response to COVID-19, the Government developed policy packages in March, May and August 2020 as well as several strategic plans that outline the major measures that the Government stands ready to implement in order to prepare for and respond to COVID-19, including the following:

1. Plan on Priority Measures of the Government of Kyrgyzstan for 2020 to Reduce the Negative Impact on Economic and Social Stability due to the Spread of COVID-19 (30 March 2020).⁶⁰
2. Action Plan of the Government of Kyrgyzstan for 2020 on the Recovery of Economic Activity and Support of Business Entities (6 May 2020).⁶¹
3. Response and Recovery Plan on the Interaction between the Government of Kyrgyzstan and a Disaster Response Coordination Unit (29 May 2020).⁶²
4. Country Contingency Plan (CCP) for COVID-19 Response (18 March 2020). The plan was developed jointly by the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic, WHO and other development partners. The plan identified priority areas of interventions to strengthen the country's preparedness, readiness and response to COVID-19 in line with the Global Strategic Response Plan.
5. Environmental and Social Management Framework Document (26 April 2020).⁶³

No civil society organizations were involved in the design of the above-mentioned plans.⁶⁴ As of May 2020, more than 160 regulatory legal acts were adopted at the central and local levels to mitigate the spread of the disease and the negative impact of the pandemic.⁶⁵ The results of the analysis revealed that the vast majority of the documents did not incorporate gender-specific needs related to the impact of the pandemic and the introduction of restrictive measures.

Assistance to enterprises impacted by the COVID-19 crisis

The Kyrgyz Government is implementing a wide range of emergency measures to support local businesses impacted by the pandemic. Despite the prevalence of the informal economy, the Government's response has prioritized support to formal enterprises only. Furthermore, these economic measures were

57 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/sozdan-respublikanskiy-shtab-po-minimizatsii-posledstviy-ot-vneshnikh-shokov-i-stimulirovaniya-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya>.

58 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/218075>.

59 UN Women 2020.

60 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/218105>.

61 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/218163>.

62 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/218195>.

63 <http://ru.mes.kg/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/KG-Emergency-COVID-19.pdf>.

64 Aitbaeva 2020.

65 UN Women 2020.

not designed to address the differentiated pandemic impact on women-owned and men-owned firms. However, since these measures are targeting micro and small enterprises, they impact a large number of women's enterprises and women entrepreneurs.

In May 2020, an anti-crisis fund, amounting to 2 per cent of GDP in 2020 and 7 per cent of GDP in 2021, was established to support enterprises in the hardest-hit sectors. In June, the Government of Kyrgyzstan approved the "Financing of Entrepreneurship Entities" programme,⁶⁶ which aimed to mitigate the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic through concessional financing of support businesses in several sectors of the Kyrgyz economy; this included those fields with high rates of women's employment, such as tourism, light industry, agribusiness, education, services, trade and others. About KGS 14 billion was planned to be accumulated to support business from both external and internal sources. As of December 2020, under the Financing of Entrepreneurship Entities programme, businesses have been supported by 6,623 loans worth KGS 5.4 billion.⁶⁷ In order to promote digitalization, concessional loans are also available to any small and medium-sized businesses that carry out all accounting transactions electronically.

Other measures include taxation and debt-service relief measures, a moratorium on business inspections, a temporary ban on bankruptcy procedures of businesses until 2021 and an exemption from paying rent on state/municipal-owned property.

On 25 January 2021, the Ministry of Economy drafted the Women's Entrepreneurship Support Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic for the 2021–2025 period and proposed it for public discussion.⁶⁸ The strategic goal of the national programme is to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem for the continuous development of women's entrepreneurship by consolidating the efforts of government agencies, local self-government bodies and non-governmental organizations. The programme has set the following three objectives that will allow the programme to reach its goal:

1. Optimization of the legal framework and regulation
2. Improvement of the financial infrastructure and increasing access to financial services for women entrepreneurs
3. Development of entrepreneurial infrastructure, promotion of entrepreneurial culture and improvement of financial literacy of women entrepreneurs.

Extrabudgetary sources are to be used for funding the implementation of the national programme on the basis of agreements reached with donor organizations.

Targeted support to SMEs is particularly vital in order to preserve existing jobs – and create new ones – for returning migrants and young workers. The Government issued calls to encourage employers to organize work-from-home opportunities for all employees where possible and to keep their earnings at the same level as before the pandemic. The Government prepared instructions that outline measures of occupational safety that the employer is required to ensure. In addition, the Government recommended that private enterprises provide their workers with a minimum income during the period of forced unemployment.

Supporting jobs and incomes

During the emergency, the Government prohibited the dismissal of workers and employees, except for valid reasons, and amended the Labour Code accordingly. Early measures also included a request that work arrangements be adapted and transfer to a teleworking mode for a significant part of the employees of ministries and government agencies.

At the end of October 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development offered for public discussion the draft government decree "On temporary support provision to people who lost their jobs due to the state of emergency and restrictive measures against the spread of the coronavirus infection COVID-19".⁶⁹ The purpose of the policy is to provide temporary support to citizens who are unemployed due to consequences

66 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2518>.

67 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/io-premer-ministra-artem-novikov-sovmestnye-usiliya-pravitelstva-i-partnerov-po-razvitiyu-povliyayut-na-minimizatsiyu-posledstviy-covid-19-i-stabilizatsiyu-ekonomiki>.

68 <http://mineconom.gov.kg/ru/post/6827>.

69 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2757>.

of the infiltration of the coronavirus infection by paying them a temporary unemployment allowance at the rate of KGS 900 (about US\$12)⁷⁰ per month for six months. The proposed policy will support approximately 38,500 individuals who make regular contributions to the Social Fund but were laid off due to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. Since it is expected to take longer to bring economic activity back to pre-crisis levels and restore lost jobs, the monthly support for the unemployed will be paid for six months. This draft increases the amount of the unemployment benefit and simplifies the conditions for granting unemployment benefits; namely, the length of employment is reduced from 12 months during the preceding 3 years to 3 months during the preceding 12 months. It also simplifies the procedure for recognizing the unemployment status and payment for unemployment benefits. As of October 2021, the proposed decree is still in the drafting stage.

The new government programme “Real goals, new perspectives”,⁷¹ presented on 5 February 2021, aims to develop the domestic labour market by changing the payment system and promote hourly and piece-rate wages instead of widely practiced monthly salaries. The details of the implementation are not provided. Some experts, however, noted that such a measure will benefit only employers since it will make workers more vulnerable and dependent and will inevitably reduce the tax base.⁷²

- **Compensation to medical workers**

Women constitute about 83 per cent of the health workforce in Kyrgyzstan. Most of them are nurses, paramedics and midwives. Therefore, women are more likely to come into contact with those who are infected. To save the lives of others, they are forced to work in extremely challenging conditions: working around the clock, sleeping two to three hours a day for a month, and then being quarantined in barracks conditions, which they describe as “prison”.⁷³

At the end of March 2020, the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan ordered medical workers to pay regular visits to elderly people in their communities in order to monitor their living conditions and provide assistance if necessary.

In April 2020, the Government announced that healthcare workers infected with COVID-19 during work would receive compensation in the amount of KGS 200,000 and that the authorities will pay KGS 1 million to the families of those medical workers who died from the effects of the coronavirus. The authorities decided that payment of the compensation will be possible only after a special commission investigates how a medic became infected.

According to information from the Republican Task Force, as of 15 January 2021, there were 4,150 healthcare workers diagnosed with COVID-19, and 4,046 of them have recovered. According to official data from the Ministry of Health, as of October 2020, 84 health workers have died. However, journalists and social media users report even more deaths from pneumonia and the coronavirus among healthcare workers. However, since the wake of the pandemic, only 608 medical workers who had been infected with the coronavirus and the families of 30 deceased medical workers have received compensation. Healthcare workers repeatedly report that it is very difficult to receive compensation because of bureaucracy and difficulties in collecting all necessary documents. If they fail to prove that they were infected at work, they are regarded as ineligible to receive the compensation. A Ministry of Health lawyer informed that in order to prove that a medic was infected at work, it is necessary to indicate the source of the infection – that is, a specific patient with his/her personal epidemic number. Many medical workers believe that it is impossible to know from whom they got infected since they were in contact with dozens of patients, many of whom may not have known they had COVID-19.⁷⁴

70 The size of the current basic unemployment benefit is KGS 300.

71 <https://economist.kg/2021/02/04/vyrvatsya-iz-lovushki-bednosti-opublikovana-programmema-novogo-pravitelstva-polnaya-versiya/>.

72 https://kaktus.media/doc/431777_vyberemisia_iz_lovushki_bednosti_kakim_pravitelstvo_vidit_kyrgyzstan_bydyshego.html.

73 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/09/kyrgyzstan-medics-suffer-rights-violations-pay-high-personal-price-during-covid19-pandemic/>.

74 <https://kloop.kg/blog/2020/11/26/v-dokumentah-mnogo-netochnostej-pravitelstvo-o-zaderzhkah-vyplat-kompensatsij-medikam-zarazivshimsya-covid-19/>.

On 21 May 2020, the Jogorku Kenesh adopted a document amending the Law “On the status of medical workers” that was signed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on 29 June 2020. The law establishes guarantees and compensations for health workers’ organizations, including in cases of a state of emergency. According to accepted payment procedures (Order No. 306 of the Ministry of Health), physicians and management-level personnel should be paid KGS 47,100 per month; middle-level personnel, KGS 42,600 per month; and junior-level personnel, KGS 39,600 per month.⁷⁵

At the end of March 2020, the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic decided to put elderly medical workers, employees with chronic diseases and pregnant women on paid leave. In April 2020, this order was annulled, and the Minister’s press service reported that payments to non-working health workers had also been cancelled. It is worth noting that such regulation only applied to medical workers. After the introduction of the state of emergency, many civil servants began to work remotely or went on vacation, but their salaries were kept in full.

• **Compensation to social workers**

Social work has had a significant front-line role in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus by supporting socially vulnerable people such as the elderly, victims of domestic violence and people with disabilities. In addition, social workers were responsible for compiling lists of especially needy citizens living in the settlements where the state of emergency was declared, as well as for providing them with food and essential goods. The overwhelming majority of social workers in Kyrgyzstan are women.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan recognized that it is important to expand social security systems in the country. The first anti-crisis package planned to increase the number of full-time social workers, as well as raise their salaries to provide assistance to the elderly, single persons and other vulnerable categories of citizens. However, no information on implementation

status is available. Some experts believe that it will be problematic to accomplish this plan since it requires major amendments to the existing legislation.

• **Compensation to teachers**

Like medical and social workers, teachers have had to adapt their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sudden transition to online learning has spiralled teachers’ workload upward and exacerbated teachers’ stress and burnout. Compensation for teachers’ additional workload during the pandemic has not even been brought up by officials, although the problem of the ‘teacher pay penalty’ has been discussed for years.

According to Decree No. 648 issued in 2017,⁷⁶ teachers of general education organizations are entitled to the following monthly allowances for each qualification category:

- For the highest category: KGS 2,000
- For the first category: KGS 1,500
- For the second category: KGS 1,000.

Despite the fact that the decree was issued in 2017, monthly allowances based on qualification categories began to be paid to teachers only in 2020.⁷⁷

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic will start assigning qualification categories to school teachers based on the results of a voluntary certification that were carried out from May 2021 until the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year. Until the beginning of that academic year, the teachers will be paid an additional monthly allowance for their qualification category. The state budget secured KGS 99.7 million for monthly pay-outs for qualifications in the first four months of 2021. The most recent certification of school teachers was conducted in 2016.

Since the beginning of 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science has reduced the amount of paperwork for teachers in general education schools. Many teachers complained that they lacked time for self-education and individual work with children because they had to devote a significant portion of their time to preparing various reports and other information.

75 <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/livinghit.aspx?Section=5,1%20Governance&Type=Section>.

76 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/11595>.

77 <https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20210111/1051073284/kyrgyzstan-uchitel-attestaciya-nadbavka-zarplata.html>.

- **Loans for housing**

The programme “Affordable Housing 2015–2020”⁷⁸ is a state-funded programme that aims to address unmet housing needs. At first, the programme was designed to meet the needs of public sector employees such as teachers, healthcare workers and social workers, the majority of whom are females. At the end of 2019, the state mortgage became available at low rates to all categories of citizens except those who live in the cities of Bishkek and Osh. As of September 2020, more than 16,000 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic have been provided with their own housing.

In order to provide state support in reducing the debt burden for citizens who received mortgages under this programme, the Government of Kyrgyzstan issued a decree recommending that JSC “State Mortgage Company” reduce the interest rates on state mortgage loans to 6–8 per cent per annum starting from 1 January 2021 for all existing mortgage loans issued before 1 October 2019.⁷⁹

- **Support to vulnerable groups of the population**

As part of social support, it was planned to provide assistance to socially vulnerable segments of the population by distributing food and hygiene products to low-income families. According to numerous reports, such support was rendered by state and municipal agencies, international organizations, NGOs and individual activists across the country. In June 2020, the Government of Kyrgyzstan reported that about KGS 18.5 million was used to purchase food packages for the vulnerable population. However, there was no detailed information offered on how the money was spent. Thus, it was not clear what food items were included in the package, what the costs were per package, how the products were purchased, and other such details.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan declared that it imposed temporary control over the prices of essential foods. In order to regulate the prices of food and medicine, fines for unreasonable price increases went up. Nonetheless, the price of food picked up by 12 per cent over the course of a year.⁸⁰

In August 2020, the Government of Kyrgyzstan outlined temporary financial support to families with children under 16 years of age and one-time loans to low-income families for business or farm development. Furthermore, the Government took measures to forgive credit liabilities, primarily those taken in US dollars. Commercial banks deferred payment of loans for all individuals and legal entities temporarily left without income for three months.⁸¹ The Government also cancelled the imposition of penalties and fines for utility services and called on Internet service providers not to disconnect Internet services for payment delays during the emergency situation period.

On 11 September 2020, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted a resolution on the indexation of the base part of pensions, the total size of which is lower than the subsistence minimum for a pensioner for the previous year. On 1 October 2020, the base part of pensions was raised by 5 per cent (KGS 100).⁸²

Mobilizing financial resources to combat COVID-19

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kyrgyzstan has raised US\$694,432,795 (\$177,049,858 in grants and \$517,382,937 in loans) from international financial institutions.⁸³ As of 2 December 2020, Kyrgyzstan has received \$327,606,526.⁸⁴ Most of the funds – \$271.3 million – are loans from international institutions, and \$72 million are grants. About \$245.7 million was used to support the state budget and guarantee state social benefits such as salaries and pensions. Only \$48.8 million was spent on health care

78 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/97851/10?cl=ru-ru>.

79 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/dlya-grazhdan-vzyavshim-kredit-po-gosudarstvennoy-ipoteke-do-1-oktyabrya-2019-goda-protse-entnaya-stavka-budet-snizhena-do-68-godovykh>.

80 <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31007031.html>.

81 <https://cabar.asia/ru/problemy-obespecheniya-natsionalnoj-bezopasnosti-kyrgyzstana-v-usloviyah-nastupivshego-krizisa>.

82 <http://kabar.kg/news/v-kyrgyzstane-s-1-oktiabria-srednii-razmer-pensii-velichitsia-pochti-na-400-somov-sotfond/>.

83 <https://www.gov.kg/ru/post/s/covid-19ga-karshy-krsh-maksatynda-nktr-boyuncha-el-aralyk-nktshtdrn-zhana-chet-iklrdn-zhar-dam-tartuu-ishteri-zhnd-2021-zhyldyn-25-yanvaryna-karata-maalymat>.

84 <https://kloop.kg/blog/2020/12/02/surabaldieva-raskritikovala-minzdrav-za-plohuyu-otchetnost-po-gumanitarnoj-pomoshhi/>.

and targeted coronavirus spending. Of that, \$37.7 million went to the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund; \$1.3 million, towards medical goods and services; and \$1.2 million, towards food.

To ensure transparency, the Government created a special website that was supposed to monitor the total amount of money received, the source of the funds, and how it was spent. In practice, however, the information on the website turned out to be too general, which made it difficult to track used resources and their spending.

The political protests in Kyrgyzstan, triggered by rigged parliamentary elections, led to the resignation of the Government and of President Sooronbai Jeenbekov in October 2020. Many experts believe that the political unrest was fuelled by the COVID-19 hardship. Two months before the turmoil, a public opinion poll conducted by IRI⁸⁵ revealed the potential for such unrest, with 53 per cent of respondents believing that the country was heading in the wrong direction and 67 per cent believing that the Government handled the pandemic badly. The poor health infrastructure and widespread corruption during the pandemic made the people yearn for change.

In January 2021, an inter-agency commission that was set by the Government to monitor the use of funds for COVID-19 response revealed that the humanitarian aid received during the pandemic was stolen by certain individuals and used ineffectively.⁸⁶ Furthermore, during the state of emergency, the country's authorities changed the Law on Public Procurement, which led to secrecy in the funds' spending; therefore, it was impossible to monitor the usage and spending of the funds.

Reopening of kindergartens and school institutions

The Ministries of Health and Education announced that schools would reopen in November 2020, which

caused a public uproar.⁸⁷ The reopening has been halted until there is further clarity on the epidemiological situation in the cities of Bishkek and Osh.

As of 16 February 2021, 1,861 schools across the country have been allowed to resume regular classes for all students. Local authorities independently decided on the resumption of classes in schools. Given the epidemiological situation, the schools in the capital and some other populous settlements were open for students in grades 1–6, 9 and/or 11. Currently, education for other primary and secondary school students continues to be conducted over WhatsApp and other platforms in Bishkek city.

The list of measures that aim at ensuring the safety of children and the community during the pandemic includes the following: mask-wearing and hand-washing; cleaning and disinfection of all facilities and surfaces; groups shifts; and keeping a distance of 1.5 metres.⁸⁸ There are scant media reports citing sources at the Ministry of Education that the funds that were not used for the few first quarters of 2020 on financing these measures were used to disinfect the schools instead.⁸⁹

The Ministry of Education and Science has stated that kindergartens and schools are to follow an 'algorithm' for reopening. Some tenets of this algorithm include the following:

- Parents who can prove they have to go to work can have their children continue to attend/restart attending a preschool institution.
- All types of institutions (public and private) are to run offline schooling in accordance with decisions issued by the local centres of epidemiological monitoring, allowing for flexible scheduling of multiple shifts of smaller sized groups.⁹⁰
- If schools are directed to return to the online mode of teaching, then students would have to continue watching the recorded lessons on the Nariste platform and use the feedback loops provided.

85 https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/russian_version_kyrgyzstan_august_2020_slides_public_release.pdf.

86 https://24.kg/english/180100_Deputy_PM_COVID-19_death_toll_in_Kyrgyzstan_is_much_higher/.

87 https://24.kg/obschestvo/167421_vozvrat_vshkolyi_polnaya_nerazberiha/.

88 https://24.kg/obschestvo/167038_vozvrat_vshkolu_kto_ikak_budet_uchitsya_s6oktyabrya/.

89 <https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20201110/1050382643/185-millionov-somov-potratyat-na-dezinfekciyu-shkol-kyrgyzstana.html>.

90 This has caused a massive disagreement among the teachers since they will not be paid more for extra shifts. See https://24.kg/obschestvo/167421_vozvrat_vshkolyi_polnaya_nerazberiha/.

TABLE 9:
Number of school reopenings as of 16 February 2021, by territory⁹¹

Territory	Total number of schools in the territory	Number of schools where all classes are taught in a traditional mode	Number of schools where some classes are taught in a traditional mode	Number of schools that did not get permission to resume offline classes by the Ministry of Health's Department of Disease Prevention and State Sanitary and Epidemiological Surveillance
Bishkek city	97	0	96	1
Osh city	55	55	0	0
Osh oblast	547	525	22	0
Chui oblast	306	289	12	5
Djalal-Abad oblast	465	351	40	1
Batken oblast	237	237	0	0
Issyk-Kul oblast	192	191	1	0
Naryn oblast	142	142	0	0
Talas oblast	111	111	0	0
TOTAL	2,152	1,861	171	7

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The kindergartens were officially shut down on 18 March 2020 and have started to reopen since 5 June 2020. Some kindergartens (both public and private) have remained open during the summer and autumn; however, the total number of attending children has

decreased. As of 16 February 2021, 1,405 kindergartens have reopened; however, there is no estimate of how many preschool-age children are attending or have started reattending kindergarten at this point. The same applies to school-age children.

TABLE 10:
Number of kindergarten reopenings as of 16 February 2021, by territory⁹²

Territory	Number of kindergarten reopenings
Bishkek city	262
Osh city	80
Osh oblast	347
Chui oblast	191
Djalal-Abad oblast	143
Batken oblast	179
Issyk-Kul oblast	74
Naryn oblast	82
Talas oblast	47
TOTAL	1405

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Education and Science.

91 <https://edu.gov.kg/ru/news/2144-shkoly-po-respublike-rabotayut-v-realnom-rezhime/>

92 <https://edu.gov.kg/ru/news/1405-detskih-sadov-po-vsej-respublike-rabotayut-v-realnom-rezhime/>.

In the regions, the Ministry of Education and Science recommended the creation of groups of a smaller-than-usual size.⁹³ There is no information on whether strict regulations in relation to disinfection and safety rules have been introduced and followed.⁹⁴ It is also unknown whether there has been any widespread distribution of hygiene and disinfection products to the preschool and school institutions. According to unofficial sources, the bulk of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science was spent on the development of the online educational platform in early 2020. There is no public funding left for the other expenditures. However, it is worth noting that not all students could use the platform. According to the National Statistical Committee survey results,⁹⁵ about 83 per cent of children aged 7–17 were enrolled in distance learning and that less than a third (29 per cent) of preschool-age children who attended preschool before the coronavirus outbreak used television programmes and digital platforms for development. The lack of strict safety measures, including social distancing, masks, regular disinfection and other required procedures, puts many families at risk of spreading the virus into the community.

Impact on women's labour force participation

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Kyrgyzstan after a year of declining employment rates. During the quarantine and self-isolation period, many people lost their basic

and daily wages. In the first half of 2020, a total of 36,758 jobs were lost, 35,832 of which were in the informal economy sector.⁹⁶ Overall, it has been recently estimated⁹⁷ that the unemployment rate might rise to 13.6 per cent in 2020 (moderate-case scenario) or 21 per cent (worst-case scenario) in 2020 (compared to 6.2 per cent in 2018) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As there is not yet a comprehensive report issued by the Kyrgyz National Statistical Committee on the overall impact of COVID-19 on the labour market, it is unknown what proportion of the lost jobs were held by women. However, it is reasonable to assume that women will suffer more because of extant underlying structural and gender inequalities.

An ILO employment risk analysis has identified five economic sectors that are at the highest risk of severe losses in Kyrgyzstan. These sectors include wholesale and retail trade, transport and storage, accommodation and food services, arts and recreation, and real estate. The analysis implies that women are more likely to face a high risk of job and income loss since they are overrepresented (relative to their share in employment) in all high-risk sectors. Furthermore, three sectors of the five with high risk factors have the highest informal share in sectoral employment. As women make up the majority of people working in informal industries,⁹⁸ they are particularly severely affected by lockdown measures.

93 However, according to the mass media coverage, the Ministries of Health and Education did not issue any specific guidelines on how to split the classes into smaller and safer cohorts. See https://24.kg/obschestvo/167421_vozvrat_vshkolyi_polnaya_nerazberiha/.

94 Globally implemented measures include the following: ventilation; washing; cleaning and disinfection of all facilities, surfaces, equipment and toys before and after working hours; placing a disinfection barrier and disinfection liquid at the entrance; rules for parents and maintenance of physical distance with use of masks visible at the entrance; different age groups of children not placed in the same space; discouraged use of furry toys and other toys that cannot be washed and disinfected; and maintenance of distance among children during snack, lunch and nap times—1.5 metres of distance.

95 <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/okolo-76-domashnih-hozyajstv-respubliki-postradali-ot-covid-19/>.

96 National Statistical Committee data retrieved from <http://www.stat.kg>.

97 ADB 2020.

98 Ibid.

TABLE 11:
Workers at risk: Sectoral perspectives⁹⁹

Economic sector	Current and projected impact on value added, by sector		Risk factor	Baseline employment situation, 2018			
	Jan-Sept 2020 change in gross value added (percentage)	Gross value added projected rate of change in 2020 (percentage)		Immediate impact of crisis on economic output	Level of employment (thousands of workers)	Share in employment (percentage)	Women's share in sectoral employment (percentage)
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	-16.0	-10.5	High	373.9	16	40	95.5
Transport and storage	-32.9	-15.0	High	195.2	8	4	86.5
Accommodation and food service activities	-47.7	-23.0	High	142.7	6	49	89.4
Real estate activities	-2.0	-15.0	High	8.8	0	81	14.4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.4	-15.0	High	16.2	1	49	27.6
Manufacturing	-1.6	-6.5	Moderate	285.7	12	40	71.2
Construction	-7.7	2.9	Moderate	247.2	10	3	87.8
Financial and insurance services	2.6	-10.0	Moderate	36.1	2	41	36.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2.1	2.0	Low	482.7	20	38	95.9
Mining and quarrying	-5.9	0.7	Low	27.1	1	4	56.1
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	-0.5	0.3	Low	25.1	1	10	22.2
Water supply; sewerage, waste management	-10.9	2.0	Low	6.1	0	33	11.6
Information and communication	0.4	1.0	Low	28.1	1	37	24.1
Professional, scientific and technical activities	1.0	-2.0	Low	26.7	1	45	35.9
Administrative and support service activities	1.5	1.0	Low	24.2	1	38	67.9
Public administration	1.0	1.0	Low	97.5	4	31	3.9
Education	1.7	1.0	Low	215.1	9	80	7.8
Human health and social work activities	-0.2	1.2	Low	97.8	4	83	14.5
Other service activities	0.8	-2.0	Low	46.3	2	52	91.1

Source: ILO 2020.

⁹⁹ ILO 2020.

Representatives from a private law firm in Bishkek reported about massive layoffs due to the lockdown. Workers without formal employment contracts, casual labourers and the self-employed were more likely to lose their jobs. Accordingly, massive layoffs were noted in the informal garment sector, predominately occupied by women.¹⁰⁰

In April and June 2020, the Economic Policy Research Institute established by the Ministry of Economy conducted a socioeconomic study among self-employed individuals, owners of small and medium-sized businesses, and employees working in the informal economy. The findings of this study show that 59 per cent of surveyed businessmen lost their income, and 31 per cent reported a reduction in total income. The loss and reduction in total income were caused by the shutdown and quarantine measures, which severely impacted the hospitality and services sector. Among the private companies that hired workers, 89 per cent of workers were either laid off or chose to take leave without pay.

Only 19 per cent of male entrepreneurs (versus 15 per cent of female entrepreneurs) could maintain the financial stability of their venture/business. Moreover, 36 per cent of entrepreneurs said that they had difficulty paying their loans and lines of credit, 24 per cent experienced difficulties with paying taxes, and 20 per cent had an issue with paying the rent and other utility bills. Meanwhile, 62 per cent of females and 55 per cent of males reported that there was not enough money to pay for all of their household expenses. Indeed, 20 per cent of respondents had to use their savings, while 14 per cent had to borrow from relatives or friends. Only 25 per cent of respondents were aware of the anti-crisis measures that the Government had introduced. Only 6 per cent of entrepreneurs were going to apply for reduced interest rate loans and credit lines. Moreover, 40 per cent of respondents were interested in the zero-interest loans, while some were expecting an easing of administrative expenditures and administrative taxes soon.

Among self-employed individuals, 67 per cent of females and 58 per cent of males reported that there was not enough money to pay for all of their household expenses. In order to keep going, 36 per cent relied only on the income that they or other family members earned, 14 per cent of respondents had to use their family savings, 15 per cent had to borrow from relatives or friends, 6 per cent had to sell some other assets (e.g. cattle), and 4 per cent had to take out a bank loan.

Impact of the pandemic on women and families with children

Many experts believe that the crisis the country faced only emphasized the problems that already existed.¹⁰¹ With its lockdowns, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a spike in gender-based violence. From January to March 2020, the number of reported domestic violence cases rose by an alarming 65 per cent compared with the same period of the previous year.¹⁰² Stay-at-home orders, which were enforced to protect the public and prevent the spread of the virus, left many women and children trapped with their abusers.

Another striking impact is that the coronavirus pandemic led to a decline in working hours during the second and third quarter of 2020 and an increase in hours spent on unpaid care work, especially for families with school-age children. Despite quarantine orders that forced many people to stay home and spend more time with their families, women spent 3.6 times more time on unpaid work than men and two times more time on childcare.¹⁰³ A survey conducted by the National Statistical Committee in November and December 2020¹⁰⁴ revealed that mothers still perform most parental tasks for children and that the father's involvement was very limited.

100 <https://centralasiaprogramme.org/archives/18048>.

101 https://kaktus.media/doc/425075_kak_krizis_sviazanny_s_covid_19_povliial_na_rynok_tryda_ekspertnyy_analiz.html.

102 <https://emerging-europe.com/news/joblessness-surges-in-kyrgyzstan-as-impact-of-covid-19-hits-economy/>.

103 UN Women 2020.

104 <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/okolo-76-domashnih-hozyajstv-respubliki-postradali-ot-covid-19/>.

There is some evidence that the burden of household chores also increased for children during the pandemic. Thus, about 59 per cent of children skipped online classes due to household duties.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, about 15 per cent of children under the age of 5 were left alone or in the care of another child under the age of 10 at least once during the preceding week.¹⁰⁶

According to the Economic Policy Research Institute under the Ministry of Economy, 52 per cent of low-income families reported a deterioration in their financial situation. A huge proportion of them are female-headed households (65 per cent) in Bishkek and Osh.¹⁰⁷

It has been well reported that families have been dissatisfied with the quality of school teaching via online platforms and WhatsApp. The educational process that started to take shape in the spring and autumn of 2020 has been labelled as torture for the entire family.¹⁰⁸ Considering the fact that women are the main caretakers and an average Kyrgyz family has three children in the household, most of the pressure of homeschooling has fallen on the women. Not only have they had to care for the elderly members that usually live with the family and work more from home if they are employed, but they have also had to become teachers to their preschool- and school-age children, leaving an immense deficit in the time that women can spend on their work duties.

For working women, the switch to work-from-home arrangements has resulted in blurring the line between their public and private lives, which has led to the simultaneous performance of their professional work and their household responsibilities. Multiple employers have complained about the reduced level of productivity and efficiency of mothers whose children have stayed at home during school closures, leaving women in the precarious position of possibly becoming redundant at some stage due to reduced rates of productivity.

About 78 per cent of children who took part in the National Statistical Committee survey at the end of 2020 replied that their parents were not satisfied with the online learning process. There was some media coverage on parents asking to resume schooling in a standard school setting.¹⁰⁹ The quality of schooling has decreased substantially as there are issues with Internet connections, power cuts, the lack of IT/computer skills among teachers, the overload of assignments, the reliance on a computer/gadget, the lack of computers/gadgets/TV in some families,¹¹⁰ and the lack of human interaction, among others. While many parents were looking forward to schools reopening, other parents will not allow their children to attend an educational institution despite the benefits of normal schooling. This is largely due to the fact that many families fear the risk of infection and reinfection.¹¹¹

105 https://opendatacovid.kg/learningonline?fbclid=IwAR2uJdidRCPiKol3EuoNXJP1LJClj39yl-gi-z_ohFOkkt_kiknlvePmPSg.

106 <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/okolo-76-domashnih-hozyajstv-respubliki-postradali-ot-covid-19/>.

107 https://kaktus.media/doc/425075_kak_krizis_sviazanny_s_covid_19_povliial_na_rynok_tryda_ekspertnyy_analiz.html.

108 https://24.kg/obschestvo/164163_muchenie_aneuchenie_roditeli_prosyat_vernut_detey_vshkolyi/.

109 Ibid.

110 <https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20200414/1047854164/kyrgyzstan-isakov-distancionnoe-obuchenie-shkola.html>.

111 https://24.kg/obschestvo/167421_vozvrat_vshkolyi_polnaya_nerazberiha_/.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with global tendencies, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already existing gender inequalities and made visible the patterns of gender discrimination and exploitation already present in Kyrgyzstan. Policy responses against the pandemic have not addressed gender inequalities.

The importance of women's unpaid work in the household has increased since the COVID-19-induced restrictions on service jobs, the closure of schools and day-care centres and the switch to work-from-home arrangements and online education. At the same time, new activities were added to unpaid work as a result of the social distancing and sanitization requirements. Based on gendered social norms that view household duties as a female responsibility, the burden of unpaid work fell disproportionately on women. Care responsibilities continue to be shared very unequally between women and men, as they were during the height of the pandemic.

Many women have suffered job losses, particularly women in vulnerable employment. Women and girls are heavily employed in industries that have been disproportionately hit by the economic downturn arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the garment industry, entertainment and tourism, wholesale and retail trade, and hospitality and food service activities.

Women are playing a key role in the response to the COVID-19 crisis at many levels – in hospitals, schools and basic health units, risking their lives to save others. Yet they remain largely segregated into lower-paying jobs and are underrepresented in decision-making processes.

To counterbalance the trend towards exacerbating existing inequalities, the most pervasive of which has been gender inequality during COVID-19, policies must focus on the vulnerabilities created or deepened by the pandemic. Responses should contain the measures discussed below.

Ensuring transparency in government spending and progress reporting

The pandemic has shown that Kyrgyzstan, like any countries in the region, does not have a coordinated system for dealing with these kinds of challenges. Most of the response measures of the government remained at the level of declarations. There is scarce information on the status and progress of the majority of measures that were planned to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic.

At a time when governments rush to launch unprecedented fiscal measures to address the crisis, budget transparency is more crucial than ever. Kyrgyzstan is a clear evidence in support of this claim: The lack of information about governmental spending contributed massively to the political turmoil in October 2020 that resulted the resignation of the president.

Building better sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics for effective response

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in order to enhance the understanding of the depth, nature and evolution of gender inequalities. Given the differentiated impacts that COVID-19 has had on gender, there is a need to ensure that sex-disaggregated data are available, analysed and disseminated, across the institutions, the regions and civil society in the country. This can include data on the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 and the response measures on women. Beyond disaggregation by gender, data would also need to reflect the rural-urban differences and the situation of different ethnic groups.

Strengthening and supporting care work

The COVID-19 crisis has made clear how crucial care provision is – both paid and unpaid – for the well-being of society. The public has recognized how difficult and

undervalued the work of carers often is. The increased public awareness is an opportunity to demand better working conditions, higher wages and adequate representation of care workers in decision-making processes at all levels.

The crisis has also revealed pre-existing flaws in the health, education and care systems and the inadequacies of social protection systems. Kyrgyzstan, just as any other country, has prioritized investments in healthcare services in the emergency response, with the intention of strengthening the public health system. These efforts should continue and extend to other care services that suffered during the pandemic, such as early childhood education and long-term care. Investments in care services have the potential to generate decent jobs for both women and men. Other examples of jobs that can be expanded or created include the following:

- Home nurses, who are trained at a lower level than certified nurses
- Teachers' assistants in schools and after-school care programmes
- Assistants in day-care centres
- Community assistants who could care for the elderly and people with disabilities during emergency situations.

It became clear that it is vital to reform the complex and fragmented social care system in Kyrgyzstan, which is not capable of providing adequate services in emergency situations. The deep-rooted workforce problems in social care (such as low pay, poor working conditions and the low status of social work) are the major barriers limiting the implementation of quality care services. It is important to revise the regulations on social workers,¹¹² clearly define the job description of social workers at different levels and reconsider the compensation structures.

Recognizing unpaid care work

Governments should also recognize in national laws, policies and programmes the economic and social value of unpaid domestic care work. It is very important

to consider the unpaid care economy in macroeconomic policy and estimate the impact of specific policies on the volume of paid and unpaid work of women and men.

Specific measures might include the following:

- An estimation of the value of the total unpaid care work relative to conventional GDP as a basis for dialogue on care work.
- A cost-benefit analysis of investments in appropriate infrastructure and public services (such as water, sanitation, digital infrastructure, and child and elderly care) to reduce unpaid care work.
- Incorporating gender-responsive budgeting into COVID-19 response and recovery packaging and taking a systematic approach to training government officials and representatives of the local authority responsible for budgeting and policymaking. Such training can be conducted by the Training Centre of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Kyrgyzstan.

Ensuring access to free public infrastructure for early childhood care

The development of free public infrastructure for childhood education and care is believed to decrease the burden on females for unpaid reproductive labour and to increase their rate of participation in the labour force.¹¹³ For example, in Kazakhstan, a gradual increase in preschool coverage has boosted the female labour participation rate.¹¹⁴ Free early childhood education and care services would be an important contribution to women's economic involvement in Kyrgyzstan too.

Ensuring women's leadership and equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making processes

Although women are on the front lines of the crisis in their homes, communities, healthcare facilities and schools, they are excluded from the decision-making processes and governance structures that determine the response. For example, women comprised only 20 per cent of the members of the National Task Forces that were created to develop the response plans.

112 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/93500>.

113 EBRD 2015.

114 Khitarishvili 2016.

A number of civil society activists, women's NGOs and international agencies have developed a series of recommendations on how to involve women and how to integrate gender perspectives into COVID-19 response planning. The UNDP Gender and Recovery Toolkit¹¹⁵ includes a guidance note on how to promote the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in crisis and recovery. The recommendations were developed based on experiences in peace and security and disaster risk reduction principles, and they include the following:

- Develop broad and inclusive consultation mechanisms to facilitate women's participation
- Work in partnership with civil society to strengthen connections with women at the community level
- Ensure that women's rights organizations have access to adequate, reliable and sustained funding
- Address barriers to women's participation and leadership through measures that address economic, social and political barriers to participation.

Promoting work-life balance policies

Trade unions and employers should provide opportunities to combine working conditions and employment (e.g. leave, working hours, etc.) with family responsibilities – that is, they should organize family-friendly workplaces. Employer-supported childcare can be integrated into family-friendly workplace policies.¹¹⁶ Such measures can be fixed in collective agreements and/or through appropriate managerial practices at the enterprise level.

Providing professional development opportunities that consider women's needs

Well-designed training programmes can expand women's choices and address women's constraints and needs by offering convenient locations, transport and childcare. Training should be of a short duration, which was proved to be the most effective length of time when linked to real labour market demand and strengthened by job-search support and guidance. The training can be provided online, and/or the location, transport options and access to childcare should be taken into account, given the restrictions on women's mobility and the disproportionate share of care at home.

Representatives of SMEs have highlighted the professional development and training in the fields of e-commerce, digital marketing and services for distance clients.

115 Gender and Recovery Toolkit: Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Crisis and Recovery Settings (2019), available at <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/undp-gender-and-recovery-toolkit.html>.

116 <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/da7fbf72-e4d9-4334-955f-671a104877a7/201911-A-guide-for-employer-supported-child-care.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mVHadh3>.

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- _____. 2020. *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic*.
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ANNEX 1. GENDER IN EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In general, Kyrgyzstan has a wide range of legal frameworks for achieving gender equality, which includes the norms of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, international conventions and special laws on gender equality. Since its independence, the Kyrgyz Republic has ratified more than 50 international treaties on gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on the basis of which a number of national laws have been enacted to fulfil the obligations stipulated by these conventions.

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2008) establishes the principle of equality in political, social, economic and labour activities, as well as within a family. This law, together with the Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, serves to protect the rights of workers and gender equality in the labour market. For example, the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women does the following:

- Guarantees equal rights and equal opportunities in advertising and recruitment for posts in the public sector
- Secures equal pay for equal work of equal qualification and the right of employers to take measures aimed at achieving gender equality
- Prohibits any direct or indirect gender discrimination on the basis of marital status, pregnancy, potential pregnancy and family responsibilities
- Outlaws sexual harassment

- Obliges employers to make sure that women and men have the opportunity to balance family and work responsibilities
- Condemns reproduction of gender stereotypes through the media, education and culture.

The Labour Code is the legal document that governs labour relations, rights and social protection of all workers and entitles the following:

- Provision of maternity leave for up to three years with retention of one's job and position, including 126 days of paid maternity leave
- Protection of women from unequal treatment due to pregnancy or having children, including protection against being denied a job on the grounds of pregnancy or having children
- A ban on dismissal by reason of pregnancy
- The right of women to take breaks for breastfeeding.

The widening of economic opportunities for females was set up as the number-one priority in the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) for the period 2012–2020 and can be accomplished by:

- Estimating and visualizing women's economic contributions to development
- Expanding sources of strengthening women's economic opportunities and moving from informal, shadow employment to the formal labour market
- Creating working conditions that enable employees to combine work and family responsibilities
- Reducing wage gaps and gender occupational segregation.

The National Action Plan on Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for the 2018–2020 period lists the following measures that will enable the creation of conditions to combine work and family responsibilities:

1. Conduct an analysis into the reasons that impede the combination of work and family responsibilities and to explore the needs and opportunities for:
 - the creation of after-school groups in kindergartens and elementary schools
 - additional places in kindergartens (i.e. added capacity for more children).
2. Create an inter-agency working group that will develop a mechanism for the effective combination of work and family responsibilities through the creation of day-care groups in elementary school and kindergartens and additional places in kindergartens.

All of these measures were planned to be implemented in 2019. The official body supervising the areas of childcare and education is the Ministry of Education and Science.

The capacity of the Kyrgyz Government to enforce the laws and policies is low¹¹⁷ and usually is hampered by financial restrictions, frequent turnover of decision-makers in governance agencies and the national gender machinery (particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Development), and the low level of gender sensitivity of state officials.¹¹⁸ To a large extent, the fact that gender issues are present on the national policy agenda is mostly attributed to the proactive effort of donor and international organizations and transnational feminist networks.¹¹⁹

117 EBRD 2015.

118 National Review of the Kyrgyz Republic in the framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2018), available at <https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/ourwork/gender-equality/library/national-review-of-the-kyrgyz-republic-in-the-framework-of-the-b.html>.

119 Hoare 2009.

ANNEX 2. LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

With regard to formal provision, early childhood education and care is regulated in Kyrgyzstan by legal acts of the Kyrgyz Republic and international agreements and treaties, including the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Law on Education, the State Standard of Preschool Education and Care of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Law on Preschool Education of the Kyrgyz Republic (Law No. 198), approved on 29 June 2009.

The activities of all preschool educational organizations, regardless of the type of ownership or mode of operation, are governed by the following regulatory documents:

- The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Preschool Education”
- The State Educational Standard “On Preschool Education and Childcare”
- The Provision for Preschool Educational Organizations.

The Law on Preschool Education of the Kyrgyz Republic contains basic principles on how the preschool educational system should function and stipulates the right of every child to have access to a school preparedness programme prior to admission to school at the age of 7.

To achieve universal coverage of preschool preparedness training, in 2007, the Kyrgyz Government introduced a 100-hour school preparation programme that runs at the premises of primary schools for children who are not yet engaged in preschool education. This programme was conducted in the summer of 2007 for 7-year-old children before their admission to the

school. Later, in 2011, the Government expanded this programme to a 240-hour programme that runs for four months in the spring. Since 2015, the programme has expanded to the 480-hour “Nariste” programme that lasts a full academic year. The expansion of the programme was implemented with the support of the Global Partnership for Education within the framework of the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic (2012–2020).

The Nariste programme remains one of the most successful policies for preparing for school. With its help, the overall share of first graders that went through the preparation programme has increased from 56 per cent in the 2015/16 academic year to 79 per cent in 2017/18.

To further increase the enrolment rate for preschool education, in May 2017, amendments were introduced to the Tax Code of the Kyrgyz Republic that exempted private preschool organizations from a number of taxes, such as VAT and taxes on land, profits and income. In addition, state and municipal education organizations (including preschool organizations) could forgo licensing,¹²⁰ and the Government has dropped a requirement that the owner of a private kindergarten owns the building that houses it.

Education in preschool establishments in Kyrgyzstan is based on state standards that are stipulated in the “Preschool Education and Childcare” Standard. However, there is no evidence-based data in regard to a quality assessment of both private and public preschool organizations. Starting from 2018, the Association of Children’s Educational Institutions in Bishkek

¹²⁰ According to temporary regulations on the procedure for licensing educational activities in the Kyrgyz Republic.

launched an internal certification project to increase parental confidence in children’s non-public preschool institutions. The initiative was pioneered by 23 private kindergartens, of which 16 preschool organizations confirmed compliance with the requirements of the quality of education and development of children of preschool age.¹²¹

Article 15, paragraph 3, of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Education” says that the State guarantees financial and material support in the upbringing of children of early childhood and ensures the availability of educational services for preschool educational organizations for all segments of the population. However, part 2 of article 23, paragraph 8, of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Preschool Education” stipulates that parents are obliged to take part in the development (co-payment) of a preschool educational organization. Article 24 of the same document states that preschool educational organizations are entitled to provide additional paid educational (above the standard) and health services.

The Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the 2012–2020 period highlights the following five major problems with preschool education:

- Low coverage of preschool education
- Unequal starting positions of preschool-age children due to inadequate preparation for primary school, compared to the children who have undergone preschool education programmes
- Inefficient resource allocation for preschool educational organizations
- Low quality teaching in preschool educational institutions
- The issue of continuity of preschool and primary school education programmes.¹²²

121 <http://www.news-asia.ru/view/ks/accidents/11247>.

122 Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2012–2020, available at <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/kyrgyz-republic-eds-2012-2020-kr.pdf>.



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