



**Joint Submission of the UN Country Team of Kyrgyzstan, prepared on the occasion of the
Fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Kyrgyzstan**

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labor Organization (ILO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), International Organization for Migration (IOM) have contributed to this submission.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Kyrgyzstan covers the period 2020 to October 2024. It is not an exhaustive analysis of the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan. It highlights the main issues addressed by the UNCT in discharging its mandates in the country.

2. SCOPE OF INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS AND BODIES

Achievements and promising practices:

Kyrgyzstan continued to engage with UN Human Rights Mechanisms.¹ The 2021 Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, and Administrative Procedure Code recognize decisions by international human rights bodies as “new circumstances” that can lead to the review of court rulings.

Main issues/gaps:

The domestic legal framework lacks an effective mechanism to ensure full implementation of views received from UN Treaty Bodies.

Key recommendations:

- Revise national legislation to ensure the implementation of views from UN Treaty Bodies. Allocate resources in the national budget for adequate compensation for victims of violations identified in the views of UN Treaty Bodies.
- Make a measurable commitment to advance the implementation of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) guiding principles, objectives, or actions.

3. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Achievements and promising practices:

The Coordination Council on Human Rights (CCHR) under the Cabinet of Ministers supports engagement with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, with the Ministry of Justice as secretariat. The Council adopted a National Human Rights Action Plan 2022-2024 (NHRAP) which has been

¹ Kyrgyzstan engaged with UN Treaty Bodies through timely submission of its periodic reports and UN Special Procedures. A standing invitation to the UN Special Procedures was issued on 30 December 2020. Three visits of the UN Special Procedures have taken place since then: SR on Poverty; WG on Discrimination against Women and Girls; SR on Rights of PwD. During 2020-August 2024, there have been 19 communications from SPs, and only 9 state replies. Voluntary UPR mid-term report was not submitted.

partially implemented.

The Ombudsperson Institute (*Akiykatchy*) was accredited in 2012 by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) with B status.

The National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under OP-CAT, the National Center for the Prevention of Torture (NCPT) has a unique structure (which includes civil society representatives, MPs and the Ombudsperson in its governance), which guarantees its independence, accountability and transparency. It has conducted over 8,200 preventive visits and 12,500 interviews with detainees in detention facilities.

In 2021, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic adopted the Concept of Migration Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030 (resolution No.191). In 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed Action Plan 2021-2025 under the Concept.

Main issues/gaps:

The CCHR secretariat lacks sufficient staff and would benefit from consistent involvement of civil society and other stakeholders. The NHRAP implementation would benefit from SMART indicators, targeted budgetary allocations, and transparent engagement with civil society and others.

Gaps remain in ensuring the *Akiykatchy* meets the UN Paris Principles, in particular its independence, selection and appointment procedures, lack of pluralism of staff, insufficient cooperation with civil society, security of tenure and insufficient engagement with UN Human Rights Mechanisms. The previous Ombudsperson was summarily dismissed by Parliament in 2023. While a draft Constitutional Law on *Akiykatchy* was developed and discussed in 2023, it has yet to be finalized.

The potential merger of the NPM with the *Akiykatchy*, which has been regularly raised by Government, would risk undermining the independent preventive monitoring of places of detention, constituting a regressive measure.

Recommendations:

- Adequately staff and train the secretariat of the CCHR. Ensure systematic involvement of civil society and other stakeholders in its work.
- Ensure the independence and autonomy of the *Akiykatchy*, in line with the 2012 GANHRI recommendations, and of the NCPT, preserving the latter as a separate and independent entity focused on preventing torture. Allocate adequate financial and human resources to both the *Akiykatchy* and the NCPT to carry out their mandates effectively.
- Evaluate implementation of the Action Plan 2021-2025 of the Concept of Migration Policy 2021-2030.
- Align the to-be-developed Action Plan 2025-2030 on implementation of the Concept of Migration Policy 2021-2030 with 23 objectives of the GCM.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Equality and non-discrimination

Achievements and promising practices:

Progress was made in improving the quality of education for children with diverse backgrounds.

Certain progress has been made in reducing stigma and discrimination against HIV-positive individuals, developing state social contract documents for the probation service, and providing 24-hour consultations via a mobile app on Reproductive Health and HIV to young key populations. Training on HIV has been provided to local community organizations and included in the curriculum for medical and legal personnel.

Main issues/gaps:

Efforts to adopt a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law were not successful. There is insufficient data collection on vulnerable groups. Laws affecting women, children, persons with disabilities and persons with HIV and TB do not fully comply with international human rights law, leading to stigma, discrimination, and limited access to justice and equitable healthcare.

Women with disabilities or from ethnic and gender minorities face compounded challenges in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) due to overlapping discrimination related to their gender, identity, and social status.

Key recommendations:

- Revise laws affecting groups in vulnerable situations, including women with disabilities, ethnic and gender minorities, and those with HIV/TB, to ensure they are non-discriminatory and fully compliant with CEDAW.
- Adopt a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law that prohibits discrimination on all grounds, including race and gender, remove mandatory registration for people who use drugs and opioid substitution therapy clients, end compulsory drug addiction treatment, expand treatment options and improve access to gender-affirming services.
- Provide legal counseling and protection to people living with HIV and TB when they are in contact with law enforcement agencies, places of detention, and courts.
- Train healthcare workers, lawyers, and law enforcement officials on ethics and unbiased and equitable service provision to people living with HIV and TB, and key populations and other groups facing stigma and discrimination.
- Establish a women's division within the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan to empower female religious leaders and women's access to information.

Development, the environment, and business and human rights

Achievements and promising practices:

In 2022, Kyrgyzstan adopted a national Roadmap for the Five-Year Action Plan (2023-2027) for Mountain Regions and established a High-level Environmental Justice Dialogue Platform, aiming to promote environmental conservation and resource management, protect vulnerable groups from environmental degradation and climate change impacts and their access to environmental justice.

The Supreme Court compiled Environmental Justice Case Law to highlight legal precedents on environmental justice. In 2023, an interagency group began drafting a National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights.

Main issues/gaps:

Kyrgyzstan has not adopted regulations to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). Laws lack mechanisms to incentivize businesses to prevent human rights violations.

Climate change adaptation activities receive minimal funding. In 2024, only 0.4 per cent of the national budget was allocated to environmental protection. Public participation in environmental law-making is limited, exemplified by the 2024 adoption of the laws lifting a ban on uranium exploration and amending the Law on Biosphere Territories. Both passed without adequate public consultation.

Environmental impact assessments are rarely made public, limiting access to information. Activists face persecution for voicing concerns on environmental matters. Kyrgyzstan lacks a strategic document specifically addressing environmental justice.

Legislation on access to justice under the Aarhus Convention is poorly implemented.

The omission of the environmental protection agency from entities responsible for environmental safety should be addressed.

Key recommendations:

- Adopt a NAP on Business and Human Rights. Ensure it includes all stakeholders, aligns with anti-corruption efforts, offers incentives for human rights respecting businesses and includes formal and informal sectors.
- Train state officials and businesses on the UNGPs.
- Publicly release Environmental Impact Assessments and feasibility studies for planned projects.
- Adopt a comprehensive Environmental Code to harmonize Kyrgyzstan's environmental regulations.
- Bring laws, regulations, policies and practices in line with the Aarhus Convention.
- Allocate sufficient funding for climate mitigation and environmental protection on national and local levels.

Human rights and counter - terrorism

Achievements and promising practices:

Kyrgyzstan adopted state programs on countering extremism and terrorism for the period 2017-2022 and 2023-2027.

Repatriation operations from Syria and Iraq for Kyrgyz citizens have been undertaken under an Action Plan approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, including comprehensive reintegration programs upon return. Since 2021, 517 Kyrgyz citizens (children and adults) have been repatriated.

Main issues/gaps:

The definition in criminal law of “extremism” remains overbroad, allowing for prosecution of acts that do not involve violence. Draft legislation increasing penalties for “calls for violent seizure of power” and “possession of extremist materials” (previously decriminalized) are not in line with international human rights law. Conviction under these offenses does not allow for probation, early release, non-custodial punishments or amnesty.

There are concerns that anti-terrorism operations do not always fully adhere to the principles of necessity, proportionality, non-discrimination and accountability.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the legal framework on countering terrorism and violent extremism and its application are in line with international human rights standards, including limiting its definition and prosecution to acts involving violence.
- Refrain from using anti-terrorism law to prosecute the exercise of fundamental freedoms.
- Expand community-based programs targeting socio-economic and ideological drivers of terrorism and violent extremism and integrate human rights education into them.
- Enhance police-community relations inter alia through community policing initiatives.

Right to life, liberty and security of person

Achievements/promising practices:

On 4 July 2024, the CCHR adopted an Action Plan for 2024-2025 on the implementation of the 2021 recommendations of the UN Committee Against Torture, coordinated by the NPM.

On 13 September 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a regulation endorsing the UN Istanbul Protocol as a mandatory standard for all medical professionals.

Main issues/gaps:

The definition of torture in the Criminal Code does not include non-state officials acting in an official capacity. Impunity for torture and other ill-treatment is largely the result of a lack of effective criminal investigations due in part to the absence of an independent police complaint mechanism. Pre-trial detention, widely applied in criminal cases, increases the vulnerability of suspects to torture and ill-treatment. Most torture prosecutions result in acquittal or closure before trial. Victims of torture lack access to justice and compensation. Restricted access to asylum procedures for detained asylum seekers has resulted in cases of refoulement.

According to NPM reports, conditions in most detention facilities do not meet international standards, with inadequate medical care, overcrowding, lack of hygiene and insufficient conditions for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- Bring the definition of torture in the criminal code in line with the UNCAT.
- Ensure the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all allegations of torture and ill-treatment.
- Establish an independent police complaint mechanism.
- Grant bail or other non-custodial measures to defendants during the pre-trial period based on personalized risk assessments by judges, in lieu of gravity of the crime.
- Uphold the principle of non-refoulement in line with the UNCAT and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

Achievements and promising practices:

The Government adopted a National Legal Aid Program and a State Program targeting persons with disabilities (PwDs). Payment rates for lawyers under state-guaranteed legal aid were doubled. The Government has initiated the digitalization of criminal justice.

Main issues/gaps:

Following amendments adopted in 2023, decisions of the Constitutional Court can be reviewed, including upon proposal from the President, raising concern about the independence of the judiciary.

The state legal aid system requires additional resources. Paralegals are authorized by law to provide free legal aid, but a regulatory mechanism is lacking. Access to justice in remote areas and closed institutions, as well as for PwDs, remains difficult.

Key recommendations:

- Ensure the full independence of the judiciary, at all levels, protecting judges from any external pressure and repeal the 2023 amendments “On the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic.”
- Improve the quality and outreach of free legal aid and people-centered justice services.

Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

Achievements/promising practices:

The 2021 Constitution includes provisions on fundamental freedoms. The 2012 Law on Peaceful Assembly is fully in line with international human rights standards.

In 2024, the draft Law on Mass Media was revised in consultations with journalists and civil society and includes provisions in line with international standards, e.g. on the voluntary registration of media.

Main issues/gaps:

In April 2024, new legislation introduced a requirement for NGOs engaged in “political activities” and receiving foreign funding to register as “foreign representatives”, creating operational challenges and significant risks of stigmatization of NGOs and increasing self-censorship across civil society. Several NGOs have closed down or are considering ceasing their operations.

The Law on Protection from Inaccurate (False) Information (2021) empowers the Ministry of Culture to unilaterally block websites. In 2023, the Law on Protection of Children from Harmful Information was adopted, prohibiting the dissemination of content considered contrary to Kyrgyz cultural values, including information on non-traditional sexual relations.

The prosecution of journalists, bloggers, civic activists and social media users for their peaceful expression of critical views has increased, often relying on state forensic expert evidence. Critics are accused of organizing or participating in “mass disorder”, inciting hatred, or calling for the violent seizure of power. Draft amendments to the Criminal Code proposed in 2024 may expand such trends.

The repeal in 2024 of the Law on Public Oversight Councils reduces avenues for public participation and transparent, accountable governance. Current draft legislation proposes to significantly reduce the period for public consultation on new legislation and exempt certain categories from public scrutiny.

Since March 2022, blanket judicial bans on peaceful assemblies have been imposed in the center of Bishkek and other towns.

Draft legislation on freedom of religion or belief proposed in 2023 and 2024 retains restrictive provisions concerning registration requirements, proselytism and activities of non-registered religious associations.

Key recommendations:

- Repeal the law on foreign representatives.
- Ensure that no executive body has the power to impose fines or sanctions for offensive speech.
- Maintain and expand mechanisms for meaningful public consultation on draft legislation.
- Provide mechanisms for effective public participation in governance at the national and local level.
- Integrate the Rabat Action Plan test into legislation and policies.
- Lift blanket judicial bans and bring the implementation of freedom of peaceful assembly in line with international human rights standards and the 2012 Law on Peaceful Assemblies.
- Ensure protection and free speech for all human rights activists, including those advocating for environmental causes, investigate cases of harassment, and hold perpetrators to account.
- Align legislation on freedom of religion or belief to international human rights standards, involving religious communities in meaningful consultations. Avoid imposing blanket restrictions on religious attire, which could disproportionately affect women from religious communities.

Prohibition of all forms of slavery

Achievements and promising practices:

With UN support, the Government established a National Referral Mechanism to assist survivors of trafficking in human beings in 2019, including legal and social assistance. In 2022, it also adopted a Program on Combating Human Trafficking for 2022–2025 and an Action Plan.

Main issues/gaps:

Kyrgyzstan has become a country of destination for migrant workers from South and South-East Asian countries, who remain vulnerable to risks of exploitation and abuse. Existing shelters are run by NGOs and accommodate only women.

Key recommendations:

- Regularly evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan.
- Operationalize the National Referral Mechanism by establishing government-run shelters for women and men survivors of trafficking, including referral and protection assistance, access to services and improve legal framework for protection of migrant workers.

Right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work

Achievements and promising practices:

Informal employment exists in all economic sectors and represents a serious challenge for the country's development. On 25 April 2024, the Government adopted a National Program on "Transition from Informal to Formal Economy" (2024-2030).

Kyrgyzstan ratified the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 on 3 June 2024 and joined the GCM on 27 August 2024.

Main issues/gaps:

There are concerns regarding freedom of association for employers due to increasing involvement of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) in activities of employers' organizations.² The CCI does not meet Convention No. 87 criteria on freedom of association, as it is a government mandated agency and provides public services.

In December 2023, the governing body of the Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) self-dissolved, and in February 2024, a new FTU Council was elected under the strict government control, undermining its independence and violating Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 (on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining), both ratified by Kyrgyzstan. In the same vein the leadership of all sectoral national union federations, affiliated to the FTU, have been forced to resign. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations suspended their collaboration with the FTU and its affiliates and may consider their full exclusion at their next governing body meetings. The ILO also suspended technical cooperation with the FTU until further clarification of the situation and requested the Government to address violations of the respective conventions.

Based on ILO data, in 2022³, total informal employment was 62.2 %, 63.7% for men, and 60.2% for women.

Currently, informal workers do not have access to the social protection system.

The Government drafted and submitted a new Labor Code for consideration by Parliament, which does not comply with ILO conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan.

Key recommendations:

- Ratify or accede to remaining human rights instruments to which Kyrgyzstan is not a party, including CED, CRPD-OP, ILO Conventions No. 155 and No. 187 on Occupational Safety and Health.
- Revise and align national legislation to ILO Convention No. 190 in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations, civil society and relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure full compliance with ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98.

² The CCI has been the employers' delegate at the International Labor Conference (ILC), representing employers in the national tripartite commission and has signed collective agreements.

³ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>

- Amend the new Labor Code to comply fully with ILO Conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan, in line with ILO recommendations.

Right to social security

Achievements and promising practices:

Conclusions and recommendations from an assessment conducted by UNICEF, WFP, ILO and World Bank on the national social protection system in 2023 were adopted at the 1st National Development Forum in November 2023.

Main issues/gaps:

There is low coverage of social protection programs and cumbersome procedures to access and enroll for social entitlements. There is no system of social care services at the local level.

Further progress is needed to ensure a coherent social protection strategy or framework to align with best practices in addressing the socio-economic needs of vulnerable people and families.

Key recommendations:

- Develop a new social protection strategy to address the socio-economic needs of vulnerable people and families.
- Increase coverage of the major social protection programs and social care services.

Right to an adequate standard of living

Achievements and promising practices:

The National Statistical Committee regularly measures monetary and multidimensional poverty. Kyrgyzstan is updating its National Development Strategy 2030.

Main issues/gaps:

Despite high poverty rate in 2023 ⁴ of 28,9%, Kyrgyzstan lacks a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Children are disproportionately represented in poverty statistics, with 36.7 % of children living in poverty and 29.8 % in absolute poverty. The sole poverty-targeted policy measure is a state benefit for poor families with children, which suffers from limited coverage, low amounts, and marginal impact on poverty reduction. This benefit is only accessible to the poorest families with incomes below the monthly Guaranteed Minimum Income⁵ (GMI) of KGS 1,000 (approximately USD 11.7). The GMI is just 19 % of the poverty line level, which stands at

⁴ <https://stat.gov.kg/ru/statistics/uroven-zhizni-naseleniya/>

⁵ <https://stat.gov.kg/ru/living-wage/>

KGS 5,250 (approximately USD 61).

Key recommendations:

- Prioritize the development of a new National Development Strategy with quantifiable targets and indicators on poverty reduction.
- Increase coverage and access of poor children to State benefits.
- Support development of an evidence-based, child-sensitive social protection program.

Right to health

Achievements and promising practices:

The Ministry of Health assessed and revised the State-Guaranteed Benefits Program (SGBP) in autumn 2023 and made recommendations to reduce out-of-pocket payments for health care services. They also increased the salaries of healthcare workers in June 2024.

The Additional Drugs Package (ADP) provides financial protection for access to essential medicines for those who are covered by insurance, but it only covers a limited number of essential medicines. In May 2023, the Government introduced a price control mechanism for imported essential medicines, estimated to reduce the cost of essential medicines by approximately 10%.

In addition to the SGBP and the ADP, the UN system and other donors make significant contributions to health security and infectious disease control. For example, the Global Fund contributes to TB and HIV interventions, hepatitis C care, and substantial support for immunizations, critical for containing outbreaks of measles.

Main issues/gaps:

Over 80% of households make out-of-pocket (OOP) payments for health care, which is the most regressive and inefficient form of health financing, with the greatest negative impact on those who are poor and experiencing vulnerability.

As a proportion of GDP, government spending on health has declined by 36% between 2012 and 2021. While the price control mechanism for essential medicines was providing some financial protection, its gains are expected to be effectively canceled by a 12% VAT on medicines introduced in September 2024.

While formal coverage rates under the SGBP and ADP are extensive, the significantly lower practical coverage leads to inadequate support for many individuals who are eligible for these benefits.

Besides increased base salaries of doctors, retaining and better distributing healthcare workers across the country will require further investment and a customized approach.

Enrolment in health insurance under the MHIF requires at least a temporary residence permit, a barrier to access for internal migrants, who account for an estimated 18% of the population.

While the hospital sector absorbs a large share of resources, it is still characterized by poor infrastructure, insufficient qualifications of staff and a limited range of services.

Restrictions on the amount of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs dispensed complicate ART provision for migrant workers, who make up a significant portion of the population living with HIV. PHC facilities are often not prepared or sufficiently motivated to provide comprehensive HIV care.

In July 2024, the Government amended the Code of Offenses with Art. 109.2. “Prostitution”, which now foresees a fine on individuals in the amount of 200 minimum monthly wages or arrest from three to seven days.

Key recommendations:

- Strengthen health financing and financial protection, with a focus on PHC and removing financial barriers to accessing care, to reduce OOPs and protect low-income and families experiencing financial vulnerability.
- Increase investment in the health sector, with a focus on the healthcare workforce, including its retention.
- Focus testing efforts and precision prevention by clearly prioritizing key populations and new sub-groups experiencing the highest epidemiological burden.
- Increase the maximum quantity of ARV drugs dispensed to patients working abroad or those with valid reasons for needing a larger personal stock of ARVs.
- Explicitly enhance the role of NGOs and community projects in linking patients to care, enrolling them in ART, and promoting adherence.

Right to education

Achievements and promising practices:

The concept of inclusive education was introduced in the new Law on Education adopted in 2023.

Main issues/gaps:

Implementing comprehensive multilingual education, in line with the new Law and the Constitution requires additional resources to ensure that children from ethnic/language minorities achieve quality learning outcomes. The current per capita funding in school does not provide an additional coefficient for minority schools or students. It is also unclear whether the new voucher financing system to be introduced in schools by 2025-2026 will have an additional coefficient. Inclusive education needs to be further addressed in by-laws and guidelines to start with practical implementation in full harmonization with the CRPD.

Key recommendations:

- Implement the educational rights of ethnic/language minorities, including the teaching of and through their mother tongue.
- Allow the study of the state language as part of the curriculum or through extracurricular activities. Preserve minority language schools in areas with significant minority populations.
- Include an additional coefficient for minority schools/students in the new voucher system to account for the increased investment required for multilingual education.
- Develop by-laws and guidelines to start practical implementation of the Law on Education, including developing appropriate curricula and training teachers.

Women

Achievements and promising practices:

In 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a National Strategy for Gender Equality (NGES) until 2030 and the NAP for 2022-2024. Amendments to strengthen protections against domestic, sexual and gender violence were signed by the President in August 2024. The National Development Strategy (2018-2040) and National Development Program (2026) prioritize gender equality, inclusive growth, and the elimination of domestic violence.

The regulatory framework supports gender-sensitive budgeting as per the Beijing+25 National Review. The State Program for Women's Entrepreneurship (2022-2026) and the State Program for Women's Leadership (until 2030) reinforce commitments to women's rights.

The Labor Code includes provisions for flexible work schedules and parental leave.

Collaborative efforts by women MPs, the CEC, civil society, and gender activists have increased women's political participation.

Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure impose stricter penalties for sexual offenses and eliminate provisions allowing case termination due to reconciliation of the parties.

Main issues/gaps:

Gender strategies are inconsistent and poorly coordinated at national and local levels. Harmful practices, such as child and forced marriages, and violence against women are prevalent, especially in rural areas with weak protection mechanisms.

Women face limited access to economic resources and bear the primary responsibility for unpaid caregiving, hindering their economic independence and career advancement. Numerous gender-blind laws in the economic and labor sectors fail to support women's empowerment, contributing to a high gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and discrimination, particularly in education and healthcare sectors, where women make up about three-quarters of the workforce.

The shrinking space weakens women-led organizations capacity to advocate for gender rights.

The Law on Courts of Elders adopted in 2024 allows traditional norms to be applied without requiring legal knowledge raises concerns.

Key recommendations:

- Strengthen the legal framework to ensure equal remuneration for work of equal value.
- Develop and implement care policies based on ILO's 5R Framework for Decent Care Work, which focuses on recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work, as well as rewarding and representing care workers.
- Ensure accountability for gender-based violence (GBV) and improve collection, sharing and disaggregation of data related to GBV.
- Ensure multi-sectoral, survivor-centered responses to GBV and increase the capacity of service providers, including those in the police, social services, medical and mental health support services and crisis centers to ensure better protection and redress for all survivors, including asylum-seeking and refugee women and girls, and those with disabilities.
- Strengthen the involvement of all relevant stakeholders including communities, men and boys and religious leaders in the prevention of violence against women.
- Align the Law on the Courts of Elders to international human rights standards and introduce mandatory legal training for the members of the courts, including on human rights, gender sensitivity, and dispute resolution.

Children

Achievements and promising practices:

On 1 June, the President announced the recruitment of 550 new child protection social workers to respond to a major shortage in trained social workers.

In September 2024, the Child Rights Commissioner coordinated the development of an action plan for implementing the recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of Child, issued in 2023.

The General Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration piloted the roll out of diversion of children away from the justice system.

Main issues/gaps:

There is a lack of well-trained and supervised child protection social workers at municipal level who can deal with statutory child protection and domestic violence cases. Those who perform social work functions often have no transport or way to access children and families in crisis or at risk of violence outside of cities. Their pay is low, they are under-valued as a profession and there is frequent turnover of staff.

There is a continued reliance on placing children in residential care because of poverty or disability. This is due the lack of services provided at home to address the complex needs of children and families in crisis. There is also a need to regularly monitor childcare institutions and ensure up-to-date records in compliance with the law.

There is a limited number of trained foster families who are regularly monitored by social workers.

Key recommendations:

- Develop and implement in-service training for social workers that includes specific modules on supporting children with disabilities, ensuring this training is part of continuing professional development, with credits for training leading to pay increases and promotions to more specialized or managerial positions. Upgrade university social work courses to incorporate inclusive practices for children with disabilities.
- Develop regulations on categories of social workers and their roles and responsibilities, including developing a supervision, mentoring, and certification frameworks.
- Ensure recruitment of the 550 para social workers and their inclusion in the civil service list.
- Increase the number of foster families and ensure regular follow up by social workers.
- Ensure all social workers have adequate transportation and communication to do their job.

Persons with disabilities

Achievements and promising practices:

Disability inclusion is prioritized in the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040 and the National Development Program until 2026. The State Programme on Accessible Country (2023-2030) was approved in February 2023 by the Cabinet of Ministers, following the 2019 ratification of the CRPD. It aims to guarantee physical and attitudinal accessibility, and access to services such as education, health care, and employment.

Main issues/gaps:

Public social protection spending is not adequate for persons with disabilities (PwDs). Principles of equality and non-discrimination are not fully integrated into national legislation and policies.

Official statistics indicate that around 3% of the population has disabilities, which likely underestimates the actual number. The country continues practices of institutionalization of PwDs.

There is limited funding for Organizations of People with Disabilities (OPDs), which are not financially independent.

There is a lack of awareness and understanding of the CRPD among government officials.

The Council for the Affairs of PwDs meets every three months but needs a dedicated secretariat and stable funding sources to become an effective institution for monitoring and co-ordination on disability.

Women and girls with disabilities face heightened vulnerability to abuse and there is a lack of specialized services and crisis centers. Law enforcement sometimes act in a discriminatory way when handling complaints, failing to provide protection.

Key recommendations:

- Address legislative gaps in consultation with OPDs by reviewing and amending the draft Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and health legislation in line with the CRPD
- Reform the disability assessment and service delivery systems to comply with CRPD provisions.
- Develop a deinstitutionalization strategy and create conditions for independent living.
- Produce and use better data on disability for informed planning and policymaking.
- Ensure meaningful participation of OPDs in planning and monitoring mechanisms, including under the State Program “Accessible Country”.
- Improve physical accessibility in public spaces and transportation aligned with international standards while expanding support services such as sign language interpretation, easy-to-read information and assistive technologies like hearing aids and mobility devices.
- Strengthen law enforcement standards and develop digital applications tailored to the needs of PwDs to enhance their safety and ensure equitable access to justice.
- Support crisis centers and shelters for girls and women with disabilities.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Achievements and promising practices:

Kyrgyzstan hosts 272 refugees and 2,482 asylum seekers. Of these, 151 refugees were recognized by the State under the 1951 Convention, while 121 were recognized under UNHCR’s mandate. Amendments to the Refugee Law in 2023 removed a provision denying asylum applications for those who had previously returned to their home countries, allowing for reapplications.

Kyrgyzstan announced pledges at the Global Refugee Forum.⁶

Main issues/gaps:

Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures are heavily influenced by national security concerns. Many asylum applications remain pending without processing, limiting access to social and legal rights.

⁶ In December 2021, the Kyrgyz Republic announced two pledges to the Global Compact on Refugees: (1) to grant refugees and asylum-seekers access to healthcare and social protection on par with citizens which was partially fulfilled and (2) to issue refugees and stateless persons with machine-readable travel documents. Moreover, in the framework of the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the government and academia announced 8 more pledges related to the improvement of RSD procedures, collection of statistics, better access to secondary education and free legal aid.

Afghan asylum seekers face particularly low recognition rates, despite the worsening human rights situation in Afghanistan. Between 2019 and 2023, recognition rates declined sharply, though a slight improvement was noted in early 2024.

There is restricted access to asylum procedures for those detained that has led to at least 4 cases of refoulement since 2020. In 2023, three asylum seekers who expressed their intention to seek asylum while in detention were not granted access to the RSD procedure. Their return to their country was a violation of the non-refoulement principle.

Additionally, 121 mandate refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, have remained in legal limbo for over a decade. They lack legal status, hindering access to employment, healthcare, social services and protection from detention and refoulement.

Asylum seekers, refugees, stateless people and people with irregular legal status are unable to enroll their children due to a lack of a personal identification number.

Asylum seekers do not have access to legal employment or income.

Key recommendations:

- Uphold the principle of non-refoulement by amending national laws and adopting protection mechanisms.
- Expedite the regularization of mandate refugees' legal status through naturalization or alternative avenues.
- Provide access to mandate refugees and asylum seekers to basic social rights, including education, healthcare, employment, social protection.

Stateless persons

Achievements and promising practices:

As of 2024, Kyrgyzstan hosts 60 stateless people and has done well in addressing statelessness. It launched a nationwide registration campaign under the global #IBelong initiative in 2014. Initially identifying 17,993 stateless persons, Kyrgyzstan helped them acquire or confirm nationality. The Law on Citizenship ensures that children born to stateless parents in Kyrgyzstan are recognized as citizens, preventing future statelessness.

In February 2024, amendments to the Law on State Guaranteed Legal Aid granted free legal assistance to asylum seekers and stateless individuals appealing negative decisions.

Main issues/gaps:

Despite progress, Kyrgyzstan has not yet acceded to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness, which are essential for ensuring the rights and protection of stateless people.

Kyrgyzstan lacks a formal Statelessness Determination Procedure, and current processes do not fully comply with international standards. Stateless individuals must apply for residence permits or citizenship through procedures that require complicated documentation. The absence of a proper procedure jeopardizes the rights and legal status of undocumented stateless people, making them vulnerable to mistreatment and refoulement.

Key recommendations:

- Develop a formal statelessness determination procedure, expedite naturalization procedures and improve the documentation of undocumented people.
- Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

5. ANNEX - List of submitting UN entities

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

International Labor Organization (ILO)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

World Health Organization (WHO)

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

World Food Programme (WFP)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)