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# Localization of SDGs in the regions of Abai, Zhetysu, Ulytau and Kyzylorda

**Result 3:** «Coordination of the Development Plan of the Kyzylorda region with the Sustainable Development Goals by conducting a Rapid Integrated Assessment»

**Result 4:** «Contributing to improvement of development in Abay, Zhetysu, Ulytau, Kyzylorda»

**Result 6:** «Analysis of the problems and opportunities of young people in Abay, Zhetysu, Ulytau, Kyzylorda regions»

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## DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

JSC	Joint-Stock Company
AIC	Agro-industrial complex
TSA	Targeted social assistance
ASPR RoK	Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan
RIA	Rapid Integrated Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
GRP	Gross regional product
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RTA	Road traffic accident
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MTR	Material and technical resources
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SME	Small and Medium Entrepreneurship
UGS	Ungraded schools
MFO	Microfinance organization
MDDIAI	Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry
UN	United Nations
LE	Life Expectancy
GD	Government Decree
TFR	Total fertility rate
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
FFSA	Fund of Financial Support for Agriculture
SMW	Solid Municipal Waste
RME	Republican Municipal Enterprise
REM	On the Right of economic management
GHG	Greenhouse gases
USA	United States of America
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
DED	Design and estimate documentation
RDP	Regional Development Plan

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## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Kazakhstan is increasingly involved in the processes of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2018, active measures have been taken to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into the state planning system and are reflected in strategic planning documents.

In the context of sustainable development, significant attention is paid to regional development, expressed through increasing the independence of administrative divisions and eliminating imbalances in their development. In 2022, a reform was carried out in line with the priorities of the new regional policy, which resulted in the establishment of three regions - Abay, Ulytau, and Zhetysu. The creation of regions will contribute to the development of their potential, and have a positive impact on industrialization and acceleration of urbanization processes.

To incorporate the factors contributing to the effective development of economic, social, and environmental development of Abay, Ulytau, Zhetysu, and Kyzylorda regions, a comprehensive capacity study was conducted. In the above regions, opportunities for implementation of SDG indicators into regional development plans were coordinated with local executive bodies; information work was carried out for local executive bodies, local experts, and non-governmental organizations to explain the introduction and implementation of SDG principles into regional development policies. In order to identify opportunities and potential for youth in the regions, a focus group discussion was held among this population.

The aim of the research is to develop and present recommendations that contribute to improving the development of Kyzylorda, Abay, Ulytau, and Zhetysu regions based on the analysis of the socio-economic development of the regions. This objective contributes to the implementation of Component 2: Localization of SDGs in Abay, Ulytau, Zhetysu, and Kyzylorda regions as part of the “Regional SDG Platform for Central Asian Countries” project.

The report consists of three chapters. The first chapter presents the compliance of the development plan of Kyzylorda region with the Sustainable Development Goals by conducting a rapid comprehensive assessment. The second chapter presents targeted tools for solving the most pressing problems and challenges identified in the studied areas. The third chapter presents an analysis of the problems and opportunities of youth in the regions of Abay, Zhetysu, Ulytau and Kyzylorda.

The report consists of three chapters. The first chapter reveals the analysis of the compliance of the development plan of the Kyzylorda region with the goals of sustainable development through a rapid comprehensive assessment. The second chapter presents targeted tools for solving the most pressing problems and challenges identified in the studied areas. The third chapter presents an analysis of the problems and opportunities of youth in the regions of Abay, Zhetysu, Ulytau and Kyzylorda.

In preparation for the research, the information resources included official statistics data, regional development plans, reports on the implementation of strategic and program documents, research results of international organizations, and material from seminars on the localization of SDGs in the regions.

## 1. COORDINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF THE KYZYLORDA REGION WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY CONDUCTING A RAPID INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

### 1.1 Identification of key SDG targets for the region using the Rapid Integrated Assessment methodology

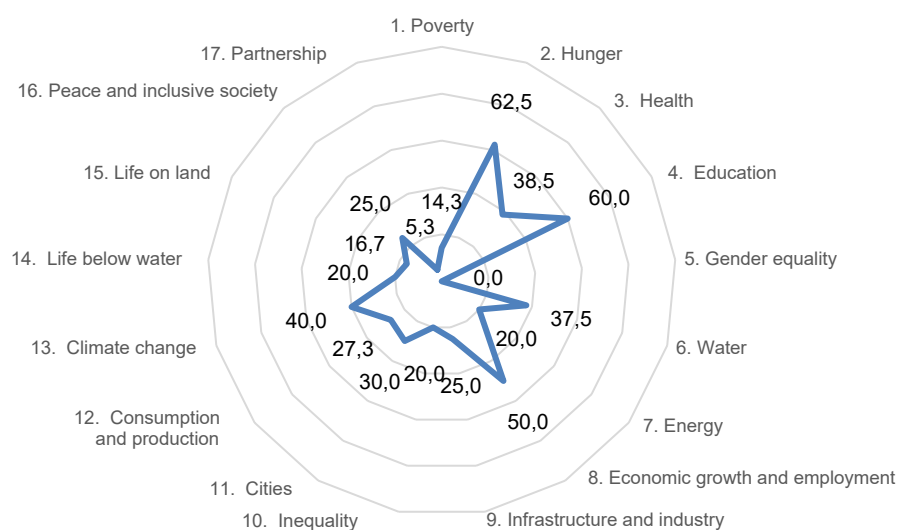
According to the amendments to the State Planning System in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2021, territorial development plans should be developed with the Sustainable Development Goals in mind. In order to assess the level of coverage of SDG tasks and indicators by the Development Program of Kyzylorda region, their assessment was carried out. The assessment of the integration of sustainable development goals and objectives in the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan was conducted using the Rapid Integrated Assessment (hereinafter - RIA), developed by the UN to assess the country's readiness to integrate and implement sustainable development goals.

The priorities for development of the regions under study were compared with the SDGs and their objectives as follows:

- ▶ Overlapping the indicators outlined in the Region Development Plan (hereinafter - the RDP) with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- ▶ distribution of the listed activities in the Region Development Plan to determine whether the SDG targets covered by the RDP are met.

When overlapping, those targets of the Sustainable Development Goals that most coincided with the priorities of the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan were selected. All objectives that fully or partially reflect the SDG targets have been taken into account.

Results of RIA of Kyzylorda region. According to the results of the RIA of the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan, the coverage of Sustainable Development Goals is 28.4% (Figure 1). The results of the analysis show that the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan covers all SDGs except SDG 5 "Gender Equality". At that, the coverage of actual national indicators of SDGs of Kyzylorda region is 14.9% (13 indicators out of 87).



**Figure 1.** Coverage of SDGs by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan under Rapid Integrated Assessment methodology

It should be noted that the RDP covered 2 national SDG indicators for monitoring and 1 indicator corresponding to the deferred national indicator (Annex 1, Table 1).

The highest coverage of SDG targets by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan is observed for SDG 2 "Eradicate Hunger" (62.5%). The main activities to ensure food security include:

- ▶ support of agricultural producers through financial institutions (preferential lending and microcrediting, leasing of machinery, equipment for processing of agricultural products);
- ▶ processing of pesticides, bioagents, biopreparations (entomophages) for 50 thousand ha per year in order to subsidize 50% of the costs of purchasing plant protection products for effective cultivation of arable land (cropland);

- ▶ increase of crop acreage of fodder, oilseeds, melons, vegetables and potatoes cultivated on a production basis;
- ▶ agricultural subsidies;
- ▶ intensification of the work of breeding farms;
- ▶ creating conditions for development of AIC production, ensuring food security and providing state support measures;
- ▶ implementation of export-oriented investment projects;
- ▶ opening of a fish processing plant (Karmaksha district);
- ▶ construction of a rice processing plant (Syrdarya district);
- ▶ production of fish flour from fish waste (Kazaly district);
- ▶ launching a poultry farm to raise broilers and process chicken meat to support production (Zhanakorgan district);
- ▶ expansion of a 1200-head cattle breeding complex and a milk processing plant, stage II (Kazaly district).

The analysis showed that in Kyzylorda region special attention is paid to labor market and skills development issues. Therefore, SDG 4 “Quality Education” (60%) and SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth” (50%) are ranked 2nd and 3rd in terms of SDG coverage. Activities to ensure quality education include the following:

- ▶ opening of 64 private kindergartens and construction of kindergartens at the expense of the state budget;
- ▶ major repairs and modernization of schools;
- ▶ construction and repair of cultural facilities;
- ▶ organization of information consultations on interested issues (consultations on entrepreneurship, provision of legal and psychological assistance). Organization of consultations in the areas of: 1) Jastarga - jumys; 2) Jastarga - bilim; 3) Jastarga - kenes; 4) Jastarga – qyzmet. Consulting service support by youth resource centers;
- ▶ professional development of teachers;
- ▶ promotion of youth participation in “Tauelsizdik urpaktary” project aimed at supporting talented youth up to 2025, propaganda among youth;
- ▶ phased equipping of educational organizations with “3D modeling” rooms;
- ▶ purchase of electronic textbooks;
- ▶ providing schools with high-speed Internet access.

SDG 8 “Economic growth and decent work” is covered by the following activities:

- ▶ implementation of targeted employment programmes for young people, including graduates of TVET;
- ▶ creation of new jobs through commissioning and expansion of production facilities, development of small and medium-sized businesses, and implementation of the “Contract of Generations”, “First Workplace”, and “Silver Age” projects;
- ▶ organization of youth internships, social jobs;
- ▶ subsidization of interest rates;
- ▶ tourism development;
- ▶ implementation of investment projects and attraction of investments in fixed capital;
- ▶ development of the Unified System of Labour Contract Accounting.

The analysis shows that between 30% and 50% compliance with SDG targets is observed for SDG 3 “Good health and well-being” (38.5%), SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation” (37.5%), SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities” (30%) and SDG 13 “Climate action” (40%). Activities aimed at the development of health care in the region include:

- ▶ providing obstetric organizations with a neonatologist;
- ▶ staffing and training of specialists in accordance with the operational plan to reduce maternal mortality;
- ▶ construction of 2 feldsher-midwife stations;
- ▶ construction of 46 new health care facilities and 28 medical outpatient clinics and 2 feldsher-midwifery stations;
- ▶ equipping with medical equipment.

SDG 6 covers measures on installation of house-wide heat meters, connection of settlements to the Aral-Syrdarya group water pipeline.

RDP covers SDG 11 with measures on modernization of reference and satellite villages, lending of regional budgets for construction and purchase of housing for specialists, on complex solution of environmental problems of Kyzylorda region.

According to the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan, activities under SDG 13 include the environmental action “Birge-taza Qazaqstan”, mass environmental actions under the title “Clean Nature. New Kazakhstan”

and “ECO MARAFON”, introduction of the “Ecology” course into the program of the 6th grade of secondary school.

The assessment showed that the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan covers 9 out of 17 SDGs with less than 30% coverage. The analysis shows that the coverage of SDG 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production” is 27.3%. New landfills and sorting complexes in 4 district centers, development of waste management program for Kyzylorda region till 2025 are envisaged under SDG 12.

Compliance of indicators of the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan with indicators of SDG 9 “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure” and SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” is 25%. However, the indicators of SDG 9 are not supported by concrete actions.

The Regional Development Plan covers SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” by measures to make proposals to improve criminal legislation to determine the expediency of making amendments and additions with regard to economic smuggling, tax evasion and other mandatory payments to the budget, integration with the information databases of the SRC of the Ministry of Finance of the RK to counter criminal cashing and issuance of fictitious invoices, analyzing measures to counter “one-day” firms and criminal encashment, etc.

20% of indicators of SDG 7 “Affordable Clean Energy”, SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities”, SDG 14 “Life below water” are covered by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan. Measures are envisaged for realization of indicators corresponding to SDG 7 on annual increase of electricity transit by 5% and reduction of normative losses by 0.05 - 0.1%, completion of work on development of power supply systems in Arai, Titov and Kyzylzharma microdistricts.

The Kyzylorda Region Development Plan for the implementation of SDG 10 contains measures to reduce the share of income of the poorest 40% of the population, provide targeted social assistance, and work with large companies to increase wages for low-paid workers.

SDG 14 includes the following activities:

- ▶ reservation and provision of land plots for the establishment and development of fish farms;
- ▶ creation of infrastructure, expansion and construction of fish farms;
- ▶ organization of fish farming training on the basis of existing universities and other educational institutions;
- ▶ phytoforest reclamation works in the dried Aral Sea bed;
- ▶ arrangement of work with nature users on release of young fish into water bodies of the region.

The lowest coverage is observed for SDG 15 “Life on land” (16.7%) SDG 1 “No Poverty” (14.3%), SDG 17 “Partnerships for the Goals” (5.3%).

SDG 15 includes such indicators as “Increase of the area of specially protected natural areas (nature conservation organizations)”, “Share of digitized land data”. At that, there are no measures that have a direct impact on the achievement of these indicators.

The Regional Development Plan covers SDG 1 “No Poverty” activities to establish fire stations in communities where there is no public fire department. It should be noted that not all indicators of SDG 1 are supported by actions.

The Kyzylorda Region Development Plan indicator “Proportion of medical organizations sharing data with the Ehealth core” covers SDG 17, but is not supported by specific activities.

Despite the fact that the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan contains indicators corresponding to the SDG targets, there are no specific measures to achieve them (Annex 1, Table 2). The share of indicators not covered by measures is 27% of the total number of RDP indicators.

Lack of activities in the implementation of the RDP makes it difficult to implement and monitor the SDGs at the local level. Summarized results of the comprehensive assessment on the coverage of SDGs by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan are presented in Table 1.

### **Conclusions**

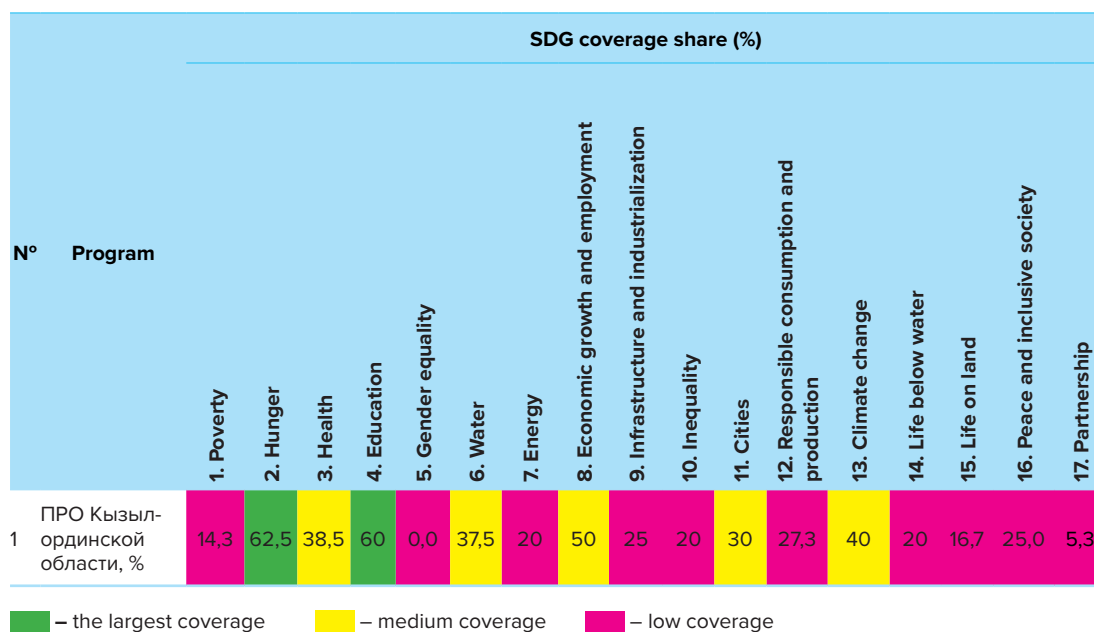
The results of the integrated assessment analysis show that the coverage of SDG objectives by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan amounted to 28.4%. This indicator is not high enough. In addition, there is no coverage of SDG 5 in the RDP. Accordingly, the low level of RDP coverage indicates low coverage of SDG objectives by the country’s National Development Plan, national projects and development plans of central government agencies.

The analysis of the conducted integrated assessment on the coverage of SDGs has shown that the key directions of regional development for the medium-term period depend on the needs and specifics of the region. The priority in Kyzylorda region is SDG 2 (62.5%) and SDG 4 (60%).

It should be noted that the Rapid Integrated Assessment only shows the coverage of SDG targets in the Regional Development Plan, i.e. how much the SDG targets are reflected in the State Planning System documents, not their level of achievement.

The analysis showed that 34 out of 133 indicators of the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan are not provided with measures, which reduces the effectiveness of strategic planning and the level of provision of the set goals with resources.

**Table1.** Results of the comprehensive assessment of the SDG coverage



Source: ERI Analysis

## 1.2 Recommendations for integrating nationalized SDG indicators into the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan

In Kyzylorda region there is a low level of expenditures among the population of the region. This indicator is noticeably lower than the national average. There is no noticeable difference in the monetary expenditures of the population between urban and rural areas in the region. In consumer expenditures it can be noted that the share of expenditures on food products and paid services in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, while the share of expenditures on non-food products is lower. However, the coverage of poverty reduction targets (SDG 1), as well as inequality reduction, is no more than 20%. In addition, some of the presented indicators on these issues are not supported by specific activities. In this regard, it is proposed to integrate the indicator “Share of population with incomes below the subsistence minimum” into the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan.

Kyzylorda RDP covered 62.5% of SDG 2 “Zero Hunger” targets. The RDP provides relevant indicators.

The RIA results showed that the coverage of the SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-being” targets is 38.5%. At the same time, there is an insufficient level of material and technical equipment of health care organizations in the region, insufficient level of material and technical equipment of health care organizations. In this regard, it is proposed to include the SDG indicators related to the provision of human resources and necessary medicines to the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan.

The Kyzylorda Region Development Plan covers 60% of SDG 4 “Quality Education”. Analysis of the socio-economic situation in the region has shown that there are problems of three-shift education. The relevant SDG targets and indicators should be included in the RDP.

The analysis showed that in Kyzylorda region there is a gender disproportion in the labour market. At that, there is a growing relevance of gender equality today. However, the assessment found that the RDP did not cover gender equality objectives. Also, SDG 5 targets were not reflected in the document. This may be due to the fact that the national indicators of SDG 5 are not categorized as relevant indicators. In this regard, indicators related to reducing the gender gap in the labour market and women’s unpaid work should be included in the RDP. This in turn will also broaden the scope of SDG 8 targets.

The analysis of the socio-economic situation in the region showed that the share of peasant and farmer farms on the contrary increased from 13.5% to 19.9% or by 6.4%. This fact indicates an increase in water consumption. In general, the region is water dependent. For the last consecutive years, the region has been experiencing low water levels. However, the coverage for SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation” is 37.5%, SDG 15 - 20%. At that, 3 indicators under SDG 6 are not supported by activities. In order to monitor and improve the situation on clean water availability, it is proposed to integrate the national indicator “Wastewater Treatment Coverage” into the RDP.

A problematic issue is the high wear and tear of power supply networks. However, for SDG 7, the coverage of SDG targets was only 20%. It is proposed to include an indicator “Share of enterprises implementing energy efficiency system” to the RDP.

In general, the “green economy” direction requires systemic measures to improve air quality, rational use of water resources, conservation of biodiversity and development of clean energy sources.

Coverage of SDG 8 targets “Decent Work and Economic Growth” amounted to 50%. It should be noted that in the region, compared to the national average, the average monthly nominal wage was lower in all spheres except public administration and defence. It is proposed to include the following national SDG indicators in the RDP: “Share of unproductively employed in total employment, percent”; “Average hourly earnings by gender, age, FEA and region, KZT”.

The top three industries with the largest contribution to the region’s GRP are Industry, Transportation and warehousing, and Trade. At the same time, there is a low level of coverage of SDG targets (SDG 9, SDG 12) related to the development of infrastructure and industry.

In addition, the region has a high potential for tourism development in the service sector, as the region has the potential for the development of beach, mountain, hiking, extreme (rafting), ecological tourism. It is therefore advisable to provide a national SDG indicator and related measures.

There is low coverage of SDG 9 “Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure” (25%). Taking into account that industry is one of the sectors that have the largest contribution to the region’s economy, it is proposed that the national SDG indicator “Growth of labor productivity in manufacturing, percentage to previous year” be included in the RDP.

SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities” covers 2 national SDG indicators. However, the RIA results showed a low level of coverage of inequality reduction targets (20%), i.e. only the first and seventh targets of SDG 10 are covered. At that, the low coverage of the Regional Development Program by the SDG objectives and indicators is due to the fact that most of the national SDG indicators are referred to the groups of indicators for monitoring and deferred indicators, as well as most of the objectives of this goal should be solved at the republican level. However, the following indicators should be provided to reduce inequality:

- ▶ “Household expenditure per capita”;
- ▶ “Household expenditure per capita among the 40% of population with the lowest income”;
- ▶ The share of GDP attributable to labor compensation.

The implementation of these indicators will also have an indirect impact on the implementation of SDG 8.

The development plan of Kyzylorda region covers 40% of SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Settlements”, the bulk of relevant national indicators are integrated into the document. The issue of a comprehensive solution to the provision of housing for certain categories of citizens remains relevant in the region; The indicator of housing affordability is provided. However, the envisaged activities are not sufficient to achieve the indicator. However, given the deterioration of critical infrastructure and problems of access to housing, it is necessary to intensify efforts to build new houses and update critical infrastructure. For correct monitoring of the situation, it is proposed to replace the “housing affordability” indicator with the national indicator of SDG “Housing provision per resident, sq.m.”

RDP (regional development program) of Kyzylorda region reflects 27.3% of objectives and 1 relevant national indicator of SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production”. The low level of coverage of SDG 12 objectives is due to the fact that the majority of SDG 12 indicators are deferred indicators.

40% of objectives of SDG 13 “Climate Change”, 20% of objectives of SDG 14 “Marine Ecosystems”, 16.7% of objectives of SDG 15 “Terrestrial Ecosystem” are reflected in the RDP, since the bulk of SDG indicators belong to groups of indicators for monitoring, deferred indicators and irrelevant indicators for our country.

However, it is proposed to include indicator “Proportion of biologically important mountain areas under protection, percentage” into the RDP in order to increase the coverage of objectives of SDG 15 and strengthen measures.

The Development plan of Kyzylorda region covers 25% of SDG 16 “Efficient institutions”. Considering the importance of implementing objectives of SDG 16 to ensure sustainability across all sectors, it is proposed to integrate the following national indicators of SDG 16 into the Regional Development Program:

- ▶ “Percentage of persons who, in the previous 12 months, had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official or from whom a bribe was demanded by that public official, percentage”;
- ▶ “Level of trust in law enforcement agencies, broken down by agency, percentage”;
- ▶ “Number of victims associated with human trafficking per 100,000 people.”

A very low level of coverage was identified (5.3%) for SDG 17 “Partnership”. National indicators are not integrated into the Regional Development Program for this goal. This is explained by the fact that the bulk of national indicators are classified as indicators for monitoring and deferred indicators. Furthermore, the bulk of the objectives of SDG 17 require solutions at the republican level.

Thus, based on the analysis carried out in this study and the results of the QCA (quick comprehensive assessment), it is recommended to include objectives in the Development Plan of Kyzylorda region that correspond to the following objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- 
- ▶ objective 1.2 “By 2030, reduce the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all of its aspects, as measured by national definitions, by at least half”;
  - ▶ objective 3.b “Support research and development of vaccines and medicines for the treatment of infectious and noninfectious diseases, which primarily affect developing countries; ensure the availability of affordable essential medicines and vaccines in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to fully benefit from the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in relation to flexibility for the purposes of protection of public health and, in particular, for ensuring access to medicines for everyone.”
  - ▶ objective 3.c “Significantly increase healthcare funding and recruitment, development, training and retention of health workers in developing countries, particularly in least developed countries and small island developing states”;
  - ▶ objective 4.a “Create and improve educational institutions that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive, and provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for everyone”;
  - ▶ objective 5.2 “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including human trafficking and sexual and other forms of exploitation”;
  - ▶ objective 6.2 “By 2030, achieve common and equitable access to adequate sanitation and hygiene and end open defecation, paying particular attention to the needs of women and girls and persons in vulnerable position”;
  - ▶ objective 7.3 “Double global energy efficiency improvement indicator by 2030”;
  - ▶ objective 7.b “By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technologies to provide modern and sustainable energy for everyone in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and landlocked developing countries, taking into account their respective support programmes”;
  - ▶ objective 8.3 “Facilitate for conduction of development-oriented policies that promote productive activity, creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formal recognition and development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services” ;
  - ▶ objective 8.5 “By 2030, ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”;
  - ▶ objective 9.2 “Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, substantially increase industrial employment and the share of industrial production in gross domestic product, in accordance with national conditions, and double the corresponding rates in least developed countries”;
  - ▶ objective 10.1 “By 2030, gradually achieve and maintain income growth for the 40 percent of population with the lowest income at the level above the national average”;
  - ▶ objective 10.4 “Adopt appropriate policies, especially fiscal policy, labor compensation and social protection policy, and gradually achieve higher level of equality”;
  - ▶ objective 11.3 “By 2030, expand inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for integrated and sustainable human settlements planning and management based on extensive participation in all countries”;
  - ▶ objective 15.4 “By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their ability to provide the benefits necessary for sustainable development”;
  - ▶ objective 16.2 “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children”;
  - ▶ objective 16.3 “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for everyone”;
  - ▶ objective 16.5 “Significantly reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms.”

The list of recommended indicators corresponding to the above objectives is presented in Table 1 (Annex 1).

## 2. CONTRIBUTING TO IMPROVEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN ABAI, ZHETYSU, ULYTAU, KYZYLORDA

### 2.1 Abai region

Based on the analysis of data from Abai region, existing problems and development opportunities may be grouped in the following areas:

#### Human resources

1. There is a negative population migration balance, in particular in rural areas (over the past three years, the population has decreased annually by about 3.0 thousand people);
2. High maternal mortality rate, as well as from neoplasms and circulatory disorders (an increase in the incidence of malignant neoplasms is by 4.9%, cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the circulatory system - by 1.5 times);

#### Infrastructure

3. There is a shortage of places in preschool and school institutions (the total coverage in preschool institutions is 24.6 thousand children, the shortage of places is 14.6 thousand places);
4. High deterioration of buildings of medical and educational institutions (lack of sports facilities and specialized classrooms);
5. High level of wear (more than 80%) of medical equipment;
6. Material and technical equipment of fire departments;

#### Industry and GRP

7. The share of industrial production is one of the lowest in the country (2.2% of the total industry in the country);
8. GRP per capita is also one of the lowest in the country.

In the region, it is quite possible to organize cooperation between several enterprises that can provide each other with raw materials for the production of goods. For example, breweries may use leftover bread as a malt substitute. Expired meat can be used to produce pet food, etc. In addition, it is important to create spaces for the sale of a wide range of locally produced, environmentally friendly products.

The results of the analysis of the current situation and the focus group showed that there is a potential for promoting projects in the field of agriculture in Abai region.

#### Project of canned food production

Abai region has quite a high potential for the development of livestock farming, especially dairy and meat production, which are of particular importance for the Government in the light of the relevance of food security in Kazakhstan. Thus, since Soviet times, Abai region has established itself as a region where meat products, supplied to all countries of the USSR, are produced and processed. Considering this circumstance, the construction of meat-packing shops in the region will give impetus to the development of livestock farming, feedlots, and the provision of raw materials to the leather and fur plant, which in turn will create a cycle of complete processing of livestock products and create waste-free production (development of closed-loop economy) Figure 2.

In this regard, it is promising to launch the production of canned meat, vegetables and fruits in order to increase the added value of agricultural goods, reduce food waste, create jobs in villages and improve the food security of the country in general.

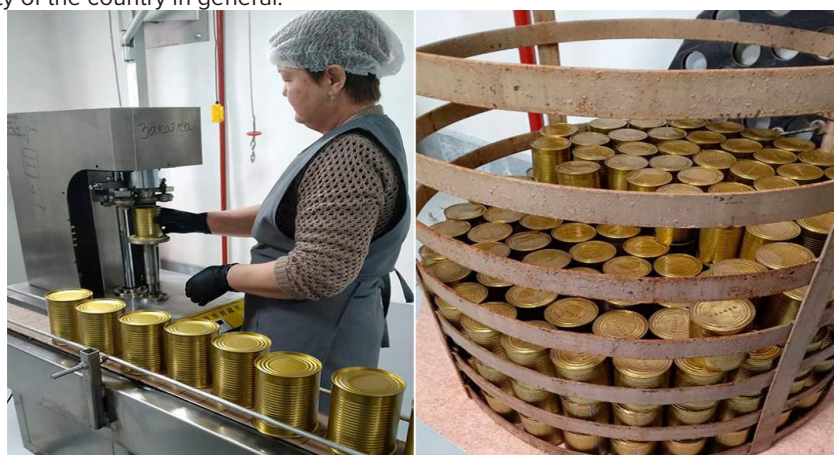


Figure 2. Production of canned meat in Zhanbay village, Atyrau region

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There are successful cases of canned food production in villages in the country. For example, the production of canned meat and sausage products of the Naryn brand was established in Zhanbay village, Atyrau region, where more than 10 types of products are produced [33]. In addition, the production of canned camel meat has been launched. The cost of canned camel meat is KZT 1000. Thanks to this project, permanent jobs have been created for 10 village residents, and the production technological cycle has also been improved.

## **2.2 Zhetisu region**

Based on the analysis of data from Zhetisu region, existing problems and development opportunities may be grouped in the following areas:

### **Human resources**

1. There is a negative population migration balance in rural area;
2. There is a shortage of personnel in medical institutions (187 medical practitioners);
3. The high mortality rate of the population, in particular from respiratory diseases, circulatory diseases and road accidents, especially in rural areas (in 2022, 125.8 per 100,000 people, nationwide - 66.8 per 100,000 people);
4. There is a gender gap in the labor market:
  - ▶ the share of women entrepreneurs is 35%;
  - ▶ the unemployment rate among women is higher by 10%;
  - ▶ the youth unemployment rate among young women is more than 5 times higher than among young men;
5. The proportion of the population with incomes below the subsistence level is the highest in the country (6.4%);
6. Low level of per capita income among the population (almost KZT 190 thousand).

### **Infrastructure**

7. High deterioration of buildings of medical institutions (more than 30%);
8. Poor length of roads of district importance, high wear and tear of rural roads and, accordingly, low volume of transported goods;
9. High wear and tear of the bus fleet (64%);
10. High wear and tear of critical infrastructure (wear of the power supply system – 73%, heat supply – 44%, water supply – 37.5% and sewerage system – 58%);
11. The process of housing construction is not progressing sufficiently in the region (only 0.5% of those on the waiting list received apartments);
12. There is an increase in cargo transportation volumes by 15% (in particular due to an increase in road transportation by 25.7%);

### **Industry and Agriculture**

13. The region's GRP per capita is one of the lowest in the country (KZT 730 thousand);
14. The share of industrial production is the lowest in the country (0.6% of total industry in the country);
15. The contribution of regional SMEs to the national total output is insignificant (1.4%);
16. The gross output of agricultural products is one of the lowest in the country, which indicates the low added value of goods and requires an increase in the production of processed products, such as canned meat, canned milk, confectionery, alcohol, fur and leather products, etc.;
17. Consumer spending on food is the highest in the country (94%);

Based on the analysis, the following promising areas of the regional development can be identified:

1. Industry (in particular the manufacturing industry in the field of food production, textiles and clothing);
2. Transport and logistics complex (taking into account the geographical location, the presence of border and road infrastructure);
3. Tourism (the region has the potential to develop beach, mountain, hiking, extreme and ecological tourism), while attention should be paid to the development of roadside services;
4. Agriculture (in particular crop production, where only 38% of the region's land fund is used);
5. Construction of new apartment buildings

It is proposed to focus on support of agriculture in order to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population (in particular rural residents).

## **Circular economy development project**

As it is known, restructuring food systems based on the principles of closed-loop economy may help solve the global problem of food waste by shortening food supply chains and increasing their efficiency in terms of resource use.

**For reference:** “Circular economy or closed-loop economy” is a system that allows the regeneration of resources, i.e. a system in which the used primary resources and waste, emissions and energy losses are minimized due to improved technological processes. In general, according to the World Bank estimates, the development potential of the “closed-loop economy” is capable of generating about USD 1 trillion in world GDP by 2025, and USD 4.5 trillion by 2030 [15].

Currently, a third of all food produced is spoiled or wasted, which is not contributive to food security and nutrition, and also increasing pressure on natural resources. The energy used to produce food that is spoiled or wasted accounts for approximately 10% of the world’s total energy consumption, and annual greenhouse gas emissions associated with food spoilage and waste amount to 3.5 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent [16].

Zhetisu region has a very high potential for the development of sustainable agriculture, which can make a significant contribution to the national economy and social stability.

Sustainable agriculture may become the flagship for the implementation of the principles of “closed-loop economy” in Zhetisu region. However, sustainable development of agriculture is impossible without a systematic approach to assessing the climate change impact, since the region has risks associated with climate change (in particular, melting glaciers and the risk of flooding settlements near large rivers).

In the framework of food security and import substitution concepts, Kazakhstan strives to fully provide the country with food, but the intention of agricultural sector for conventional expansion creates the risk of depletion of limited resources, in particular soil. One of the obstacles to the development of closed-loop agriculture is that currently the use of mineral fertilizers is subsidized by the state, while the use of alternative organic fertilizers is not supported in any way.

**For reference:** China provides state support for agriculture, introducing technologies to reduce food losses and waste, as well as recycling (development of circular economy principles within China’s circular economy targets for 2025, where by 2025 China should fully implement the circular method of production [17]. Thus, it is planned to increase resource productivity by 20%; reduce energy and water consumption per unit of GDP by 13.5% and 16%; achieve a utilization rate of 86% for crop stalks, 60% for bulk solid waste; and increase resource recycling to USD 773 billion)

By implementing a circular economy strategy in the Zhetisu region, organic waste generated by agriculture and the food industry in food production and processing, as well as by households – can be collected and used for soil remediation (waste composting), production of new food products (e.g. canned goods, biofuels) or alternative packaging materials (e.g. recycled paper or plastic products). Thus, the use of available organic resources, including food waste, will allow the Zhetisu region to produce the products that are currently imported into the region.

The effectiveness of implementing circular economy tools is that the region will be able to compete with suppliers from other regions on these products due to simpler logistics. The circular economy tool allows for active adoption of technological solutions such as hydroponics, smart greenhouses, carbon farming, drip irrigation, and others. Furthermore, the closed-loop economy allows limited use of plastic and other chemical materials (e.g., cellophane packaging materials).

### **Successful cases**

There are already successful cases of implementing circular economy methods near the Zhetisu region:

#### **Amiran LLP <sup>1</sup> (Shymbulak village, Almaty region)**

Amiran LLP dairy products are created according to the principles of sustainable agriculture, where a fully organic value chain of goods without preservatives has been created. Amiran LLP was established through the efforts of the National Academy of Nutrition, where 8.6 million liters of organic dairy products are produced on 1870 hectares of land.

#### **Arba Wine Organic wine <sup>2</sup> (Almaty)**

The company owns a vineyard (200 hectares) near Almaty, where fully organic wine is produced. To demonstrate its commitment to organic production, the company conducts “agritours” to its vineyards and wineries.

1 <https://amiran.kz/p/o-nas/>

2 <https://arbawine.com/ru>

### **White Cap LLP<sup>3</sup> (Kok-Ozek village, Almaty region)**

Production of domestic, eco-friendly food, without GMOs and chemistry (mushroom cultivation on organic residues). Mushrooms are usually imported into the country from outside, but a number of local companies are already taking active steps to create their own production to replace expensive imports. So, White Cap LLP created its own composting plant for the purpose of growing mushrooms (capacity of 500 tons per year). White Cap LLP produce organic mushrooms through the following phases:

1) Production of mushroom compost. Throughout this phase of production, based on constant laboratory research, characteristics, and physical indicators of all raw materials used, the formula and recipe of future mushroom compost is calculated on a daily basis.

2) Pasteurization (disinfection) of the mushroom compost. Throughout this stage of production, all pathogenic flora is eliminated, insects and their larvae are destroyed and optimal conditions are created for the selectivity of the mushroom compost on which the mushrooms will grow.

3) Sowing of inoculum (mushroom mycelium - seeds) into mushroom compost after pasteurization for further incubation.

4) Mushroom cultivation, by placing germinated mushroom compost (phase 3) on racks.

### **Flyworx LLP<sup>4</sup> (Almaty)**

The company manufactures drones for farmland planning and quality assessment, which enables the implementation of precision agriculture practices where substances to improve soil bonitet, fertilizer and control weeds and insect pests are applied only as needed. This reduces costs and also results in higher yields and preservation of soil productivity.

### **KazHemp Company's hemp paper<sup>5</sup> (Almaty region)**

This pilot initiative in Almaty region is supported by the government to produce hemp fiber for subsequent use in domestic paper production. Currently producing 6,000 tons of fibers and plans to start textile production. Hemp fiber can also be used as an alternative building material (as insulation).

### **Possible areas of circular economy development in the Zhetisu region. Composting of organic / food waste**

According to the analysis, there is a potential for utilization of organic/food residues in the Zhetisu region, as a large number of plants and animals are cultivated in the region, the residues of which can potentially be used for the production of biogas, biofertilizers and/or soil improvers. For example, a balanced combination of different types of organic residues can yield an enriching compost specifically designed for the soils of the Zhetisu region.

The starting materials for composting are animal manure, poultry manure, residues, and waste from agricultural and food production. In addition, analysis of data from the Zhetisu region shows that there is severe deterioration of critical infrastructure in the region, in particular, there may be energy shortages. Therefore, organic waste can also be used to develop biogas plants to generate the missing energy.

In general, increasing soil organic content can prevent desertification and salinization, reduce water requirements and restore the natural concentration of soil organic carbon. Therefore, it is important that the use of organic fertilizers receive similar support as synthetic fertilizers (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Organic waste composting technology developed by the German company UTV AG<sup>6</sup>**

3 <https://whitecap.kz/about-company>

4 <https://and.kz/dumai-inache-3>

5 <https://kazhemp.kz/>

6 <https://www.kompostanlagen.de/ru/>

### **Aquaponics**

Hydroponics is a combination of fish culture and plant cultivation techniques in water (in hydroponic systems). The two systems are balanced so that materials from the fish can be used to fertilize the plants. The water in such a system can be recirculated, which is already common practice in many hydroponic greenhouses where plants grow in nutrient-enriched water rather than in soil (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Use of aquaponics in Tulkubas district, Turkestan region

### **Utilizing abandoned houses to develop vertical farms**

An example of vertical farm development is Peer Foods <sup>7</sup>, located in an industrial area in southeast Chicago, where fresh herbs and mushrooms are grown in a former factory. Also, the Japanese company Mirai corp <sup>8</sup> daily produces 10,000 bunches of lettuce in a vertical farm, while saving 95% water, 45% electricity, and recycling 80% of waste compared to soil (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Vertical farms in the USA and Japan

## **2.3 Ulytau region**

Based on the analysis of data from Ulytau region, existing problems and development opportunities may be grouped in the following areas:

### **Human resources**

1. There is a negative population migration balance;
2. There is a shortage of personnel in secondary schools;
  - ▶ The shortage of staff in schools was 236 people.;
  - ▶ There are 25.7 doctors per 10,000 people in medical institutions (the national average in 2021 is 40.9 doctors);
  - ▶ 69.5% of respondents noted a shortage of staff in kindergartens and medical institutions.;

7 <https://www.peerfoods.com/>

8 <https://www.worldrecordacademy.org/farming/largest-indoor-farm-shigeharu-shimamura-s-indoor-farm-sets-world-record-219490>

3. High mortality rate, including due to homicides;
4. Expansion of gambling and betting services;
5. The gender gap in unemployment rates among women and youth is one of the highest in the country. The proportion of NEET youth is high in the country;
6. High proportion of urban residents (79%);

#### **Infrastructure**

7. There is a shortage of kindergartens and modern medical institutions;
8. Problems with drinking water and air quality;
9. Poor length of roads of regional and district importance, high wear and tear of roads and, accordingly, low volume of transported goods;
10. Population and Internet subscriber densities, as well as the workforce, are the lowest in the country;

#### **Industry and Agriculture**

11. Weak diversification of the economy, which is tied to a large metallurgical enterprise;
12. The gross output of agricultural products is one of the lowest in the country;
13. An increase in the number of SMEs by 13% compared to last year (at the same time, the share of SMEs in the GRP structure remains lower than in other regions);

#### **Industry and Agriculture**

14. Consumer spending on food is the lowest in the country (79%);
15. High level of per capita income among the population (almost KZT 400 thousand).
16. Share of population with substandard income is the lowest in the country:
  - ▶ unemployment rate: men – 2.1%, women – 6.4%;
  - ▶ youth unemployment rate: men – 0.3%, women – 9.6%

The results of the analysis of the current situation and the focus group showed that there is a potential for promoting projects in the social field and services in Ulytau region.

### **Mass sport development project**

There is a gender gap in unemployment rates among women and youth in Ulytau region. Moreover, the proportion of NEET youth is high in the country. Gambling and betting services are extending in the region, which may indicate a high interest of local residents in sports. In addition, 79% of the population live in cities (the most urbanized region). Taking into account the existing problems and opportunities, it is proposed that the region pay attention to the development of mass sports among residents (especially among children and adolescents). Thus, there are no local football teams or hockey clubs in the region.

The Head of State also drew attention to this problem, who, during a working visit to the Ulytau region, noted the need to build and support multifunctional sports complexes [19].

In 2022, the Kazakhmys Corporation confirmed its intention to build a multifunctional sports complex with a swimming pool, Children's and Youth Sports Academy "Namys", which will allow local children to actively engage in sports [20]. As part of corporate social responsibility, the Kazakhmys Corporation allocated KZT 25.4 billion in 2022 for the development of the region.

Taking into account the demand for sports facilities, it is proposed, together with the Kazakhmys Corporation, to develop an action plan for the development of mass sports, taking into account gender equality and accessibility for all categories of citizens.

It is assumed that the joint action plan should be aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle, developing mass sports, increasing the number of teenagers involved in sports sections (those in difficult situations, children with disabilities, children of orphanages, boarding schools, teenagers from disadvantaged families), to systematic physical education and sports, participation in the cultural life of the region. The development of mass sports is proposed to be carried out through the following measures:

1. Popularization of physical culture and sports among young people.
2. Creating conditions to increase the availability of physical education and sports for young people, including teenagers (those in difficult situations, children with disabilities, children from orphanages, boarding schools, teenagers from disadvantaged families).
3. Increase in the number of teenagers and young people involved in sports sections in the region.
4. Involving young people in regular sports, participation in sports and cultural events.

### **Project for the development of ecological, geological, historical tourism**

#### **Ecological tourism**

Ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry, accounting for 25% of world tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization, the number of ecotourists increases annually by 20% [21].

**For reference:** The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that preserves the environment, supports the well-being of the local population and includes excursion, outreach and educational activities.

According to the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the total area of the national specially protected natural areas (SPNA) is 26 million hectares, that is, about 0.26 million km<sup>2</sup>, which is tens of times more than in a number of countries with well-developed ecotourism [22]. However, the number of tourists is only 2 million people per year. Meanwhile, this figure reaches 200 million people a year in the USA, the world leader in the development of ecotourism, and 60 million people - in Australia. The countries achieved such results due to a well-established system of tourism management in national parks and natural areas, regulated by law.

Ulytau region has enormous potential for the development of ecotourism with its abundance of untouched and pristine natural sites. The national historical, cultural and natural reserve-museum "Ulytau" was established in 1990; there are 337 officially registered monuments of different times in the territory of the reserve, 282 of them are included in the historical and cultural map [23]. Thus, Ulytau region in Kazakhstan is positioned as a center of sacred tourism and the Great Steppe. The terrain of Ulytau region embodies various facets of natural and cultural landscapes, sacred places, and it is a treasure trove of ethnographic and anthropological research and cultural practices (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Akzhar, Ulytau region

## Geological and historical tourism

According to experts, you can "cross" several geological periods [24] traveling through Kazakhstan from north to south, or from east to west, which makes it attractive for scientists and tourists studying geology. Among all the regions of the country, Ulytau region is historically very rich in mineral resources. Therefore, it is promising to develop geological tourism in the region.

According to the Bureau of National Statistics, Ulytau region has the lowest number of hotel rooms, which is one of the significant limitations for the development of tourism. Thus, the region has only 307 hotel rooms at its disposal, while the national average is 4221 rooms [25].

In this regard, it is proposed to re-equip the houses of local residents into guest rooms. There is successful experience in refit of local residents' houses into guest rooms in almost all regions, but it is especially developed in Almaty region. For example, conditions for tourists have been created in Saty village near Lake Kolsay. Thus, the villagers were asked to provide a room for refit and creation of appropriate conditions for a comfortable stay for tourists [26] (Figure 7).

<p><b>Гостевой дом "У Танирхана"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-х комнатный и 2-х комнаты с раздельными кроватями</li> <li>• <b>Душ/туалет:</b> общий душ/туалет</li> <li>• <b>Формат размещения:</b> Отдельная комната/номер</li> <li>• <b>Вместимость:</b> группа до 12 человек</li> <li>• <b>Питание:</b> завтрак, обед и ужин</li> <li>• <b>Wi-Fi</b></li> </ul> <p>от 8 000 тенге / с человека тт.</p> <p>+7 771 412 68 81 +7 727 77 27 730</p>	<p><b>Гостевой дом ALBAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-х комнатный и 2-х комнаты/номера с раздельными кроватями</li> <li>• Есть <b>семейные номера</b>, это очень удобно</li> <li>• <b>Душ/туалет:</b> душ/туалет в номере</li> <li>• <b>Формат размещения:</b> Отдельная комната/номер</li> <li>• <b>Вместимость:</b> 12 номеров/ группа до 30 человек</li> <li>• <b>Питание:</b> завтрак, обед и ужин</li> <li>• <b>Wi-Fi</b></li> </ul> <p>от 12 000 тенге/ с человека тт.</p> <p>+7 777 022 27 21</p>	<p><b>Гостевой дом в Саты</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-х комнатный и 2-х комнаты с раздельными кроватями</li> <li>• Есть <b>семейные номера</b>, это очень удобно</li> <li>• <b>Душ/туалет:</b> душ/туалет в номере</li> <li>• <b>Формат размещения:</b> Отдельная комната/номер</li> <li>• <b>Вместимость:</b> группа до 10 человек</li> <li>• <b>Питание:</b> завтрак, обед и ужин</li> <li>• <b>Wi-Fi</b></li> </ul> <p>от 12 000тт тт.</p> <p>+7 777 128 54 07</p>

Figure 7. Examples of guest houses in Saty village of Almaty region

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## 2.4 Kyzylorda region

Based on the analysis of the data of Kyzylorda region, it is possible to group the existing problems and development opportunities in the following areas:

### **Human resources**

1. There is a negative migration balance and outflow of residents to large settlements;
2. Shortage of qualified medical personnel;
3. Infant mortality in urban areas is significantly higher than in rural areas (in 2021 in the city – 15.3 cases per 1000 births, in rural areas – 4.7).

### **Infrastructure**

4. Outdated sewage treatment plants or their absence;
5. The number of three-shift schools increases annually (there were no such schools in 2017 and 2018, and in 2021 their number amounted to 9 units);
6. The indicator of housing provision per resident remains one of the lowest in the country (in 2022 in Kyzylorda region - 20.8 sq.m, in the country – 23.4 sq. m);
7. The majority of emergency buildings of preschool organizations in the country (9 buildings out of 11 emergency-state buildings in 2021);
8. High depreciation of power supply networks (68% in 2021);
9. Low proportion of highways of regional and district significance in good and satisfactory condition (75% in 2021).

### **Industry and GRP**

10. Depletion of the raw material base and low rate of development of the manufacturing sector
11. Low productivity of livestock and poultry due to a weak feed base and a lack of complete feed.

The results of the analysis of the current situation and the focus group showed that there is a need for promoting projects in the environmental field in Kyzylorda region.

It is proposed to focus on environmental compensation for tree planting in the region in order to solve the problems of the gender gap among the unemployed, as well as to solve significant environmental issues.

### **Project for payment of environmental compensation for tree planting**

Supporting and empowering local producers and other existing social groups is critical to the transformation needed to rebuild and develop a resilient economy in Kyzylorda region. One of the forms of support is the possibility of cooperation between government agencies and international organizations to solve not only socio-economic but also environmental problems in the region.

It is well known that starting from 2020 Kazakhstan is implementing an ambitious project to plant 2 billion trees. This project will assist regions in flood control, soil degradation and biodiversity development.

In order to carry out the planting of 2 billion trees in the forest fund, for all regions and subordinate institutions of the Forestry and Wildlife Committee approved Comprehensive Plans to increase the area of forest reproduction and afforestation for 2021-2025. Thus, in 2021, 138.0 million trees will be planted on the territory of 66.0 thousand hectares. In 2022, according to the Comprehensive Plan, 278,778.5 million trees were planted on an area of 111,499.4 hectares on the territory of the state forest fund [27].

In this case, most of the tree planting is directed to Kyzylorda region, so the forest will be planted on an area of more than 3 million hectares.

In this regard, “Roadmap for 2021 on the execution of the Plan-schedule on the realization of works on creation of saxaul plantations on the dried bed of the Aral Sea” was approved in Kyzylorda region. Between 2021 and 2030, 1.1 million hectares of saxaul are planned for planting [28].

In 2021, 100,000 hectares of saxaul were planted, and in 2022-2025, it is planned to plant 250,000 hectares each year. Moreover, in order to carry out sowing of saxaul on the dried bed of the Aral Sea, 500 thousand hectares of land from the dried bed were transferred to the forest fund lands of the Aral Forestry Institution; to date, survey, soil research and design works are underway on 53 thousand hectares [29] (Figure 8).

It is well known that the country’s forest cover does not exceed 5% of the territory, which, according to UN standards, is 2.5 times lower than the required cover for biodiversity development.

However, the project may face problems in terms of tree survival, as in the first years the trees require careful care, constant watering and vitamins. It is important for Kyzylorda region to establish work on growing trees, and tree care, in turn, this work will strengthen the fight against unemployment in the region, which is comparatively higher than in other regions (4.9%).

In this way, unemployed residents of the region can grow tree seedlings in their backyards using advanced methods and then sell them to the Forestry Department of the region or plant and care for them themselves.



**Figure 8. Saxaul planting process in Kyzylorda region**

For a successful tree planting project, it is important to work in 4 main directions:

1. planting of new trees and restoration of existing forests;
2. ensuring a high level of transparency in project implementation;
3. improving the situation of local residents (combating unemployment and poverty);
4. combating illegal deforestation.

**For reference: China’s experience in the implementation of the “Grain for Green” project**

Implemented since 1999, the Grain-for-Green (GFG) program is China’s largest ecological restoration program, designed to convert unproductive land and steep slopes into forests and grasslands to prevent soil erosion and desertification. The GFG has restored 34.3 million hectares of degraded land and farmland and achieved significant environmental improvements, increased farmers’ incomes and reduced poverty.

The GFG project is the largest poverty alleviation program. Rural households that convert their agricultural land to forests can receive direct subsidies in grain and cash (especially poor rural households from areas with deteriorating ecology).

Among the 180 GFG pilot counties nationwide in 2000, 104 counties were poor by the national standard, representing 57.8 percent of the total population. For example, among the 333,000 villagers in Minhe County, Qinghai Province, about 100,000 lived in absolute poverty with an annual income of less than 625 yuan (KZT 40,625). Poverty in Minhe County was mainly caused by environmental degradation, resulting in several consecutive years of no harvest. Therefore, the GFG project helped to convert 8,000 hectares of arable land into forests, and cash subsidies, alleviated rural poverty.

Since the inception of the GFG project, government agencies at all levels have encouraged the development of farmland infrastructure, promotion of organic food production, forest ecotourism and green industry. Thus, an economy with specific characteristics was created, which also facilitated the shift from agricultural production to tree crops, livestock and other secondary industries.

For example, Longhui County, Hunan Province, has adopted a model of combining forestry with the cultivation of medicinal plants with a yield of 60000 yuan (KZT 4 million) per hectare. Medicinal plants totaling 1,200 hectares have been planted in the county, generating an income of 72 million yuan (KZT 4.7 billion) for local farmers.

Nationwide, 41 million households participated in the program; 158 million farmers directly benefited. The GFG has helped build local social capital and endogenous growth and has empowered participating households through specific social protection elements such as grain subsidies, cash grants, and technical assistance. More than 90% of participating households are covered by basic health insurance and pensions. The program has established a registration system that confirms ownership and rights of use of converted land and established forests, allowing households to generate income from tree planting. In addition, in order to reduce poverty and organize afforestation, GFG, together with other environmental restoration programs, has promoted the establishment of 21,000 cooperatives that help improve the livelihoods of 1.2 million poor people.

China has transferred more than USD 235 billion to the GFG project, and more than USD 30 billion of funds are provided annually by the state as environmental compensation. Through the ecological compensation program, China’s national ecosystems assessment found that [30]:

- ▶ carbon sequestration increased by 23.4%;
- ▶ soil quality retention increased by 13.1%;
- ▶ flood mitigation decreased by 12.7%;
- ▶ sandstorms prevention decreased by 3.6%;

- 
- ▶ *water conservation increased by 27.1%;*
  - ▶ *biodiversity conservation increased by 21.1%;*
  - ▶ *atmospheric air purification increased by 18.4%;*
  - ▶ *accumulation of nutrients in soil increased by 1.6% [31].*

*Overall, the GFG program has also helped many of the 41 million farm households (158 million farmers), escape poverty, and increased China's forest cover to 22% of the country's total land area [32]. More than 90% of the surveyed farm households claim that the environmental conditions around the village have improved since the implementation of the GFG project.*

### 3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ABAY, ZHETYSU, ULYTAU, KYZYLORDA REGIONS

#### 3.1 Analysis of studies, national reports on youth policy in Kazakhstan and identification of main trends and problems of youth

Analysis of the results of research on youth issues allowed to draw the following conclusions.

1. Youth is the most moving and active community in society. Every year it changes, develops and introduces new trends in all spheres of life. Modern youth strives for self-expression, freedom and individuality.<sup>9</sup>
2. According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On State Youth Policy” dated February 9, 2015 No. 285-V, as amended and supplemented on December 26, 2022, the youth includes citizens of age from 14 to 35. According to the BNS ASPR RK, currently, there are 5.7 million young people in the country, that is, about 30% of the population of Kazakhstan is represented by the youth.
3. Kazakhstan is facing serious demographic changes in the coming years – the active age period will include a large generation of the 2000s, which will join the ranks of young people. In the period from 2003-2008, there was a high rate of birth rate growth – an average of 8% per year, which is already reflected in the current structure of the young population. Thus, the number of 14-19-year-olds increased by 6.2% on average in 2019-2023, while the young cohorts aged 20-24 and 25-28 years decreased by an average of 2% and 4.5%, respectively.<sup>10</sup>
4. By 2030, 1.3 billion young people will live in the world. This shows the important role that youth will play, especially in developing countries, where 90% of the world’s total youth population lives. Youth-related issues are directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.<sup>11</sup>
5. Youth policy is one of the areas that are constantly undergoing changes, and Governments of all countries are forced to regularly review the relevant norms of national legislation.
6. An important aspect of working with young people is the development of standards that are necessary not only for the recognition and approval of the profession of a specialist for work with the youth, but also for improving the quality of work with young people. The development of standards is an important tool for improving the quality of work with young people, as it allows:
  - ▶ to ensure recognition of the professional status of youth workers and to promote the importance of youth work in the eyes of society;
  - ▶ to change the attitude towards working with young people, which today is perceived as a kind of transitional stage to “real” work;
  - ▶ to avoid manipulation and formalism;
  - ▶ to guarantee the provision of a minimum set of services by youth centers;
  - ▶ to perform a personal and social performance assessment.<sup>12</sup>
7. One of the main trends among young people is the active use of modern technologies. Due to the development of the Internet and social networks, young people are always in touch and communicate with friends around the world. They exchange opinions, ideas and findings, create their own online communities and projects.
8. Another important trend among young people is the fascination with environmental issues. They strive to preserve nature, take care of the environment and actively promote an environmentally friendly lifestyle. In the future, environmental issues are of great importance to young people, so there are more and more young people who choose environmentally friendly and sustainable fashion. They prefer to wear clothes made from natural materials such as organic cotton or linen fabric. In addition, young people actively support fashion brands engaged in the recycling and reuse of materials in order to reduce the consumption of new resources.<sup>13</sup>
9. Modern youth is inseparable from digital technologies. Digital technologies have a huge impact on the study of new trends, communication with peers, education and even on the style of clothing. Social networks and mobile applications play a key role in shaping the image of a modern young person.
10. The Central Asian States are developing countries with a high proportion of young people in the total population, which makes these countries “young”. As of 2020, the total population of the four Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) is 68.46 million people, of which the youth is 16.55 million or 24.1%. This shows the importance of developing and

9 Source: <https://investim.guru/news/sovremennye-tendentsii-u-molodezhi-vzglyad-v-budushee>

10 Qazaqstan: towards a sustainable development model. View of young experts. Page 206

11 The youth of Central Asia. Challenges to peacebuilding. Comprehensive Research Review // Published in 2022 The United Nations on Education, Science and Culture.

12 Yelena Ignatovich, Max Fras and Tanya Basarab. Youth work in Eastern Europe: reality, prospects and successful initiatives // The Council of Europe and the European Commission, October 2020

13 Source: <https://investim.guru/news/sovremennye-tendentsii-u-molodezhi-vzglyad-v-budushee>

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implementing special strategies and measures for youth development. For Central Asia, the peace and peacebuilding agenda is, first of all, the development agenda, and vice versa, since both of them are interconnected with each other, as well as with youth issues.

11. The following trends are observed in Kazakhstan.<sup>14</sup>

- ▶ The focus of state youth policy should be on adolescents aged 14-18 with reduced educational opportunities and psychological difficulties. The lack of accessible social elevators in Kazakhstan creates a vicious circle – social status is transferred from parents to children, which creates a “vulnerability trap”.
- ▶ The increase in the young population is more intense in the southern and western regions of the country. Kazakhstan is characterized by an uneven distribution of youth in the country, with the highest growth rates in the number of young people living in the southern and western regions. In addition, the contribution to the growth of the young population is higher in rural areas. There is also a gender imbalance in the number of young cohorts.
- ▶ The contribution to the growth of the young population is higher in rural areas. Thus, the total birth rate (the number of children per 1 woman) was 3.59 in 2022, and 2.76 in the city. At the same time, the highest birth rate in rural areas was recorded in Turkestan region (4.44) and Mangystau region (4.34), the lowest rate is in North Kazakhstan region (2.02) and Kostanay region (2.03).
- ▶ Men predominate among the younger segments of the population. In 2023, at the age of 20-24, the number of men exceeded the number of women (573 thousand men and 550 thousand women). This gap persists in the age categories from 25-28 years (512 thousand men and 495 thousand women). The difference in the younger generation is also high - the number of young girls aged 14 to 19 is 45.4 thousand less than young men (914 thousand men and 868 thousand women).
- ▶ Special attention should be paid to young girls living in the southern and western regions, in areas with conservative views on gender roles. Early marriages and early pregnancies lead to consequences such as lack of education, job opportunities in the profession, financial dependence on a spouse and other relatives, and an increased risk of domestic violence.

As global practice shows, a large number of young people in the population structure can become both a destabilizing factor and opens up opportunities for economic growth of the country.

Among the potential risks due to the social and economic insecure conditions of young people:

1. Annual losses in GDP due to the non-involvement of some young people in productive work, their reduced purchasing power, as well as the lack of tax revenues due to lack of employment or informal employment.
2. Lost benefits due to incomplete realization of the innovative and creative potential of young people. Young people are more receptive to new technologies, they adapt to changes more quickly and become the engines of these changes themselves. Most of the technological innovations and discoveries in recent decades have been carried out by young people, and very often during their student years. By not involving this age group in the labor market, the state may lose the potential to create large corporations and startups in the future.
3. The high burden on the budget due to social obligations related not only to social benefits for unemployment, but also to the costs of supporting socially vulnerable families.

But a large number of young people can also become an opportunity when applying effective measures for their development. For example, the “demographic dividend” has become one of the most significant factors that have contributed to economic growth in the countries of East Asia. The most significant demographic dividend was received by the South Korea in 1965-2000.

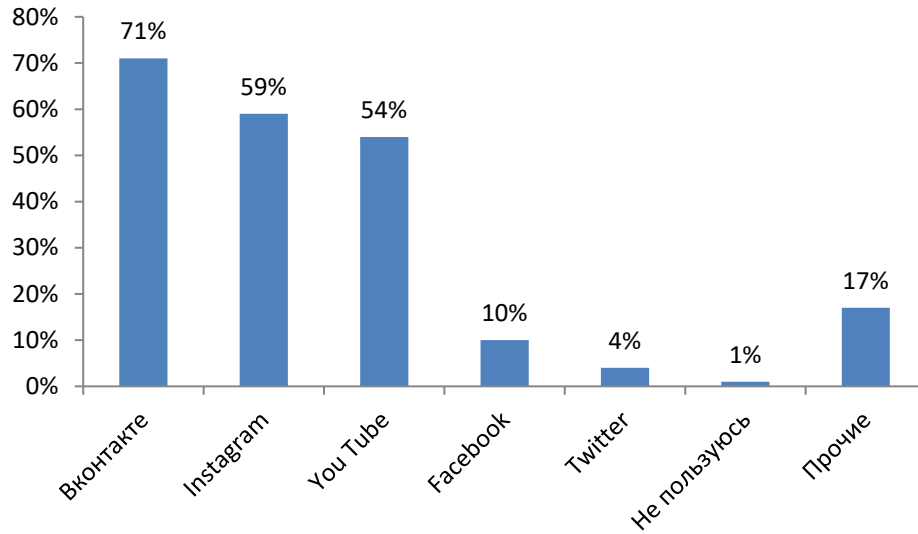
According to the study by the Brif research group, modern young people are characterized by total digitalization and the growing popularity of social networks. Modern youth are gradually moving away from traditional methods of communication and are increasingly choosing creative professions by expressing themselves on social networks. The new generation is a generation of absolute visuals who see the world in pictures. We can especially note the “me me me” generation, where everyone wants to show themselves. The media play one of the key components in the formation of the cultural and value views of young people. Young people have begun to express themselves openly and boldly, which is facilitated by an active position on social networks. Today, almost every young person wants to be seen. The most popular social networks among young people in Kazakhstan include VK, Instagram, and Youtube (Figure 9).

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**Figure 9.** The most popular social networks among young people in Kazakhstan

Source: Brif research group

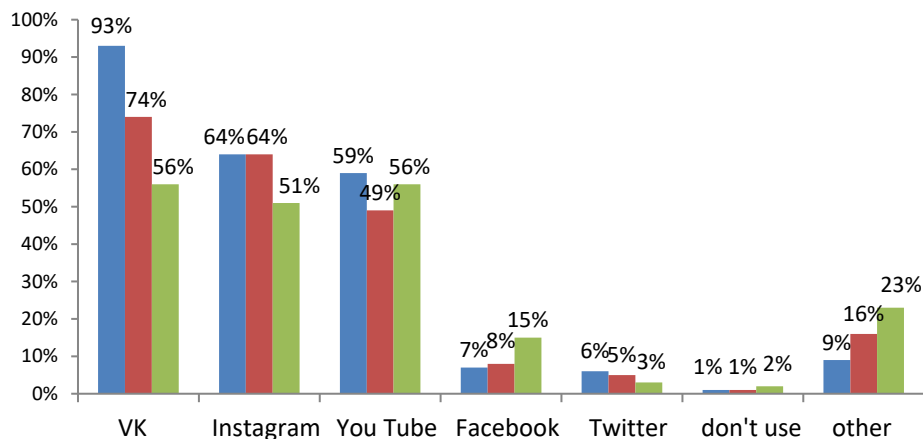


Источник: Brif research group

Broken down by age group, the group of young people aged 15-18 years is most active on social networks. For socialization, this group of people actively uses the platforms VKontakte (93%), Instagram (64%), You Tube (59%), the least used networks include Facebook (7%) and others (9%). The next group of people of 19-24 years old predominantly uses the social networks VKontakte (74%) and Instagram (64%), and the group of 25-30 years old chooses VKontakte and You Tube more - 56% in each of all the social networks presented (Figure 10).

**Figure 10.** The most popular social networks among young people in Kazakhstan, broken down by age

Source: Brif research group



### Youth and religion

Religion plays an important role in the development of the state and society. There is a growing interest of young people in religious life in Kazakhstan. The analysis shows that a destructive cult becomes a salvation and a way out of all life problems for young people. The most vulnerable to the influence of destructive religious movements are young people. This is objective, since this age group has not yet formed stable spiritual, moral, and personal qualities of young people. Also, Kazakhstan youth have the lowest level of religious literacy, and at the same time the highest level of social expectations.

The research report “Youth” separately examines the moral and value attitudes of the younger generation of Kazakhstanis. According to a survey conducted as part of the study, it was found that 69% of young people identified themselves as believers. The group of unbelievers consists of unbelievers who

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respect religion (15.2%), indifferent to religion (8.0%), unbelievers, but sometimes participating in religious events, for example, visiting religious places, as well as atheists – only 1.6%.

Representatives of other religions evoke respect among a significant share of Kazakhstani youth – 36.3%, interest – 10.7%, indifference – 35.8%, annoyance – 8.3%. Accordingly, religious tolerance of different levels prevails among young people. In general, the most of Kazakhstani youth have proper upbringing. Young people are patriotic and spiritual, strong and healthy physically and psychologically, progressive and master all technological means, and they are not inferior in intellectual capabilities to the youth of any other country in the world.

#### **Modern generation on the labour market.**

Today, labour market trends include: generation Z entering the labour market <sup>15</sup>, new forms of employment, economic digitalization and automation, and the development of online education. Three main categories are present in the labor market: the older generation (1), the existing workforce (2) and the new workforce (3). The new workforce include generation Z. This generation is distinguished by a pragmatic approach, a desire for online learning and working on a flexible individual schedule. With the participation of generation Z, new employment formats are being introduced in the labour market, including platform employment, remote work and freelancing. The rapid development of digitalization and automation of the economy has a significant impact on the labour market. Alternative education and online vocational training are rapidly developing.

In connection with the new identified challenges, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population is forming a new employment policy, and within its framework it is planned to strengthen the skills of the workforce through the development of a qualifications system. The Ministry plans to train all groups of the population, including young people, involving about 9 million people in advanced training program. Draft law “On professional qualifications” has been prepared for implementation of this direction.

#### **Existing youth support programs.**

Support for the youth of Kazakhstan is an urgent issue, since Kazakhstan has young nation.

1. Educational program “Mangilik Yel Zhastary – Industriyaga” - “Serpín-2050”. The purpose of this program is to train and employ young people from the southern region of the country with an excess of labor resources in the east, north and west, i.e. in regions that experience a shortage of personnel. According to the rules of the program, youth from the southern regions receive free education in one of three areas: education, technical or agricultural sciences. During their studies, students are provided with dormitory accommodation and scholarship allowance.
2. Program “With diploma to village”. As part of the program, the state provides work in rural areas for young people who have graduated in the following specialties: education, healthcare, social security, culture and sports, and veterinary medicine. At the same time, social support is provided, which stipulates the payment of a one-time benefit in the amount of 100 MCI; issuing a budget loan for the purchase and construction of housing for a period of 15 years, with an interest rate of 0.01% in the amount of 1,500 MCI; increasing the official salary by at least 25% of the tariff rates for specialists of social institutions located in rural areas.
3. Youth practical training is organized for graduates of educational facilities in order to gain initial work experience in their acquired profession (specialty). Unemployed people under age of 29 are directed to the youth practical training within 3 years after graduation. Amount of salary amounts to 25 MCI, duration - up to 6 months.
4. The program “Free Vocational Education for All” involves training personnel with technical and vocational education, creating conditions for obtaining the first vocational profession for free. The program is available to school graduates who were unable to continue their studies after the 9th or 11th grade. The duration of training is determined in accordance with the List of professions and specialties by duration of training and levels of education. Training of program participants is paid at the expense of state funds. In addition, they obtain one hot meal, a scholarship allowance, and allocated money for travel to the educational institution.
5. Program “Zhas Kasipker” involves training young people in the basics of entrepreneurship, obtaining a loan, grant and starting a business. The program is aimed at unemployed youth, members of young families, low-income large families, low-income employable people with disabilities who have entrepreneurial potential. The duration of the training process is at least 25 calendar days. The certificate of completion of training is issued based on the training results.
6. Program “Bastau Business” is aimed at teaching participants entrepreneurial skills. The program can involve unemployed, self-employed, people with disabilities, and first-time entrepreneurs with a registration period of up to 3 years. The training duration is 1 month, where a business trainer provides interactive training on preparation of a business plan. Participants receive start-up capital in the form of grants and microloans after presentation of a business project.

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<sup>15</sup> Generation Z are “digital natives”, a generation of people born from 1997 to 2012. This generation is characterized by high attachment to a large number of devices, they trust information published by friends and recommendations from bloggers and team leaders.

7. Microloans for citizens under 29 years of age. The program is implemented in rural settlements and small towns for opening micro-businesses, expanding the activities of start-up and operating entrepreneurs, establishment of agricultural cooperatives and development of the activities of anchor collaboration participants. Mandatory conditions for obtaining a loan/microcredit include its registration with the tax authorities and a referral from the employment center. Loans/microcredits for starting a micro-business are issued after presentation of business projects within the framework of “Bastau Business” program (see “Bastau Business” subsection) or in case of availability of certificate of completion of training courses in the basics of entrepreneurship under other programs within the last thirty-six months from the date of issue of the certificate, prior to the date of application for a loan/microcredit. Loan/microcredit term - 5 years.
8. State grants are provided free of charge and on a non-refundable basis to participants of “Enbek” program who are launching or planning to launch a start-up business. The grant amount is 200 MCI. Applicants for state grants are participants of “Enbek” program who have completed training in the basics of entrepreneurship under the Bastau-Business program or who have completed short-term training within the first direction of Enbek program and have not previously received grants under other government programs.
9. Social jobs are created by the employer on a contractual basis with the employment center for the employment of the unemployed with subsidization of their wages. Social job is temporary. Duration of social jobs is 12 months. The monthly subsidy amount is 35% of the established wage, but not more than the minimum wage determined by the Law on the Republican Budget for the corresponding financial year. Part of the labor compensation for unemployed people employed in social jobs at the expense of the employer is made by the employer on its own on a monthly basis for the time actually worked, based on the amount established by the employment contract.
10. Program “Zhas Maman” provides for the training of specialists in the 100 most in-demand industrial and service occupations on the basis of 200 modernized educational institutions.
11. Rental housing for employed youth in Nur-Sultan, Almaty and Shymkent. Program criteria: official residents of Astana, Almaty or Shymkent under the age of 29 with a permanent job and without their own housing. The participant should have a deposit account in order to make savings, and also have an income of KZT 100 thousand or more.
12. Social program “70-20-25” (mortgage program) for citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which provides new opportunities to improve housing conditions for every Kazakhstani with affordable lending conditions. A housing loan is issued in national currency, and any citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan who has income from labor and (or) entrepreneurial activities, and also does not have own housing, has the right to participate in the program.
13. Program “Shanyrak” (5-10-20) provides for lending of those on the akimat’s waiting list for the purchase of housing. The persons on the affordable housing waiting list of the akimat who are in need of housing in accordance with the Law of RK “On Housing Relations” (LEA waiting list persons) can participate in the program.
14. Bakytty otbasy programme A loan program for low-income families to purchase a housing. Participation is open to large families, single-parent families, or families with a child with a disability.

### **NEET youth by regions**

The NEET (not in education, employment or training) generation is a category of young people who, due to various economic, social, or political factors, are not in employment, education or training.

In Kazakhstan, the share of young people who are not in education, employment or training is about 8%, that is, about 456 thousand people. The situation is regionally heterogeneous, in some areas the share of NEET youth can be up to 12%. Among the newly created regions, Ulytau region is an anti-leader in the number of NEET youth, where the largest indicator in the republic (12.1%).

For a number of regions, the NEET category declined more than sevenfold over the long term. For example, in West Kazakhstan Region, the share of NEET was 22.5%, and in 2021 this indicator amounted to 2.9% (a decrease of more than seven times).

The reduction in the share of NEET category youth was reflected in the results of the world ranking, where Kazakhstan entered the category of countries with the lowest indicators at the level of 1.0-9.9%, which indicates the effectiveness of targeted work with young people not in training and not in employment.

One of the main reasons for youth unemployment is low wages, and the main barriers for young people themselves remain the desire to work in their specialty and the requirement of experience. At that, NEET youth in Kazakhstan has no special problems with the availability of training. The majority of young people have specialized secondary or higher education, and those who have no education still have a positive attitude towards future enrollment.

NEET youth have an impact on economic and societal development. In the economic context, there is a decrease in the income of citizens, reduction of tax revenues to the budget, increase in public expenditures, decrease in the qualification of the labour force; ultimately these factors lead to a decrease

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in GDP. As a result, the economy shrinks and the country's production capabilities and resource potential are underutilised.

### **Demographic Trends.**

A characteristic demographic trend is the annual increase in the imbalance between urban and rural areas. In particular, a meaningful spike in the number of urban youth aged 17 and older was observed between 2018 and 2020. The reason for the outflow of young people of this age group from villages is the need to obtain a specialty in universities, which, as a rule, are based in megacities. The increase in the young population is more intense in the southern and western regions of the country. Thus, the highest share of children and adolescents under the age of 15 was observed at the beginning of 2023 in Turkestan and Mangystau regions (39.5% and 38.7%, respectively). It also accounts for more than a third of the population in Zhambyl (36.7%), Kyzylorda (36.4%), Almaty regions (33.1%) and Shymkent (37.4%).

At the same time, in the north and northeast of the country, the population is aging due to a slight natural increase in population and a negative migration balance. At the same time, they have a relatively higher share of the elderly population: in the North Kazakhstan region - 18.6%, East Kazakhstan region — 19.3%, Kostanay region - 16.8%, Pavlodar region — 15.7%, Karaganda region — 15.4% and Akmola region — 14.9%.

In regional terms, the two southern regions and the city of Almaty are the leaders, which together are home to one third of young Kazakhstanis: Turkestan region (12.8%, or 478,471 people), Almaty region (10.5%, or 393,176 people), Almaty (10.2%, or 381,227 people). The smallest share of young people is in the north of the country, where North Kazakhstan region is particularly indicative (2.6%, or 97,047 people). At the same time, the number of young people in the southern capital is growing not only due to the birth rate, but also due to internal migration from other regions.

### **Health.**

Kazakhstan pays special attention to the health of young people. In the health care sector, young people are currently the target group under the activities of the “Healthy Nation” Quality and Affordable Health Care for Every Citizen” National Project, launched in 2021.

A network of 166 youth health centers has been set up in the country to provide targeted preventive work and medical assistance to young people. For their part, the majority of young people note the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. In terms of gender, girls are more conscious of health support than boys.

### **Education and Science.**

There is a long-standing gap in the quality of education between urban and rural youth. Rural schoolchildren demonstrate lower performance indicators by results of the External Evaluation of Educational Achievements, Unified National Testing, subject Olympiads, international comparative studies PISA and TIMSS than their peers living in urban areas.

At the level of technical and vocational, higher and postgraduate education, the gap in the level of academic achievements of rural and urban youth is rather a projection of educational inequalities formed at the level of secondary education.

Disproportions in the infrastructural development of education are noted in all regions. The reproduction of the territorial imbalance in the development of educational infrastructure over a long period of time continues to contribute to the persistence of the gap in the quality of education of rural and urban youth.

### **Economic and social situation.**

The country has a policy of social protection for young people. There is a trend to reduce the share of NEET youth, which allows Kazakhstan to be included in the category of countries with the lowest share of NEET youth at the level of 1.0-9.9%.

At the same time, the gap in the well-being of urban and rural youth persists. Rural youth are still predominantly self-employed and a significant proportion of them are oriented towards low-skilled labour. The share of rural youth receiving targeted social assistance remains high. The youth labour market remains unbalanced, there is still a gap between the supply and demand for skilled labour, and there is spontaneous labour migration of young people within the country.

Among the positive trends, it can be noted that there is a development of youth business in the country. Young people are predominantly active in the service and light industrial sectors. Youth entrepreneurship acts as an important instrument of youth socialisation and a social elevator. At that, the state implements a number of projects aimed at business development among young Kazakhstanis, and young people annually receive about 30% of grants allocated for the realisation of domestic business ideas.

### **Civic and political participation.**

For Kazakhstan youth, the key reference points and values are currently not related to the political or religious sphere. Family (83.3%), health (64.2%), friendship (40.7%), financially secure life (39.3%), love (22.8%), interesting work, profession (19.6%) and knowledge, education (19.5%) are consistently at the top of the set of values. Religion and faith are a value for only 18% of young people surveyed, the youth of Kazakhstan today is not distinguished by mass religiosity, although the proportion of respondents who indicated religion as a value remains stable with a tendency to increase.

Global factors, including the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, have brought a new level of trust in authority figures, including scientists (18.2%) and doctors (16.2%). Bloggers, vanners, and ticktockers remain the less significant authority. Their influence decreased by almost two times - from 16.2% to 8.3%.

According to the research conducted by SRC "Youth", 547 youth organizations operated in the country at the beginning of 2022. At the same time, there is a formal existence of youth NGOs in the country, which do not conduct permanent activities.

По данным исследования НИЦ «Молодежь» на начало 2022 года в стране действовало 547 молодежных организаций. Вместе с этим в стране отмечается формальное существование молодежных НПО, которые не ведут постоянную деятельность.

#### **Kazakhstan's position in the Global Youth**

Kazakhstan participates in the Global Youth Development Index. This research is aimed at researchers, policymakers and civil society, including youth, to track progress on the Sustainable Development Goals related to youth development. Research is a process that raises the status of young people and empowers them to utilize their competencies and abilities for life and enables them to contribute to and benefit from a politically stable, economically viable and legally enabling environment, ensuring their full participation as active citizens in their country.

The Global Youth Development Index 2020 places Kazakhstan in the group of countries with a high level of youth development and ranks 70th with a score of 0.731. By domain, "Education" ranked 56th (0.834 points), "Employment and Opportunity" ranked 50th (0.81 points), "Equality and Inclusion" ranked 43rd (0.937 points), "Health and Wellbeing" ranked 120th (0.621 points), "Peace and Security" ranked 68th (0.791 points), and "Political and Civic Participation" ranked 136th (0.227 points).

The Global Youth Development Index measures progress in 181 countries across 6 areas of youth development: health and well-being, education, employment and opportunity, political and civic participation, equity and inclusivity, and peace and security. Changes in 27 indicators for 6 domains are tracked over the period between 2010 and 2018. Where youth-specific indicators are used, youth are defined as those aged 15-29, although data are sometimes only available for those aged 15-24. The methodology and indicators used to compile the Index have been updated since the 2016 report, and for the first time measures levels of peace and security, equality and inclusivity.

### **3.2 Results of focus groups with young people in Abay, Zhetysu, Ulytau, and Kyzylorda regions**

#### **Abai region**

In Abai region, the group discussion was attended by employees of the akimat, employees of budget organizations and the youth center, university students, students of the VET

#### **Hobbies and leisure**

Semey has enough sports and cultural facilities (fitness centers, clubs, parks, cinemas, museums, theaters) to spend free time. However, they are mostly located in the city center and it is difficult to access from the suburbs, due to problems with public transport. Accordingly, there are practically no special leisure facilities on the outskirts of the city: sports facilities, fitness centers, cinemas, etc.

The youth of the region in their daily lives, as in other regions of the countries, mainly use social networks and receive information from there. The region has an information resource - 018.kz (Abai akparat), which is a separate website, a telegram channel, and pages on social networks. A lot of information is posted on this information resource, including for young people.

Due to the fact that Semey has only recently become a regional center again, there are not enough separate buildings and premises in the city where young people could spend their leisure time, hold various events and meetings. Currently, youth organizations in the region hold their meetings in different places, for example, in buildings of universities and colleges. There is no separate buildings of youth resource centers or coworking centers.

#### **Education**

According to the majority of the focus group participants, one of the main problems of secondary specialized and higher education is the quality of education and the lack of experienced personnel. For example, the colleges demonstrate a tendency of staff outflow (mainly subject teachers) to schools due to relatively low wages. In most cases, the most experienced personnel leave, which affects the quality of education. The level of language teaching in colleges was also affected, in particular, teaching English and Kazakh. It is important to improve the approach to teaching and learning languages.

The issue of logistical support for VET organizations is also relevant. There is a problem of providing heat supply to college buildings, especially in rural areas, during the cold season. In addition, the participants noted the problem when applicants for admission choose specialties with many grants, rather than those

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that they like or have abilities for. As a result, there is a chance that they will not have much interest in studying. The same situation is observed when applying for a job, mostly they choose places where the salary is relatively high.

It is necessary to develop IT specialties in the field of secondary specialized and higher education. In the region, the most popular and in high demand is the IT specialty after medical and pedagogical specialties. Therefore, at the suggestion of the regional leadership, it is planned to open an IT college next year.

As a result of the discussion, it is recommended to conduct a study in order to determine the region's shortage of specialists in the context of industries. For example, applicants from other regions of the country come to Abai region under the Serpin program, who, according to the terms of the program, must work in the region for 3 years after completing their studies. However, they also study in specialties, for example, in pedagogical specialties, in which even local people find it difficult to find a job. Furthermore, many people do not stay after mandatory period of work, but return to their regions or leave for other regions.

There are 10 dormitories in 3 universities in the region, and only 21 dormitories in colleges (12 of them in Semey). Regarding the provision of students with places and accommodation in dormitories, there is no shortage of places in the region. A certain problem is observed at the beginning of each academic year. Many students apply for a place in dormitories at the beginning of the academic year, but in some cases they don't stay in a dormitory or later they move to other housing – to relatives or rent apartments. Semey Medical University has a large shortage of places in dormitories, but they solve such problems on their own in a working manner – they rent dormitories, hostels, etc.

According to the participants of the discussion, it is necessary to improve living conditions in student dormitories, especially in college dormitories, so that they correspond to modern living conditions. It is necessary to pay attention to the conditions of bathrooms and shower rooms and cabins in dormitories.

The opinion of the representatives of the akimat regarding the student dormitory correlates with the opinions of young people. It should be noted that almost all dormitories were built a long time ago and do not quite meet the modern needs and desires of students. Therefore, there are proposals from young people to make more modern dormitories.

Most of the participants noted that there is a possibility of further employment after completing an internship. Several participants noted that they were invited to work in the organization where they had an internship, told about acquaintances and friends who found a job after the internship. At the same time, the areas of work proposed by employers do not always correspond to their specialties and qualifications.

The issue of accessibility of educational literature in Kazakh, required for education, was also raised, in the field of education. Most of the participants noted the shortage and low quality of educational literature and materials in Kazakh on the Internet.

### **Employment**

Regarding youth employment, it was noted that it is not difficult to get a job for the specialties with a shortage of personnel, but it is difficult for the specialties with significant competition. Therefore, it is required to allocate resources for training specialists in the fields with a shortage of personnel.

According to the participants, young people have rarely applied to employment centers lately. There were participants who told us that they got a job under the youth practice program.

Despite the difficulties, active work with NEET youth is being conducted. There is a special group that is working in this direction, at the end of the year they will present their analysis and statistics. It is planned to create a separate website and mobile application, through which existing vacancies, announcements of various events and other necessary information will be offered.

The main reason for the difficulties in finding employment remains the lack of practical work experience and recorded work experience. Young people participate in competitions for vacant jobs, but employers often pay attention to length of service, category and age.

In addition, the level of wages should be addressed. Mostly low-paying jobs and places are offered, that don't quite correspond to their specialties. At the same time, it should be noted that those who get a job as a teacher in schools receive a relatively high salary.

An important issue of youth employment is the discrepancy between the training profiles of specialists and the needs of the labor market. It can also be difficult for young people to find a job because of excessive demands and expectations in relation to future work, in particular, to wages.

### **Youth entrepreneurship**

The results of the discussion with the focus group participants showed that young people have a great interest in business. The number of young people who participate in the competition to receive gratuitous grant funding from the state to open or develop their business is growing. Most of the participants among the youth are rural youth, who mainly want to receive a grant for the development of small businesses in the field of agriculture.

The Akimat and the Youth Resource Center work with young entrepreneurs and conduct monitoring in this direction. In 2022, about 10 university graduates started their own businesses.

Focus group participants noted that they have acquaintances and friends who have started and are conducting their own businesses. For example, there is a young entrepreneur who produces ice cream from mare's milk. He is already selling its franchise to other regions. He has also won a grant and received support from the state. One girl opened a small pottery business. There is a guy who makes furniture. In rural areas, young entrepreneurs are mainly engaged in agribusiness and livestock farming.

One of the problems in the field of youth entrepreneurship was the ineffective use of allocated government grants.

### **Housing and standard of living**

Housing issues, in particular for young people, are relevant not only in Abay region, but in all regions of the country. The region, as other regions, has a special housing program for the youth "Abai Zhastary". Under "Abai Zhastary" program, priority is given to families; since the beginning of this program, 40 young families have received housing, however, there are still a lot of candidates.

The discussion participants noted that apartments are expensive in Semey, and after it became a regional center they became even more expensive. Therefore, according to some participants, a person needs to earn about 400-500 thousand tenge per month to buy an apartment on credit.

The change in the status of Semey also affected the price of renting an apartment. On average, renting a one-room apartment costs 90-100 thousand tenge.

One of the main problems for purchasing an apartment is the low wages of young people.

In general, the discussion participants believe that Semey is a convenient city to live in; prices for products and services are cheaper than in many other regions.

Regarding the accessibility of social infrastructure, almost all focus group participants noted the problem with public urban transport in Semey.

Public transport only runs until 20:00 in the evening and it is difficult to return home in the evening if you live in the countryside. The interval between buses of duplicate routes in the lines is long, it takes a long time to wait. The poor condition of roads, housing problems for young families, and a shortage of places in kindergartens were also noted.

### **Migration mood**

Young people are more mobile than other age groups. Many young people would like to continue their studies or get a job in big cities like Astana and Almaty. Focus group participants who are studying in college would like to continue their studies in Almaty or abroad. Many young people come to study at Semey Medical University from other regions of the country and foreign countries.

According to the focus group participants, in Semey there are few young people who go to study or work in foreign countries. The reason for this is that Semey was located in the relative periphery and only recently became a regional center; accordingly, there were few opportunities and offers for work and study abroad.

Many graduates after graduation in certain specialties, for which there are not many vacancies, can go to continue their studies or work in Almaty, Astana or other regions and countries.

One of the main reasons for youth migration until now has been unemployment and relatively low opportunities for self-fulfillment. People have mainly moved to Astana, Almaty and abroad. However, recently, after the creation of a separate region, there has been a tendency for young people to see prospects for development in this region and stay here.

### **Main conclusions**

The main issues that concern the youth of Abay region, especially in the regional center, are the lack of infrastructure for youth, the lack of separate buildings for youth leisure, various events and meetings, and co-working centers.

According to the focus group participants, in the field of secondary specialized and higher education, problems are mainly observed in the quality of education, material and technical support of educational institutions and living conditions in student dormitories. These issues relate to the VET facilities to a greater extent.

In matters of youth employment, issues such as difficulties in finding employment for young people who have no work experience, inconsistency between the profiles of specialist training and the needs of the regional labor market, the difficulty of working with NEET youth, inflated requirements and expectations of graduates in relation to future work, in particular wages.

Ineffective use of allocated government grants was noted as one of the important problems in the field of youth entrepreneurship.

According to the participants, one of the main reasons for youth migration until now has been unemployment and relatively low opportunities for self-fulfillment.

The main problems for purchasing housing were the increase in housing prices in the regional center, low wages of young people and the small coverage of the housing program for young people "Abai Zhastary" with a huge number of applicants.

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Regarding the accessibility of social infrastructure, almost all focus group participants noted the problem with public urban transport in Semey. The poor condition of roads, housing problems for young families, and a shortage of places in kindergartens were also noted.

## **Zhetisu region**

The focus group of Zhetisu region included the young people from various areas - students of I.Zhansugurov Zhetysu University, Taldykorgan Agrarian Technical College, employees of the Youth Service Center, Youth Resource Center, young civil servants, entrepreneurs and others.

### **Hobbies and leisure**

Resource centers for education and leisure, children's and youth sports schools, sports and recreation complexes with free admission are established for young people in Zhetysu region.

At the same time, young people noted that the entertainment market is not sufficiently developed in Taldykorgan.

Trade and entertainment centers take the leading position in the entertainment of young people. In trade centers, young people spend their leisure time in different ways - meeting with friends, going to cinemas, visiting cafes, restaurants, bars, shopping and more.

The existing shopping malls (City+, Atameken) are very small, and there is a high attendance by families with children on weekends. In this regard, many young people go to Almaty for entertainment.

Regarding the availability of sports complexes, stadiums and any other facilities of social importance, the youth of the region expressed the opinion that all sports facilities are accessible to everyone. In addition, they also noted that the world-class Olympic swimming pool, meeting all international standards, was opened in Taldykorgan. The pool is designed for year-round sports competitions of different levels and for recreational swimming. Conditions for people with limited mobility are provided.

In their daily activities, young people use Instagram, where they receive accessible information.

### **Education**

Educational institutions in the region are equipped in a modern way by using the latest interactive technologies to increase the efficiency of the educational process.

Comfortable modern hotel-type dormitory was built on the river bank with a library, cafe and mini-cinema for students of the state university. Students also reported that from September 1 of this year they will receive increased monthly government scholarships. The students are glad that these issues have such attention from the state and local akimat.

In the modern dynamically changing world, the youth of the region is striving to acquire new knowledge and additional skills in order to be competitive in the labor market. The students noted the quality of education received in the region as high.

Students have no problems completing internships for subsequent employment.

However, it should be noted that there are certain barriers to obtaining education in VET program as an accountant-cashier. Thus, students, future accountants, noted that they have to master the 1C program in Russian, since the developers of this product are Russian companies. There is no software product 1C in Kazakh for automating accounting and tax accounting. In this regard, some students often face some difficulties in such studying.

### **Employment**

Currently, employers are putting forward more and more new requirements for applicants for a particular position. Thereby forcing young people to continuously study for a more prestigious and highly paid job. Therefore, students of Zhetisu region are ready to make every effort and do everything required by healthy competition in the labor market.

Despite the fact that in recent years the public policy has given more attention to youth, young people still face many obstacles.

All focus group participants noted that there are serious problems with finding a job in Taldykorgan. During the discussion, the youth of the region noted a common situation when the main requirements for an applicant indicate mandatory work experience. In this regard, employment prospects are not quite positive - there are no jobs or low wages, which leads to deepening problems of youth unemployment. In many cases young people have to find a job with the help of acquaintances. The only operating plant in the region is a battery plant, which has no enough jobs for all candidates. There are no large production facilities in Zhetisu. The majority of the population is mainly employed in the service sector - cafes, bars, restaurants. Salaries in the region are very low - 80-120 thousand on average.

The students also noted that the period of study in an educational institution is the best time for them with maximum opportunities to gain knowledge and pleasure. Therefore, they are actively and successfully working in this direction. Most students, starting from the first year of study, earn extra money in the service sector. Explaining this by saying that they like financial independence and freedom.

It should be noted that the Youth Resource Center (YRC) in Taldykorgan provides assistance in preparing for employment and career guidance, improving digital literacy, and activating innovative and entrepreneurial activities of young people in the region.

In addition, the YRC provides psychological, consulting and legal assistance to young people free of charge.

### **Youth entrepreneurship**

The Labor Mobility Center plays an important role in supporting youth entrepreneurship in Zhetisu region. At the same time, the focus group participants noted that they face problems when receiving services through the urban Labor Mobility Center. One of the requirements is to have a higher education diploma in engagement of the unemployed through subsidized jobs (35% of the salary is from the state, 65% is from the employer). At the same time, there is no need for higher education, seniority and work experience for temporary employment at the enterprise. In this regard, it is proposed to revise the rules for the participation of the unemployed in the created social jobs on the basis of an employer's contract with the Labor Mobility Center.

The young entrepreneur also noted the difficulties in obtaining additional financing to expand the production capacity of own project. So today it is possible to obtain loans from second-tier banks within the framework of the National Project for the Development of Entrepreneurship for 2021-2025 with the use of subsidies and guarantees from the Damu Fund.

Other participants suggested developing programs for young people to develop entrepreneurial activities. For example, they proposed to develop trade networks by building a transport and logistics hub in Ushtobe. Since the Semey - Almaty railway station is located in the territory of the city. This will create new jobs for the unemployed population, contributing to the economic growth of the region.

The youth of the region can carry out entrepreneurial activities both in the countryside and in the city. However, there are much more opportunities in the city to develop business. As the participants of the focus group noted, the top business areas for girls include online commerce, confectionery, knitting, photo studio, tutoring and others.

### **Housing and standard of living**

The results of the focus group showed that most of the youth in the region do not have their own homes. In the case of rental housing, young people often have to earn extra money in order to pay rent payment on time.

The mortgage program "Zhetisu zhastary" for young people offers an interest rate of 5% per annum and a maximum loan amount of 10 million tenge for 19 years. In addition, a down payment varies depending on the type of housing. It is zero percent in case of purchase of housing from a developer. Down payment is equal to 10% in case of purchase of an apartment on the secondary real estate market. The income level of young people does not always meet their needs.

In conclusion, the youth of the region expressed the opinion that they are more concerned about the state of the city's infrastructure. The roads on the outskirts of the city are broken, the buses in these areas are old. Spontaneous trade points operate in the center of the city, which blocks part of urban Arbat, once the most beautiful place for young people. At the moment, Arbat is in a deplorable state of disrepair - there are broken benches, broken glass of arbors and banners.

### **Migration mood**

An analysis of the migration mood of young people showed that migration outflow of young people is not expected. The main factor in internal migration is the problem of youth employment. Young people prefer to live in the city, as the city has many opportunities for growth and a career. The most significant factor in deciding youth migration is improving living conditions and obtaining quality education.

The problem of youth migration from villages to cities should be solved by involving young people in entrepreneurial activities, as well as by conducting vocational guidance work among rural youth aged 15 to 19 years.

As the discussion participants noted, the majority of Kazakhstan people leave the country in order to obtain high-quality higher education, self-fulfillment and a high standard of living. Among the main reasons recipients noted unemployment and low wages.

### **Main conclusions**

The youth of Zhetisu region are positively minded and want to achieve success in their studies and careers. All sports facilities are available to everyone. A world-class Olympic swimming pool that meets all international standards was opened in Taldykorgan. At the same time, there are not enough modern shopping and entertainment centers and multifunctional leisure centers for young people. There are no modern film and television studios for creative youth. Unsatisfactory condition of the roads and bus fleet and the significant deterioration of utility networks in the city should be noted.

The region experiences high unemployment and low wages. Lack of experience and work experience of graduates of educational institutions for employment.

Young people in the region are interested in conducting business. However, there are difficulties with the participation in government programs. Thus, the participants noted that they have problems attracting unemployed citizens through subsidized jobs through the urban Labor Mobility Center. There are also difficulties in obtaining additional funding to expand own projects.

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## **Ulytau region**

The Ulytau region focus group was attended by college students, working youth, youth from among government employees, representatives of the heads of universities and colleges, and leaders of the youth resource center.

### **Hobbies and leisure**

There is the Youth Resource Center in a specially built building in Zhezkazgan. According to the representatives of the youth policy coordinators, the youth of Ulytau region have the same opportunities for development as in other regions of the country. The youth and other population groups spend their free time in fitness centers, the Kinoplex cinema, the Serke Kozhamkulov Black House («Черный дом») Theater, parks.

Along with that, Ulytau region has all opportunities for the implementation of youth policy. There are open discussion platforms, arranged job fairs, events for the implementation of skills. The development of additional skills for young people is also in focus: English language courses, table tennis, chess, dance, etc. are provided. However, experts involved in youth policy coordination note the passivity of young people.

Young people note the low level of access to sports facilities and gyms. There is no swimming pool in the regional center. Only Kazakhmys JSC provides gym membership cards to their employees.

### **Education**

Significant opportunities for the development of young people are based on the development of quality education. As of today, the region has the system of technical and vocational education and training as completely free of charge. The colleges teach the basics of entrepreneurship, but students cannot apply their knowledge in practice, since the age limit for receiving business grants is 18 years - that is, higher than the age of college students.

The Ministry of Education and Akimat of the region have agreed on joint plan for the development of preschool, secondary, technical and vocational education and training, including more than 80 events, for the region. According to the Plan, the state order for places in preschool organizations will be increased to 15,350 by 2029. All children aged 2 to 6 years will be provided with preschool education by 100%. In addition, about two thousand educators will take advanced training courses. As part of this plan, it is planned to build 9 schools with 4,680 seats and 2 gyms. In addition, it is planned to renovate 111 schools and purchase 186 subject rooms of robotics, chemistry, biology, physics and STEM. Program “Ustaz – Ulytau” will also be implemented in the region for improvement of the professional competence of teachers in the region. Thus, such comprehensive measures will contribute to improving the quality of education and increasing opportunities for youth development in the region.

### **Employment**

Regarding the issues of improving employment levels and the youth employment system, graduates need competitive enterprises in addition to Kazakhmys. In addition, there was a practice of employment for graduates on applications due to early experience. Currently, the issue of renewal of this process of conducting targeted training at the request of enterprises with the obligation of employment of graduates should be considered.

Young residents noted the great demand for specialists in pedagogical and medical specialties as significant competitive advantage and a great opportunity for the region. The internship is provided for students in full and is carried out on the basis of a bilateral agreement. This motivates students to be good specialists in their field. Graduates of VET and universities rarely apply for support to employment centers and services, facilitating employment, since most of them consider employment in Kazakhmys Corporation with good salaries.

### **Youth entrepreneurship**

The region is taking measures aimed at developing entrepreneurship. However, the youth themselves do not have sufficient competence and do not have theoretical skills for the competent use of “tools”. The most striking example includes grants and loans for the development of entrepreneurship.

In 2022, the first grant procedure of the akim of Ulytau region was held. It clearly showed that the majority of young people of the region cannot enter the creative economy sector. Business projects were focused on the service sector and did not entail any innovations for the region. One of the common problems encountered both in grants and in lending programs is the insufficient theoretical readiness of participants to prepare and present business plans.

Insufficient development of logistics and transport infrastructure is the next problem pointed out by young residents of the region. The public transport operates by 09:00 pm, which also causes inconvenience for the residents of Zhezkazgan. As a result of this problem, it becomes difficult for young entrepreneurs to organize their business in rural areas of the region and the most of them prefer to establish their business niche directly in cities.

### **Housing and standard of living**

There is a large income gap in the region. According to young people, only employees of Kazakhmys JSC have a high level of income.

The issue requiring attention is the problem of housing conditions. The measures to improve housing conditions are taken. Thus, currently, there are operating grants and lending programs.<sup>16</sup>

However, in recent years, housing construction has not covered the housing shortage, and the quality of hot and cold drinking water remains at a low level. Accidents in the heat center in winter cause inconvenience to the local population.

As of today, the country has the Housing Construction Plan, within which the roadmap with specification of certain facilities and terms of implementation was approved. The MIID monitors each commissioned facility. It is established that Ulytau region belongs to the number of three regions (North Kazakhstan region and Atyrau region) where plans have not been achieved. According to the results of 4 months of this year, Ulytau region is also among the regions with lagging rates of housing construction (Abai region, Mangystau region)<sup>17</sup>.

The situation is complicated by the fact that in connection with the formation of a region of Ulytau, public sector workers come to the region and thereby create an additional burden on the housing stock, as well as they themselves face problems settling their families due to existing household issues. This situation leads to an increase in prices for both primary and secondary real estate, price fluctuations in the rental housing market, in the hotel business, a shortage of dormitories, including student dormitories. In this way, it is difficult for the region to attract young specialists from other fields to create new impulses for the development of the region.

### **Migration mood**

The discussion showed that there is a migrational mood among young people in Ulytau region. At the same time, the focus group participants note a traditional outflow of school graduates to large cities – Karaganda, Astana and Almaty for better living conditions and quality education.

### **Main conclusions**

The focus group discussion showed that Ulytau region is conducting active work aimed at creating conditions for young people. It is planned to open a university that meets international standards. However, there is a risk of an outflow of educated youth, if conditions are not created to improve the environment, in particular air and water quality.

The participants of the discussion propose creating conditions for students studying in technical colleges to start entrepreneurship. There are colleges with developed projects for recycling car tires (project value is 50 million tenge).

In addition, there is good potential for agricultural development in Ulytau region. For example, the region was famous for its melons (melon, watermelon, etc.). But now only a few families are engaged in these types of farming.

On average, at least 3/1 of young people's income is allocated to paying housing costs.

In order to improve the effectiveness of these programs, it is proposed to raise public awareness about the possibilities of purchasing housing through government programs, and developers should consider developing programs without a down payment. There is a need to provide dormitories in Karazhal village, Zhana-arka village, and Satpayev.

## **Kyzylorda region**

Kyzylorda region focus group included college students, working youth, and youth from among government employees.

The focus group pursued two interrelated goals: identifying current problems among young people and developing recommendations to improve the situation of a position of the youth in the region.

### **Hobbies and leisure**

The youth of the region note a lack of free time. Young people explain the reasons for lack of time either by studying or by combining two jobs. Students spend their free time in the shopping center, working youth prefer to meet friends in coffee shops from time to time, visit cinemas, or sometimes go to the gym. According to young people, there are not enough shopping and entertainment centers in the region, explaining this by the lack of leisure facilities and the presence of only one large shopping and entertainment center. There is also a need for coworking centers or other places for leisure activities, especially in rural areas. It is noted that there is no entertainment in rural areas.

There is Kyzylorda Regional Historical and Local History Museum in the region, but it's not visited by all young people of the region.

<sup>16</sup> The region has operating housing program for youth Ulytau Zhastary, which provides for purchase of housing on more favorable terms for residents under the age of 35.

<sup>17</sup> Construction plan for 111 mln m<sup>2</sup> within 7 years has been developed. An annual increase in housing commissioning in the country by 200 thousand square meters is envisaged by the end of 2029 for achievement of the set goal.

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Young people in Kyzylorda have no idea whether there are available free sections for young people. They note that they only know fee-based fitness centers. In addition, the city has the “Shanghai” district, which has no equipped playgrounds, football fields, or places for leisure activities. In this connection, there is a high crime rate and the number of drug addicts among young people in this region. At the same time, according to young people, representatives of the akimat are aware of the current situation.

Having access to the Internet, almost all young people use popular social networks, using it as a source of information in study or work. The modern youth have no much interest in books.

### **Education**

Education in the region is affordable. Most young people study at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. On the other hand, it was noted that the level of knowledge acquired at the university is quite low. Among the factors hindering the provision of quality knowledge are the following: low material and technical base of the university, lack of literature in Kazakh, lack of teachers in some areas, uninteresting lectures, i.e. lack of new teaching methods in the form of presentations, practical cases, and classes are not taught by teachers with practical experience in the industries.

In addition, the participants noted the low awareness of young people on the ongoing programs for free education in foreign countries. This could be especially useful for students with low UNT passing scores. As an example, one participant accidentally learned about such program and got a free master's degree in China.

### **Employment**

Young people generally find jobs on their own without the engagement of the Employment Center. Young people have information about the functioning of platform enbek.kz. A government employee in the focus group got a job through the platform. It should be noted that the total number of unemployed in the region tends to decrease from 4.2 thousand people in 2017 to 3.4 thousand people in 2021. At the same time, the youth unemployment rate remains virtually unchanged: it was 4.3% in 2017, and 4% - in 2022.

The main problem in employment for young people was the employer's requirement to have length of service and work experience.

It should be noted that the share of NEET youth is 7.9%, which exceeds the republican average of 6.9%. However, the discussion showed that the population does not pay attention to this problem.

Focus group participants noted that an important factor that helps a job seeker find a suitable job is the availability of additional skills. Thus, the candidates among the youth seek to learn such skills. For example, students were advised to acquire skills in the 1-C accounting program, which will be useful in the future work.

### **Youth entrepreneurship**

Based on the results of the discussion, it was revealed that young people are informed about the programs being implemented in the country, such as the program of Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund JSC, Business Road Map 2025, in particular Bastau Business. Youth representatives noted that it is not enough to provide financial assistance; non-financial support is very important. Non-financial support for entrepreneurs, according to the participants, consists of providing consultations during the implementation of a business idea.

The main factors hindering the development of youth entrepreneurship were the lack of collateral, the high risk of engaging in entrepreneurial activity, and low awareness of the measures being taken.

### **Housing and standard of living**

Focus group participants noted the poor living conditions in the dormitory at the Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, in particular the lack of repair works. This fact forced students to refuse to live in the dormitory in favor of renting an apartment. In general, there are no proper living conditions in other dormitories, for example, at the Kyzylorda Pedagogical Higher College named after M.Mametova. It should be noted that, according to the students in the discussion, at the first year of college the students are provided with a room in the dormitory, and they are asked to vacate it for new students at the second year, and therefore nonresident students and students from rural areas have to rent housing.

Students receiving scholarships do not face the problem of payment. However, some of the working youth noted that the incomes of young people in the region are quite low compared to other regions and they have to earn extra money. In this connection, not everyone can afford to buy their own apartment. Despite the fact that the cost of 1 sq. meter of housing in Kyzylorda costs 164,851 tenge and is the lowest in Kazakhstan, with the exception of Taraz (149,666 tenge).

Youth representatives have not heard about the ongoing preferential programs in the field of housing, but they know that preferential programs are implemented through Housing Construction Savings Bank Otbasy Bank JSC and, if necessary, they can seek consultation. Among those present in the focus group, workers rent housing, some students live with their parents, and the rest of the students live in rented housing. Students have to co-live with other people when renting an apartment.

**Migration mood**

The youth highlighted that there is unemployment in the region and migration flows from the region to other regions. The main reasons are low wages, lack of decent work, lack of work in rural areas, and a small number of entertainment facilities. Thus, the average wage level is 150,000 - 180,000 tenge, while in other regions, according to focus group participants, it is 250,000 - 300,000 tenge.

Also, young people noted a high, in their opinion, migration flow to other regions. One of the factors voiced by young people was the lack of a sense of patriotism towards the place where they were born and it is necessary for young people to create not only living conditions, so that they do not leave their native land.

**Main conclusions**

Based on the results of the focus group, it is possible to identify the main current issues in the development of youth sector in the region

- ▶ insufficient leisure facilities in the city and in rural areas;
- ▶ low material and technical equipment in educational institutions, lack of literature in Kazakh;
- ▶ low awareness of undergraduate and graduate educational programs among school graduates;
- ▶ poor living conditions in student dormitories in the city;
- ▶ low wages in the region;
- ▶ low awareness of support for young entrepreneurs;
- ▶ high migration among young people to other regions.

### **3.3 Recommendations for addressing the identified problems of youth in the regions taking into account the best practices applied in foreign countries**

**Abai region**

Based on the results of the focus group in Abai region, the following recommendations were presented:

1. To increase the accessibility of sports and cultural facilities in Semey, attention should be paid to improving the social infrastructure in residential areas of the city, creating points of attraction within walking distance for residents of peripheral areas of the city;
2. It is necessary to create leisure centers and coworking centers for young people in Semey and districts of the region, where young people can spend their free time, events of various formats (trainings, master classes, creative meetings, etc.), receive consultations, discuss ideas;
3. It is necessary to pay attention to improving the quality of education and material and technical support of VET organizations;
4. It is necessary to improve living conditions in student dormitories. To reconstruct old student dormitories and build new ones that will meet modern requirements and the needs of young people;
5. To encourage employers to hire young people without work experience, it is necessary to improve the existing youth employment programs («Youth Practice», «First Workplace» and «Generational Contract»), taking into account the specifics of the region;
6. It is necessary to improve monitoring and control over the use of allocated state grants for entrepreneurs;
7. To create more conditions for young people to purchase housing. For example, to provide for the provision of rent-free housing for working youth within the framework of program «Abai Zhastary»;
8. To improve the operation of public urban transport.

**Zhetisu region**

Based on the results of the focus group in Zhetisu region, the following recommendations were presented:

1. It is important to create the necessary conditions for high-quality development in the field of creative industries for creative youth. Creative industries include many areas of life: design, cinema, music, fashion, architecture, computer game development and other multimedia projects.

Creative youth as a socio-professional group occupies a certain segment in the general group of youth. This group of young people is distinguished by an increased level of motivation for creative activity, the need for self-realization in art. Therefore, the study of creative youth has a high scientific and practical relevance.

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For example, the experience of South Korea is interesting, where the government creative content agency KOCCA was established for this purpose. In many ways, it was its work that allowed to establish work with creative industries and bring Korean content to the international market. It is an integrated approach, systematic support at the government level with constant dialogue between representatives of the creative sphere and business that are the key to creating a favorable environment for the self-realization of the younger generation.

2. It is proposed to build modern libraries in the library cafe and library hotel format to instill a culture of reading not only for young people, but also for other groups of the population.

For example, in Japan, the management of libraries was entrusted to private companies. The design and concept of the library have completely changed. The buildings were built in such a way as to attract visitors with a good location.

Library hotels is not a library in a hotel, but a hotel in a library, that is, a place designed for temporary accommodation among books in accordance with the concept of Book and Bed (creating an ideal place, atmosphere and time for reading).

In this regard, changing the entire library system is not necessary, small changes and the introduction of innovations may be introduced, that meet the needs of the modern world.

3. Today, the freelance market is actively developing and more and more specialists prefer to work for themselves and feel free from corporate obligations. In this regard, the youth of the region would like to see modern, large co-working centers in their city, where they can work/socialize/relax in a cozy environment for free.
4. Targeted work with Employment Centers to gain work experience in the relevant field should be continued for assistance in the employment of urban youth.
5. It is necessary to develop medium-sized businesses, open enterprises and create new jobs for the unemployed population. The rules for the participation of the unemployed in created social jobs based on the employer's agreement with the Labor Mobility Center should be revised.
6. In order to solve the problem of unemployment among rural youth, it is necessary to stimulate the creation of new jobs related to agriculture, since the region is considered an agricultural one.
7. Development/adaptation/translation of 1C software product in Kazakh for students studying in the state language.
8. Development of modern transport infrastructure in the region.

## **Ulytau region**

Young people need confidence that the Ulytau region will rapidly develop for a holistic solution to the identified problems of the region. Therefore, it is important to implement effective arrangements in these areas.

Creation of business incubators with favorable conditions for conducting business projects may be considered as the solution for competence problems and improvement of quality of business plans. Such structures can arise on the basis of universities and business centers or can be created with the assistance of a local executive body and a private company. The incubator looks like an office space with separate rooms for meetings and educational events, which business owners can use on preferential or gratuitous terms.

A number of programs are currently operating in the republic to provide housing for the population, including young people. These include mortgage lending programs on preferential terms in Otbasy Bank, such as the Regional Mortgage Program for Working Youth or the mortgage for young families "Zhas Otbasy". In order to improve the effectiveness of these programs, it is proposed to raise public awareness about the possibilities of purchasing housing through government programs, and developers should consider developing programs without a down payment. There is a need to provide dormitories in Karazhal village, Zhana-arka village, and Satpayev.

Regarding the issues of improving employment levels and the youth employment system, graduates need competitive enterprises in addition to Kazakhmys. In addition, there was a practice of employment for graduates on applications due to early experience. Currently, the issue of renewal of this process of conducting targeted training at the request of enterprises with the obligation of employment of graduates should be considered.

The implementation of these recommendations will solve the emerging problems of the newly formed region: the quality of housing conditions will improve, new opportunities for the development of entrepreneurship will be created, the efficiency of the use of labor will increase, which in general will have favorable impact on the development of Ulytau region.

In addition, it is proposed to create conditions for the development of tourism (including the hotel business, road infrastructure).

Also, holding various cultural events and workshops aimed at increasing awareness of the youth regarding new trends and opportunities will have a positive impact on increasing the potential of youth in the region. The experience of the regional policy of the Republic of Belarus is indicative. A workshop was held in the country, at which international methodologies of local economic development, successfully used in the practice of planning and management of territories, were presented, in order to study approaches and practices of stimulating local economic development.

The workshop participants got acquainted with successful practices, the latest international approaches and tools that are used in the regions in the interests of the local economy. Thus, the presented foreign practice will serve as the basis for local economic policy, which will create conditions for increasing the economic potential, competitiveness of districts, creating new decent jobs and boosting entrepreneurship.

It is expected that as a result of familiarization with the presented methodologies, each of the pilot districts will be able to choose one of the proposed methodologies for its further using, with the involvement of experts and taking into account the needs of the district.

The focus of the workshop was on the development of private initiative in the regions, namely on the development of small and medium-sized businesses, which account for 26% of Belarus GDP. Since the government has ambitious plans to double this indicator by 2030, the Ministry of Economy also has intentions to financially support business ideas, in addition to implementing the methodologies of the European Union. The amount of grants starts from 25 thousand to 60 thousand US dollars.

The workshop was organized with the assistance of UNDP in the Republic of Belarus. It was attended by representatives of district executive committees, Councils of Deputies, business support infrastructure entities, commercial and non-profit sector and Business Development Councils. It is proposed to consider the possibility of holding similar workshops for all regions in Kazakhstan.<sup>18</sup>

## Kyzylorda region

Based on the results of the focus group, a number of activities will contribute to eliminating the current pressing problems among the youth of Kyzylorda region.

1. Leisure for modern youth is one of the primary values. This is confirmed by the proposals of the region's youth.

One of the options for young people to spend their leisure time could be opening an anti-cafe in Kyzylorda and in rural areas. Young people will be able to spend their leisure time (communicate, play games, watch movies, attend lectures, trainings, master classes, etc.), as well as do their work (similar establishments in the city center are used as offices for business meetings and coworking space) in the anti-cafe. Some anti-cafes have separate areas (rooms) equipped with office equipment for freelancers. This space is accessible to any visitor, regardless of financial status.

Examples of the largest anti-cafes include "Necafe" (22 establishments in Russia and Kazakhstan), Jeffrey'sCoffee / NewYorkCoffee (20 in Russia and Ukraine), "Tsiferblat" (11 - in Ukraine, Russia, Slovenia and the UK), TimeClub (4 - in Russia).

2. In order to create favorable conditions for young people to live in dormitories, it is necessary to monitor the dormitories and carry out repair work to improve them.
3. Training in 1C for unemployed people. The 1C program allows to create an effective management structure at manufacturing enterprises. Thanks to this system, production, personnel, accounting, operational and tax accounting can be automated. 1C helps reduce time spent on work and make enterprises more mobile. In addition, it is necessary to translate the 1C software product into Kazakh for students studying in the state language.
4. As a focus group survey showed, it is necessary to intensify activities to develop youth entrepreneurship and the development of start-up projects. An information campaign should be actively implemented by the Kyzylorda Regional Branch of the Damu Fund. In addition, activities to inform the population about youth entrepreneurship programs should contain information about potential opportunities in the area. For example, a resident of Kazalinsky district exports reeds to Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. She has customers from France, Poland and Belarus.

<sup>18</sup> <https://moluch.ru/archive/109/26604/>

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5. In order to solve the problem of unemployment among rural youth, it is necessary to stimulate the creation of new jobs related to agriculture, since the region is considered an agricultural one.
  6. Currently, the generation born after 2000 is growing up. Every year more than 300 thousand young people enter the labor market in the country. As a result, a new high-quality structure of the labor force is being formed. Already today, 60% of the workforce is made up of millennials and generation Z.<sup>19</sup> According to the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of RK, T.Duisenova, this indicator will reach 80% by 2030. In this connection, it is necessary to reconsider approaches to employment. One direction could be the development of platform employment. To develop this area, it is possible to open special courses at Employment Centers. However, its main deficiency is the lack of social protection for the employed.
  7. It is necessary to improve district “Shanghai”. The disadvantages of this area were discussed at the focus group and during the workshop on localizing the SDGs. More than 40 thousand people live in microdistrict “Shanghai”. There are no equipped sports grounds here. The only sports complex is rented by various organizations, so it is almost always inaccessible. There are three schools in the microdistrict that were put into operation 15-20 years ago, so their football fields are worn out. The city akimat is aware of the problem. According to specialists, it depends on financing. Currently, there are no state financing and private investments for these purposes.
  8. Students in graduating classes should be informed about the opportunities to study at foreign universities for free in undergraduate programs by attracting various funds, for example, the Public Association “Friendship of graduates of universities of the People’s Republic of China.” Educational grants from the Chinese government provide the opportunity to study completely free of charge. This program fully compensates students for tuition, accommodation and health insurance. An applicant admitted under a grant receives a one-time allowance for settling in a foreign country.
  9. The development of social responsibility of business will allow the development of villages. For example, the village named after Hero of the Soviet Union Naga Ilyasov, Syrdarya district, Kyzylorda region, is an example of such responsibility. The village is the country’s leader in the production of rice and seeds. Total of 3000 people live in the village. In the village, a fountain was built in front of the bust of Naga Ilyasov; there are local “Big Ben” with a clock, cafes, shops; a colonnade stage was built; the school landscaped garden became a continuation of the square. All facilities have a lot of flowers around.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://primeminister.kz/ru/news/platformennaya-zanyatost-v-kazahstane-dostigaet-500-tysyach-chelovek-t-duy-senova-751315>

## CONCLUSION

- ▶ The results of the research showed that the coverage of SDG targets by the Development Plan of Kyzylorda region was 28.4%. This indicator is not high enough. The analysis showed that Kyzylorda region has a gender imbalance in the labor market. The assessment showed that the region's RDP does not address gender equality targets, despite the growing relevance of the issue of gender equality. This may be due to the fact that national SDG 5 indicators are not included in the group of relevant indicators. In this regard, it is necessary to include in the RDP indicators related to reducing the gender gap in the labor market and women's unpaid work. This in turn will also expand the scope of targets in the field of decent work.
- ▶ Based on the results of focus groups on youth policy conducted in pilot regions, the following conclusions are presented:
  - ▶ Abai region has the potential to promote projects in the field of agriculture. Therefore, it is proposed to focus on support of agriculture in order to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population (in particular rural residents). The main issues that concern the youth of Abay region, especially in the regional center, are the lack of infrastructure for youth, the lack of separate buildings for youth leisure, various events and meetings, and co-working centers.
  - ▶ There is potential for the use of organic/food residues in Zhetisu region, as the region grows a large number of plants and animals, the residues of which could potentially be used to produce biogas, biofertilizers and/or soil improvers. Thus, a balanced combination of different types of organic residues can produce enriching compost specifically designed for the soils of Zhetisu region. The youth of Zhetisu region are positively minded and want to achieve success in their studies and careers. All sports facilities are available to everyone. A world-class Olympic swimming pool that meets all international standards was opened in Taldykorgan. At the same time, there are not enough modern shopping and entertainment centers and multifunctional leisure centers for young people. There are no modern film and television studios for creative youth. Unsatisfactory condition of the roads and bus fleet and the significant deterioration of utility networks in the city should be noted.
  - ▶ Ulytau region has a potential for promoting projects in the social and service sectors. The focus group discussion showed that Ulytau region is conducting active work aimed at creating conditions for young people. However, there is a risk of an outflow of educated youth, if conditions are not created to improve the environment, in particular air and water quality.
  - ▶ Kyzylorda region has a need in promoting projects in the environmental sector. It is proposed to focus on environmental compensation for tree planting in the region in order to solve the problems of the gender gap among the unemployed, as well as to solve significant environmental issues. Based on the results of the focus group, the following pressing issues in the development of youth in the region were identified: there are not enough leisure facilities in the city and in rural areas; low material and technical equipment in educational institutions, lack of literature in Kazakh; low awareness of undergraduate and graduate educational programs among school graduates; poor living conditions in student dormitories in the city; low wages in the region; low awareness of support for young entrepreneurs; high migration among young people to other regions.

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## Annex 1

**Table 2.** National SDG indicators coverage by the Kyzylorda Region Development Plan

No.	Target indicator of the Kyzylorda region RDP	SDG task	National SDG indicator
<b>ЦУР 2 «Ликвидация голода»</b>			
1	2.5-fold increase in labor productivity (in AIC)	2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk, including through secure and equitable access to land, other agricultural inputs and resources, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and off-farm employment	2.3.1. Labor productivity in agriculture, KZT thousand
2	Land area with the use of water-saving technologies (drip irrigation, sprinkling)	2.4 By 2030, ensure creation of sustainable food production systems and introduce farming methods that increase resilience, productivity and volumes of output, contribute to conservation of ecosystems, strengthen ability to adapt to climate change, extreme weather events, droughts, floods and other disasters and gradually improve the quality of land and soils	2.4.1.1. Area of irrigated lands on which water-saving technologies are used (drip irrigation, sprinkling), thousand hectares
<b>SDG 3 «Good Health and Well-Being»</b>			
3	Материнская смертность	3.1 Reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to below 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030	3.1.1. Maternal mortality rate, per 100,000 live births
4	Младенческая смертность	3.2 By 2030 put an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of five. At the same time, all countries should strive to reduce neonatal mortality to no more than 12 cases per 1,000 live births, and mortality under the age of five to no more than 25 cases per 1,000 live births	3.2.1 Mortality rate of children under the age of five, per 1000 births
5	Охват сельских населенных пунктов первичной медико-санитарной и консультативно-диагностической помощью; - в т.ч. открытие фельдшерско-акушерских, медицинских пунктов и врачебных амбулаторий в сельских населенных пунктах, в том числе, в опорных и спутниковых селах	3.8 Ensure universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, quality access to essential health services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.	3.8.1 Coverage of basic health services
	Охват сельских населенных пунктов первичной медико-санитарной и консультативно-диагностической помощью, в т.ч. численность населения, охваченного услугами передвижных мобильных комплексов		
<b>SDG 4 «Quality Education»</b>			
6	Assessing the quality of school education based on PISA test results (OECD report): in mathematics in reading in natural history	4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equal and high-quality primary and secondary education that allows them to achieve demanded and effective learning outcomes	4.1.1 Proportion of children and youth who graduate from secondary school and who have reached at least the minimum level of i) reading literacy by gender, percentage PISA results

No.	Target indicator of the Kyzylorda region RDP	SDG task	National SDG indicator
7	Share of secondary education organizations provided with Internet at least 100 MB/s for the local school network: not less than 8 MB/s for rural schools; not less than 20 MB/s for urban schools	4.a Create and improve educational institutions that take into account the interests of children, the special needs of persons with disabilities and gender aspects, and ensure a safe, free from violence and social barriers and an effective learning environment for all	4.a.1 Proportion of schools provided with Internet access at a speed of 4 Mbit/s and above
8	Number of modernized schools in small towns, district centers and villages	4.a Create and improve educational institutions that take into account the interests of children, the special needs of persons with disabilities and gender aspects, and ensure a safe, free from violence and social barriers and an effective learning environment for all	4.a.1.1. Share of modified classrooms with modern equipment in secondary education organizations, of their total number, percentage
<b>SDG 6 «Clean Water and Sanitation»</b>			
9	Access to water supply services for the people: in cities, villages	6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all;	6.1.1. Access to water supply services for people, percent - city - village
10	Level of wastewater treatment in cities	6.3 By 2030, improve water quality through pollution reduction, elimination of waste discharges and minimization of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of wastewater untreated, and significant increase in recycling and safe reuse of wastewater globally	6.3.1. Share of treated wastewater by full biological purification (including additional processing) in the total volume of passed wastewater, percent
<b>SDG 8 «Decent Work and Economic Growth»</b>			
11	GDP per capita in nominal terms	8.1 Maintain per capita economic growth based on national circumstances and, in particular, gross domestic product growth of at least 7 per cent per annum in least developed countries	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita, percent by 2005
<b>SDG 10 «Reduce inequality»</b>			
12	Income share of the poorest 40% of the population	10.1 By 2030, gradually achieve and sustain income growth of the poorest 40 per cent of the population above the national average	10.1.1. Growth of household expenditures or per capita income among the poorest 40 percent of the population and for the general, percentage to the previous year
<b>SDG 11 «Sustainable Cities and Communities»</b>			
13	Share of roads within the tolerance range	11.2 By 2030, ensure that all can use safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally sustainable transport systems, based on improving road safety, in particular increasing the use of public transport, paying particular attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, the disabled and the elderly	11.2.1. Share of roads in good and satisfactory condition, percent
14	Coverage by separate collection of cities (capital, cities of republican, regional and district subordination): - by fractions - Certain hazardous types of waste (medical and mercury containing waste, electronic and household appliances)	11.6 By 2030, reduce the negative per capita environmental impact of cities, including through a focus on air quality and urban and other waste management	11.6.1 Provision of population with waste recycling and disposal services, percent

No.	Target indicator of the Kyzylorda region RDP	SDG task	National SDG indicator
	Share of recycling and disposal: SMW (by volume of formation)		11.6.1.1 Percentage of recycling and utilization of household solid waste by volume of formation, percent
<b>SDG 12 «Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns»</b>			
15	Share of recycling and disposal: hazardous medical waste (by volume of collected)	12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international principles, and substantially reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse effects on human health and the environment	12.4.2.b) Percentage of hazardous waste treated by type of treatment
<b>SDG 13 «Climate action»</b>			
16	Coverage of students with the course "Ecology" in the secondary school programme (6th grade)	13.3 Improve education, information dissemination and the capacity of people and institutions for climate change mitigation, adaptation and prevention	13.3.1.1 Share of children covered by updated educational content, percent
<b>SDG 15 «Live on Land»</b>			
17	Increase/expand the area covered by forests, including through planting 2 billion trees, ensuring normative rooting rate by species and planting regions.	15.2 By 2020, promote sustainable management of all forests, reduce deforestation, restore degraded forests and significantly increase afforestation and reforestation globally	15.2.1. Forested area, thousand hectares

**Table 3.** List of SDG task covered by Development Plan of Kyzylorda region but with no specific activities

SDG task	Name of target indicator of the Development Plan of Kyzylorda region	Task of the Development Plan of Kyzylorda region
1.5 Build resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks	Level of protection of the population from flood, melt and rain water	Second Area: Quality of Institutions Goal 1. Enhancing national security
1.5 Build resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks	Notification level in case of emergency threat	Second Area: Quality of Institutions Goal 1. Enhancing national security
2.2 End all forms of malnutrition by 2030, including achieving internationally agreed targets for stunting and exhaustion in children under five by 2025, and addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and the elderly	Reduction of obesity morbidity among children (0-14 years old) - 105.9 per 100,000 population	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 2. Affordable and effective health care system
3.2 By 2030 put an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of five. At the same time, all countries should strive to reduce neonatal mortality to no more than 12 cases per 1,000 live births, and mortality under the age of five to no more than 25 cases per 1,000 live births	Increased coverage of children under 1 year of age with proactive surveillance and screenings	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 2. Affordable and effective health care system
3.2 By 2030 put an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of five. At the same time, all countries should strive to reduce neonatal mortality to no more than 12 cases per 1,000 live births, and mortality under the age of five to no more than 25 cases per 1,000 live births	Increased coverage of medical rehabilitation for children with disabilities	3.2 By 2030 put an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of five. At the same time, all countries should strive to reduce neonatal mortality to no more than 12 cases per 1,000 live births, and mortality under the age of five to no more than 25 cases per 1,000 live births

3.8 Ensure universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, quality access to essential health services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.	Coverage of rural settlements with primary health care and consultative and diagnostic assistance, including the number of population covered by the services of portable mobile package.	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 2. Affordable and effective health care system
3.d Build the capacity of all countries, especially developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks	Increase in the share of Kazakhstan citizens leading a healthy lifestyle	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 2. Affordable and effective health care system
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equal and high-quality primary and secondary education that allows them to achieve demanded and effective learning outcomes	Assessing the quality of school education based on PISA test results (OECD report) in math in natural history in reading	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equal and high-quality primary and secondary education that allows them to achieve demanded and effective learning outcomes	Share of daytime state general secondary educational organizations, subordinated to LEA, provided with video surveillance, including: external, internal	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education
4.4 By 2030, significantly increase the number of young and adult people with in-demand skills, including vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship	Enrollment of young people in free college education in demanded specialties (9th grade graduates)	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development	Coverage of school-age children with cultural education	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development	Increasing the reading activity of the population within the framework of the "Reading Nation" project	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development	Coverage of the population, projects of the Rukhani zhangiru Program, cumulative total	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 1. Equitable social policy
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development	Coverage of the population, special projects and main directions of the "Rukhani zhangiru" program	First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 1. Equitable social policy

<p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development</p>	<p>Amount of facilities built and repaired by patrons</p>	<p>First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 1. Equitable social policy</p>
<p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education on sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship of the world and awareness of the value of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development</p>	<p>Proportion of participants in written communication who use the Latin alphabet</p>	<p>First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 1. Equitable social policy</p>
<p>4.a Create and improve educational institutions that take into account the interests of children, the special needs of persons with disabilities and gender aspects, and ensure a safe, free from violence and social barriers and an effective learning environment for all</p>	<p>Coverage of children with limited abilities of development by special psychological and pedagogical support and early correction</p>	<p>First Area: Citizens wellbeing Goal 3. Quality education</p>
<p>6.3 By 2030, improve water quality through pollution reduction, elimination of waste discharges and minimization of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of wastewater untreated, and significant increase in recycling and safe reuse of wastewater globally</p>	<p>Level of wastewater treatment in cities</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development</p>
<p>6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity;</p>	<p>Reduction of irrigation water losses by 4 km<sup>3</sup>: length of reconstructed canals, km LB</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development</p>
<p>6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity;</p>	<p>Reduction of fresh water abstraction in industry by 1.3 km<sup>3</sup>;</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development</p>
<p>7.3 Double the global energy efficiency target by 2030</p>	<p>Reduction of energy consumption in the public sector and housing and utilities;</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development</p>
<p>8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that encourage productive activities, the creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formal recognition and development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services</p>	<p>Increase in the share of people who started their own business after training under the Bastau Business project</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy</p>
<p>8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that encourage productive activities, the creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formal recognition and development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services</p>	<p>Creation of new business entities in villages</p>	<p>Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy</p>

8.5 By 2030, ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value	Increasing the employment rate after short-term vocational training	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy
8.9 By 2030, ensure the development and implementation of strategies to promote sustainable tourism that supports job creation, local culture and local products	Increase in the number of room supply	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy
8.9 By 2030, ensure the development and implementation of strategies to promote sustainable tourism that supports job creation, local culture and local products	Increase in the growth of investment in the industry (tourism) to KZT 6.9 trillion	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy
9.5 Intensify scientific research, increase the technological potential of industrial sectors in all countries, especially developing countries, including by stimulating innovation by 2030 and significantly increasing the number of employees in the field of research and development (R&D) per 1 million people, as well as public and private R&D spending	Share of large and medium-sized enterprises in the manufacturing industry using digital technologies	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy
9.2 "Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, substantially increase industrial employment and the share of industrial production in gross domestic product, in accordance with national conditions, and double the corresponding rates in least developed countries";	Manufacturing industry production volume	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 1. Building a diversified and innovative economy
10.1 By 2030, gradually achieve and sustain income growth of the poorest 40 per cent of the population above the national average	Household expenditure on food products	Area 1. Citizens' well-being Goal 1: Provide the population with jobs with decent wages, create conditions for starting and developing one's own business, and prevent price increases.
11.3 "By 2030, expand inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for integrated and sustainable human settlements planning and management based on extensive participation in all countries	Level of urbanization at year-end	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development
15.9 By 2020, integrate the values of ecosystems and biological diversity into national and local development planning and processes, and poverty reduction strategies and plans	Percentage of digitized land data	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development
16.1 Significantly reduce the prevalence and mortality rates of all forms of violence worldwide	Increase in the number of video surveillance cameras in cities of national importance and regional centers	Second Area: Quality of Institutions Goal 1. Enhancing national security
16.6 Create effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.	Level of satisfaction with the quality of LEA work	Third Area: Strong economy Goal 2. Balanced regional development
17.8 Make the technology bank and science, technology and innovation development mechanism for least developed countries fully operational by 2017 and increase the use of high-impact technologies, in particular information and communications technologies	Percentage of health care organizations providing data exchange with Ehealth core	Area 1: Citizens wellbeing. Goal 2. Affordable and effective health care system

**Table 4. Recommended SDG tasks and indicators for integration into the Development Plan of Kyzylorda Region**

№	Предусмотренные цели в рамках Плана развития Кызылординской области	Рекомендуемые приоритетные цели	Рекомендуемые приоритетные индикаторы для ПРО области
1	Equitable social policy	-	Share of population with incomes below the subsistence minimum, %
		-	Number of medical workers per capita and distribution
		-	Provision of medical workers per 1,000 population (excluding dentists)
2	Affordable and effective health care system	-	Provision of average medical workers per 1,000 population
		-	Availability of dentists per 1,000 population (including dental assistant)
		-	Availability of pharmaceutical personnel per 1,000 population (including pharmacists)
3	Affordable and effective health care system	-	Share of medicines supply to patients under dispensary observation
4	Quality education	-	Share of 3-shift schools
5	Promotion of Rukhani zhangiru values and state language enhancement	-	Share of time spent on unpaid household services for the household and its members, percentage
6	Equitable social policy	-	Unemployment rate by gender, age, percentage
7	Balanced regional development	-	Population coverage of wastewater treatment, percent
8	Building a diversified and innovative economy	-	Share of enterprises applying energy efficiency system, %
9	Equitable social policy	-	Share of unproductively employed in total employment, percent
10	Equitable social policy	-	Average hourly earnings by gender, age, foreign economic activity and regions, KZT;
11	Building a diversified and innovative economy	-	Labor productivity growth in the manufacturing industry, percent to the previous year
12	Equitable social policy	-	Household expenditure per capita
13	Equitable social policy	-	Household expenditure per capita among the 40% of population with the lowest income
14	Equitable social policy	-	The share of GDP attributable to labor compensation.
15	Equitable social policy	-	Housing provision per one resident, sq.m.
16	Balanced regional development	-	Share of biodiversity-important mountain areas under protection, %
17	Enhancing national security	-	Number of victims associated with human trafficking per 100,000 people
18	Enhancing national security	-	Level of trust in law enforcement agencies, broken down by agency, percentage
19	Enhancing national security	-	Percentage of persons who, in the previous 12 months, had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official or from whom a bribe was demanded by that public official, percentage