

# KAZAKHSTAN

## TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Kazakhstan is a unitary country with a three-tiered subnational government structure. At the regional level, the country is divided into 17 regions (*oblasts*) and 3 cities of national sub-ordination (Astana, Almaty and Shymkent).<sup>1</sup> At the intermediate level, there are 37 large “cities of regional significance” and 179 districts (*rayons*).<sup>2</sup> At the municipal level, Kazakhstan counts 48 small “cities of district significance,” 2186 rural districts, 85 villages, 26 urban settlements, and 4593 rural settlements (*aul*).<sup>3</sup>

The regional and district governments are “quasi-decentralized.” Indeed, local self-governments are elected and hold powers to approve their budgets and issue regulations in the area of their competence. However, each tier of government is subordinate to the tier above (and the regional governors are appointed by the President). Heads of local executive bodies (*akims*) are accountable to those who appoint them.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the 2022 VNR mentions that direct elections of rural *akims* were introduced.



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).<sup>5</sup>

## 1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The **Strategy Kazakhstan-2050** defines the long-term strategic goals for the country’s development and highlights the need for a transition to the principles of sustainable development, to which all medium and short-term national, sectoral and regional development documents are aligned. The principles of sustainability and inclusiveness form the basis of the new **2025 Strategic Development Plan**, while the Five Social Initiatives of the Head of State and the “Ruhani Jangyru” programme aim at creating a sustainable economy and improving the quality of life of all segments of the population.

The 2022 VNR reassures that principles of sustainability and inclusiveness form the basis of the new **National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2025**, while the **localization** of strategic goals is ensured through national projects and regional development programs. A new state planning system containing national SDG indicators has been in effect since 2021.<sup>6</sup> Other strategic and program documents, such as the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Territorial Development Plan, national projects, and regional development plans, correspond to SDG targets and indicators.

### 1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The government established a **SDG Coordination Council**,<sup>7</sup> chaired by the First Deputy Prime Minister, with **permanent interagency working groups** in five areas corresponding to the five sustainable development pillars, namely “People,” “Planet,” “Prosperity,” “Peace,” and “Partnership.” Each interagency working group includes representatives from government agencies, civil society, international organizations, the private sector, as well as independent experts. In addition, the **SDG Secretariat** has concluded a number of memorandums on cooperation in implementing the SDGs, while building “a dialogue with business structures” (see VNR, 2022, p. 48).

### 1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The 2019 VNR process was prepared by the Economic Research Institute of the Ministry of National Economy, with the support of the five interagency groups of the SDG Coordination Council. The preparation of the 2022 VNR was similarly led by the **SDG Coordination Council**, its interagency working groups, and the Ministry of National Economy. Discussions took place in all

1. They are headed by a regional governor (regional/city *akim*) appointed by the president, and have a regional/city council elected by universal suffrage (regional *maslikhat*).

2. District executives are appointed by the regional governor (or by the mayor in the case of city districts) while they have a directly-elected council (city or district *maslikhat*).

3. See: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/>

4. Since 2013, local *akims* are elected through indirect suffrage by local level councils. See UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

5. See: [https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/23946KAZAKHSTAN\\_DNO\\_eng\\_4.Juli19.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/23946KAZAKHSTAN_DNO_eng_4.Juli19.pdf) (2019); <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Kazakhstan%20Report%20English.pdf> (2022)

6. See: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1700000790>

7. The SDG Coordination Council was referred to as ‘Coordination Board’ in the 2019 VNR.

regions of the country, engaging more than 2,500 citizens including representatives of local executive bodies, representatives of civil society, independent experts, persons with disabilities, pensioners, representatives of the academic community, youth, representatives of the private sector, and international organizations. The organization of expert discussions, development of the main theses, and summary of the report were carried out by the **Economic Research Institute**. Based on the results of seminars in the regions, the top five SDGs of 2022 for Kazakhstan, SDGs 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 (compared to 3, 4, 6, 8, 11 in 2019), were selected.

### 1.3 MONITORING

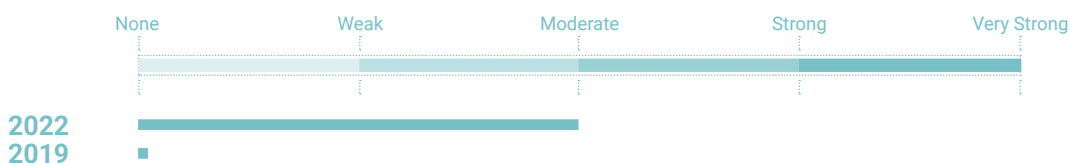
The **Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BNS ASPR RK)** collected statistical data and prepared a national list of SDG indicators in close interdepartmental cooperation with government bodies responsible for SDG implementation, non-governmental sector, and international institutions. Currently, the national list of SDG indicators approved by the SDG Coordination Council includes 262 indicators, 190 of which are UN global indicators and 30 national indicators are proposed to replace global ones as alternatives. 42 additional indicators reflecting national priorities for sustainable development have been proposed in the process of consultations with national stakeholders. Government agencies are responsible for calculating projected values up to 2030 regarding all current indicators.

## 2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

There is no evidence of any LRG participation in national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation. While there was no information available on LRG involvement in the 2019 VNR, in the 2022 VNR, regions are included in the list of organizations that participated in the preparation of the report (see VNR, 2022, p. 251). Regional centers and cities of national importance have hosted training seminars for local executive agencies on the nationalization and localization of the SDGs in Kazakhstan, as well as discussion seminars on the draft of the VNR for regional residents. The VNR mentions the active participation of local executive agencies' staff and the sharing of experience in SDG-related projects. The problems and prospects of localizing the SDGs in each region were discussed.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

#### ► In the VNR process



Comments: Local executive bodies took part in discussions for the 2022 VNR elaboration.

#### ► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: There is no evidence of LRG involvement in national coordination mechanisms.

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

### 2.2 VNR REFERENCES

There are some references to LRGs in the 2019 VNR, but almost all of them concern the regions, and there are no examples of specific locally-led initiatives for the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas in the 2022 VNR, localization is mentioned in a dedicated subsection: 'Regarding the localization of the SDGs' (see VNR, 2022, p. 47). In the section 'Next Steps', the report identifies the need to 'improve the effectiveness of local and regional institutional mechanisms that promote and facilitate the implementation of the SDGs' (see VNR, 2022, p. 198).

8. Two cities have also mentioned specific contributions to the VNR. Answers of Semey and Shymkent to the GTF survey in 2022.

9. Nonetheless, the next steps presented at the end of the report put forwards the aim of "focusing on the specific characteristics of each of the 17 regions of Kazakhstan, including advantages, disadvantages, and systemic problems that have a significant impact on the implementation of the SDGs until 2030," as well as "continue work to improve the effectiveness of local and regional institutional mechanisms that promote and facilitate the implementation of the SDGs" (see VNR, 2019, p. 137).

## 2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

▶ **Almaty** adopted in 2017 its 2020 Development Strategy. Also, a project based on participatory land planning and upgrading of city grounds was launched. The local government engaged the city's residents in the decision-making process regarding the future of disused and abandoned parts of the city, such as the Almaty tram depot, to make these zones into people-oriented public spaces.

▶ In the city of **Nur-Sultan**, 51 outpatient clinics will be opened as part of the project "Doctor near the House." The aim of the project is to provide citizens with access to medical services within a 20-minute walking distance. Outpatient clinics will provide basic medical help: vaccination, medical certificates, day hospitals, ultrasound or ECG among other services.

▶ The UN's community development programmes in East Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda, Mangystau and Aktobe are important channels of assistance related to the implementation of SDGs at the subnational level. This is supported by the Ministry of Investment and Development as the key national government agency to create and manage the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of Kazakhstan which are located in particular cities. Currently, there are ten SEZs in the country, including, for example, the SEZ Ontustik located in **Shymkent city** and aimed at developing the textile industry, or the SEZ Pavlodar located in **Pavlodar city** and created to develop the petrochemical industry.<sup>10</sup>

▶ A pilot project on gender-responsive budgeting was implemented using the example of the **Akmola** region. A methodology for gender-responsive budgeting was developed within the framework of this project, which can later be used to form a consolidated gender-responsive budget.

## 2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Not applicable.

## 2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In 2020, the **SDGs Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)** was launched with the support of the United Nations Joint SDG Fund. Kazakhstan is one of the few countries that has begun work on implementing the INFF. The study into the feasibility of implementing the INFF began with the Development Finance Assessment (DFA). The first stage of the DFA was conducted at the national level, while the second stage of the DFA was conducted at a local, regional level in a pilot mode. Three regions were selected: one industrial region; one agricultural region; one city of republican status, where the service sector is actively developing. The DFA provided an opportunity to clarify some of the limitations to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. A Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) of budget programs was conducted with the expert support of the UN Development Programme in Kazakhstan. The DFA has found that SDG principles are not integrated into the budget process and weak integration of SDG principles into monitoring.

# 3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

**General comments:** Kazakhstan has engaged in a **decentralization** process since 2012. In 2020, a reform was implemented to strengthen local self-governments, which led to the first direct elections of over 700 rural heads of local administrations in 2021. This reform is scheduled to be extended to larger cities and districts in 2024, which, to date, have had heads appointed by the central government.<sup>11</sup> The 2025 Strategic Plan comprises a "Strong Regions and Urbanization" reform.

In 2021, UNDP and the European Union Delegation to Kazakhstan signed a contribution agreement to start the implementation of a project on setting up a **regional knowledge-sharing SDG Platform** for Central Asian countries. The platform was launched at the end of 2021. The main goal of the platform is to work with governments and civil society in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to achieve the SDGs, integrating country-level efforts regionally through SDG monitoring and financing process.

## 3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The 2019 VNR acknowledged that "despite the progress made, problems related to the low representation of women at all levels of decision-making remain relevant." The share of women was 22.2% in local representative bodies. The 2022 VNR mentions that the president has proposed the introduction of a 30% quota for women and youth on the electoral lists of the final parliamentary parties.

10. The three practices presented above are mentioned in UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>  
11. UCLG, 2022, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, [https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/hlpf\\_2022.pdf](https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_2022.pdf)

## 3.2 COVID 19

There is no reference to locally-led initiatives.

## 4. SDG INDICATORS<sup>12</sup>

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		22.3 (2020)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	91 (2020)
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		-
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		17.8 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		100 (2020)

12. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>