

«Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world»

**LIVING STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH
MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)
INTO THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY
IN TAJIKISTAN**

COUNTRY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Republic of Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, with more than 93 percent of the territory covered by mountains. The population of the country is 8.5 million, 49% of them are women, and 35% are youth (under 14 years old), which makes Tajikistan one of the youthful countries in Central Asia. Tajikistan is ranked 85th as per its territory and has abundant hydropower and freshwater resources, and varied natural resources, as well as favorable conditions for growing organic food products. In addition to that Tajikistan is full of opportunities for brisk growth of eco-tourism, which is in line with the fundamental principles of human development in the context of access to natural resources.

Tajikistan is ranked 85th as per Human Capital Index, 129th as per Human Development Index (2015, out of 188 countries and territories), 69th as per Gender Inequality Index (2015, out of 160 countries), 114th as per Global Innovation Index, 77th as per Global Competitiveness Index (2016) and 132nd (out of 189 countries) in “Doing Business, 2016”

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Tajikistan initiated preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) to be presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The main purpose of the VNR is to analyze progress towards implementing the SDGs at national level, as well as mainstreaming of Agenda 2030 into the national development policy through broad stakeholder participation.

The main objective of the VNR is to facilitate the implementation of Agenda 2030 through sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learnt. Review is aimed to strengthen policy-making of the government and institutes in order to mobilize support and partnerships with engagement of various stakeholders for the implementation of SDGs.

The theme of the VNR focuses on issues of eradication of poverty through the improvement of living standards in Tajikistan. The VNR considers the process of nationalizing the SDGs from the perspective of achieving two strategic development goals identified in the National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030 (NDS 2030): 1) ensure energy security and efficient use of electricity; and 2) ensure food security and people’s access to good quality nutrition. Other SDG related targets are also reflected in the VNR as cross-sectorial issues: gender equality, industrialization, access to water and climate change. The Review is prepared on the basis of series of consultations at the national and regional level, with the broad participation of stakeholders: governmental experts, including sectorial and local level specialists, UN agencies, and parliament members, civil society, academia, entrepreneurs and media, as well as representatives of the development partners in Tajikistan. The scrutiny of the VNR involved processing of information derived from official statistics, including administrative data provided by ministries and agencies, as well as reports and reviews produced by international organizations, expert evaluations, monitoring results of regional development programs, and other information from international sources.

The recently adopted NDS -2030 and Mid-term Development Program of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016-2020 (MTDP 2020) are two key tools for nationalization of the SDGs and its further integration into the national development policy. The Government of Tajikistan has identified four strategic development goals for the next 15 years which are fully aligned with the SDGs:

- I. Ensure energy security and efficient use of electricity (SDG 7);
- II. Exit from communication dead-lock and turn country into a transit path (SDG 9);
- III. Ensure food security and people's access to good quality nutrition (SDG 1 and SDG 2);
- IV. Expand productive employment (SDG 8)

Thus, NDS-2030 will be considered as a main strategy around which stakeholders will be implementing the SDGs, become the main enabler for achieving national development goals.

The Review builds on the thematic goals and objectives for sustainable development – achievements of the MDGs, development priorities identified at NDS-2030 and MTDP 2016-2020, global water initiatives proposed by the Republic of Tajikistan and Year of Youth announced in Tajikistan in 2017.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS (MONITORING PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING MDGs)

Tajikistan reported significant progress in achieving MDGs; however this progress was uneven. The goals related to extreme poverty eradication (MDG 1), education (MDG 2) and the global partnership (MDG 8) have been largely achieved. Poverty reduction was the main achievement of Tajikistan for the period of implementation of the MDGs. Since 2000 to 2015, the poverty rate dropped from 83% to 31%. In this indicator, Tajikistan was included in the list of top 10 states, which demonstrated the fastest pace of poverty reduction over the past 15 years. Poverty eradication remains an actual problem, but the achievement of agreed goals serves as a basis for changing approaches related to poverty issues through addressing food and energy security, water sector issues, climate change, and other SDGs affecting the livelihoods of Tajikistan's population.

Tajikistan has achieved nearly universal primary education. Growth of income and wages were main driving forces of improved livelihoods.

Environmental sustainability goal (MDG 7) was achieved, as stated in MDG narrow approach. People enjoy improved access to drinking water and sanitation. However, environmental challenges and vulnerabilities (which were not reflected in MDG indicators) remain significant, particularly in the context of climate change. Climate change issue is addressed at a very high level of the Government of Tajikistan, as evidenced through initiation of glacier melting issue at the Global Agenda.

Water sector demonstrates improved indicators on access of people to drinking water and sanitation. However, these issues are not addressed fully and require significant investments. Tajikistan is among the countries to initiate water discussions at global level. The country hosted several High-Level Water Forums. Tajikistan is a member of a global panel on water issues.

Infant and child mortality (MDG 4) and maternal mortality (MDG 5) rates are going down, however slower than required. As for MDG 6, thanks to joint efforts and participation of the global community, Tajikistan has fully achieved indicators on combating malaria. Hundreds of health, education, cultural and sport facilities were constructed and handed-over. As for MDG 3 (gender equality) the progress is considered to be mixed. Through adoption of effective policy and legal framework, Tajikistan shows improvements by addressing existing gender inequalities and discrimination by the means of effectively applied policies and legislative norms.

Tajikistan is positioning well in successfully implementing the SDGs, given the experience of Tajikistan in achieving MDGs, as well as recent adoption of the NDS 2030 (with the efforts to align NDS with the SDGs). In line with international obligations of Tajikistan in achieving SDGs, the NDS 2030 envisages to respect the principle of "inclusion" by

mainstreaming needs of all population groups (based on gender, age, disability, social status, place of living, ethnicity etc.), as well as ensuring their representation.

The analysis of the current country situation, as well as reflection of policies and strategies in the context of their integration with SDGs is an important part of the VNR. The Rapid Integrated Assessment was conducted in 2016, covering such aspects as integration of SDGs' goals and targets into the national and sectorial strategic policies and action plans. Upon completion of the Rapid Integrated Assessment it was identified that around 64% of SDG targets are reflected in the national strategic programmes of the Republic of Tajikistan.

3. PROBLEM-SETTING AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

Given the complexity and indivisibility of SDGs, this chapter covers analysis of the thematic problems/challenges through the prism of poverty eradication in the context of food and energy security, and efficient use of water resources in Tajikistan.

An important part of this chapter is the assessment of policies and strategies, particularly in terms of inclusion (integration) of various elements of Agenda 2030 into these policies and strategies, with a particular focus on targeted efforts for those, left behind.

During transition to SDGs it shall be emphasized that several MDGs are not achieved. Achieved poverty reduction is uneven at sub-national level and clearly characterized by seasonality. Non-monetary poverty rate remains high, which is the reflection of lack of access to basic social and infrastructure services.

Significant discrepancies are observed in the context of regional development, particularly in the field of quality of water used by urban and rural population for household and drinking purposes. A large gap across regions is observed at the level of social infrastructure development. At the same time, relatively high demographic burden in rural areas indicates sharp problems in employment and income-generation in rural areas.

Access to power supply (electricity), given the specific conditions of Tajikistan, is the weakest link having a sharp negative effect on the achievement of a number of goals. The consequences are: limited industrial and non-industrial production and low productive employment, the use of unsafe solid fuel, as well as lack of access to education and health services.

Chronic malnutrition is observed in the field of food security and nutrition, affecting around 26% of the population.

Issues related to unequal access of women and men to material (land, finances etc.) and non-material (education, health etc.) resources remain sensitive. In order to promote gender equity, it is essential to harmonize goals and targets across adopted social-economic and gender strategies and programmes.

Designing the M&E system for the SDGs remains an important task for successful implementation of the SDGs. In this regards, the Government of Tajikistan has been conducting an analysis of global targets and indicators and its mainstreaming the system in the country. The design process of the M&E system is led by Government of Tajikistan with participation by various stakeholders and partners.

However, there is a problem that hinders effective planning, implementation and monitoring of development activities. The problem is that sectorial, strategic, program and budget priorities have to be consistent with the new national strategic documents, as well as international obligations of Tajikistan in regards to SDGs. Such situation hampers the practical implementation of the national development priorities and significantly impedes monitoring and evaluation of implementation of outcomes from the strategic documents and SDGs. Moreover, existing sectorial programmes are often times not interlinked and do not comply with the standards of results- and target-based planning and are not linked with the national budget. Such situation might create a risk of inadequate supply of required resources.

4. VISION OF THE FUTURE BASED ON LESSONS LEARNT

The NDS 2030 and its alignment with SDGs is the main vision of the Government of Tajikistan in the field of development and future of the country. Such vision lays a foundation to overcome existing challenges faced by the country.

It is essential to have an effective cross-sector coordination mechanism in order to achieve overall implementation of SDGs. Such mechanism will ensure that relevant policies are developed and implemented in an agreed and comprehensive manner with participation of broad range of stakeholders, including parliament, civil society and private sector, as well as in cooperation with the development partners and UN agencies.

Monitoring and reporting:

It is envisaged that existing institutional mechanism for coordination, facilitation and monitoring of SDGs will be improved as a part of M&E of the SDGs' implementation. Establishment of the cross-sectorial coordination mechanism will play an important role in the field of monitoring activities. Particular attention will be paid to the quality of data collection and introducing SDGs indicators.

In order to ensure that “*no one is left behind*” in Tajikistan, it is proposed to pay particular attention to data disaggregation and localization of SDGs to meet demands of such populations groups like women, children, elderly people, rural communities and people with disabilities.

Nationalization of the SDGs indicators:

At this stage the SDGs are agreed at global level, and SDG-related targets are reflected in the national development documents. The next step is to introduce SDG indicators at the country level. Following shall be accomplished to achieve this next step:

- Use global targets and indicators as a baseline for proposing series of the nationalized target and performance indicators, identified particularly for the context of Tajikistan;
- Use National Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan as a platform for a broad participation of the stakeholders for agreeing corresponding goals, targets and indicators tailored to the national needs and circumstances;
- Integrate related SDG indicators into the M&E system, which will be a priority for the next five years;
- Ensure effective cohesion across policy goals and indicators in order to develop effective M&E system, starting from the several key SDGs sectors in support of implementation of the national development goals.

Financing the SDGs

Given national budget constraints comprehensive funding of the SDGs agenda in Tajikistan seems to be impossible. It should be noted that the state investment strategy identifies concrete priorities. In this regards it is essential to take into account the role of international partners in achieving national SDGs. Some of the recommendations might include:

- Utilize financial evaluation/assessment tools, such as “Expenditures review”. Such tools might help in finding methods for building confidence in commitment to institutional governance and public financial management in support of reforms which might accelerate the progress in implementing SDGs;
- Coordination of donors' and UN agencies' activities in support of outcomes specified at the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and alignment with SDG-related progress ensures solid justification of the progress achieved at social-economic sphere and potential advancement in achievement of the SDGs.
- To a large extent, the effectiveness of development activities in Tajikistan will depend on the effectiveness of result-oriented systems, monitoring and evaluation of national and sectorial development plans, particularly NDS 2030 and MTDP 2020.

There are several areas where Tajikistan is in need of financial support by international development partners: SDG 2 and SDG 7, and associated with them SDG 3, 5, 6, 9, 13 and 15.

Conclusion

Tajikistan continues to introduce elements of strategic planning for development of monitoring and evaluation system at the national level. To support these processes the country has developed and operationalized legal framework and methodological base. For the implementation of SDGs, the integration of strategic planning system at all levels of government is envisaged.

In order to ensure achievement of a goal related to energy security and efficiency, as well as radical decline of poverty, the government plans to establish an effective risk management and monitoring system in the field of energy security, ensuring unlimited and fair access to energy to all. In support to SDG 6 and SDG 7, country plans to introduce an integrated water resource management.

Challenges related to food security and access to quality food products in the context of poverty eradication and improvement of livelihoods will be addressed through promotion of agrarian and water reform, as well as stable growth of the agro-industrial sector and other interventions aimed at achievement of SDG 2.

Another issue is about localization of SDGs, which will enable implementation and achievement of outcomes in key social and environmental goals. It is critical to increase the level of participation of civil society and a wider population in SDGs implementation at both national and regional levels.

The national budget will be amongst the main sources to feed implementation of SDGs within the context of the NDS 2030 and MTDP 2020. UN agencies and development partners will also play a critical role in funding implementation of SDGs. Both foreign direct and domestic investments will play a more significant role in the implementation of SDGs. Financial support by development partners will be essential for the programmatic development of the country, including funds and technical assistance of the multilateral organizations in the field of design and advancement of reforms and interventions. Tajikistan expects that development partners will increase financial support for priority areas which are in line with the spirit of new global Goals of sustainable development agenda.