



KAZAKHSTAN

BACKGROUND

An ethnically diverse nation with large oil, gas and mineral reserves, Kazakhstan has experienced rapid economic growth since the turn of the century and has become the dominant economy in Central Asia. However, with oil and other petroleum products making up over 60 percent of exports, the fall in prices for many commodities in 2015 had a significant impact on the Kazakh economy.

In April 2015, Nursultan Nazarbaev won the latest presidential election with a reported 97.7 percent of the vote.¹ His re-election coincided with the launch of an important reform process,

entitled '100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms', which is anticipated to strongly impact on institutional efficiency, government openness and long-term economic development. Furthermore, the President has made a commitment to reforms encouraging a multi-party system, while the country has also been exploring ways to decentralize power to the local level, with several initiatives from the Government in this area. To date, however, there is still significant potential for the further decentralization of power to local executive bodies.

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan has implemented significant public administra-

¹ BBC News, "Kazakh leader gains crushing election victory," 27 April 2015. Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32471428>

tion and civil service reforms to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government. Nonetheless, more progress is needed in addressing the development challenges facing Kazakhstan. Restrictions on freedom of expression remain, with newspapers and other media outlets presenting dissenting views still subject to closure by authorities. Further improvement is also required to reduce discrimination against ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community and some religious groups.

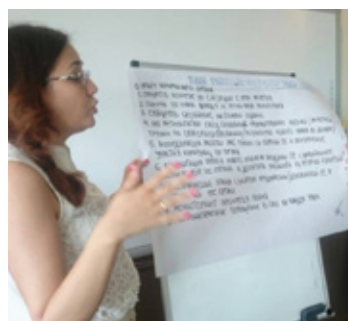
More recently, Kazakhstan has been playing an active role in attempts to counter violent extremism in Central Asia. In June 2015, Kazakhstan hosted the two-day Central and South Asia Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism. Co-organized by the Kazakh and US governments, the event was attended by 200 high-level government officials, representatives of the private sector and civil society activists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As a result of the conference, a set of recommendations were adopted and concrete steps proposed to enhance national and regional efforts.

ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

A major development in 2015 was the adoption of the Law on Access to Information in November. UNDP has been involved with this new law in several ways, including participating in the working group to discuss and draft the law, providing expert recommendations and advice, and the provision of suggestions and comments collected at Regulatory Impact Analysis and capacity building events in the regions. Following the drafting process, UNESCO and UNDP also initiated a preliminary evaluation of the draft law to assess compliance with the Global Right to Information index. The results of this evaluation were presented in September by the UN common group at the 'Access to Information and Public Participation' conference organized by the Parliament, OSCE, UNDP and a number of NGO partners.

UNDP also continued its support for the Regional Hub for Civil Service in Astana (the Hub). Established in 2013, the Hub's goal is to promote civil service excellence and facilitate the ex-

change of knowledge and best practices among the countries of the region and beyond. The Hub has a range of strategies, including capacity build-



Discussing the effectiveness of public councils, the involvement of civil society in decision making and access to information

Photo by: UNDP Kazakhstan

"Since its establishment, the hub has become a recognized multi-institutional platform for the incessant exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of civil service, aimed at stimulating the transformation of civil service in the region through capacity building and dissemination of innovative approaches in the field of civil service"

– **Mr. Rolf Alter**, OECD Director for Public Governance and Territorial Development at the 'Partnership for Civil Service Excellence' conference

ing for people and institutions, building partnerships and networks across borders, and assisting with research and knowledge management. As part of this support, in 2015, UNDP assisted with the launch of the Innovative Solutions Scheme, a grants scheme that supports innovative reforms and solutions in civil service and public administration that have the potential to be replicated in other countries. UNDP also sits on the independent selection committee that selects the most innovative proposals. Membership of the Hub currently includes 36 countries globally.

In work to support the strengthening of the rule of law and human rights, UNDP completed a nationwide survey of 12,206 people in 193 courts to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of the judicial system. The survey results have been made public and posted on the website of the Supreme Court. Further, UNDP worked in partnership with the Supreme Court and OHCHR to deliver regional workshops targeted at judges, prosecutors, policemen and local government representatives to increase knowledge on how UN treaty bodies function, and facilitate discussion on the need for better coordination between government agencies. Despite high levels of female participation in the work force, women in Kazakhstan continue to suffer from discrimination in many aspects of life. In efforts to change the perception of women in Kazakhstan, UNDP is supporting a dialogue on ways to promote the protection of the rights of women and children, and the right to education of young girls, as outlined in the strategy 'Kazakhstan - 2050'.

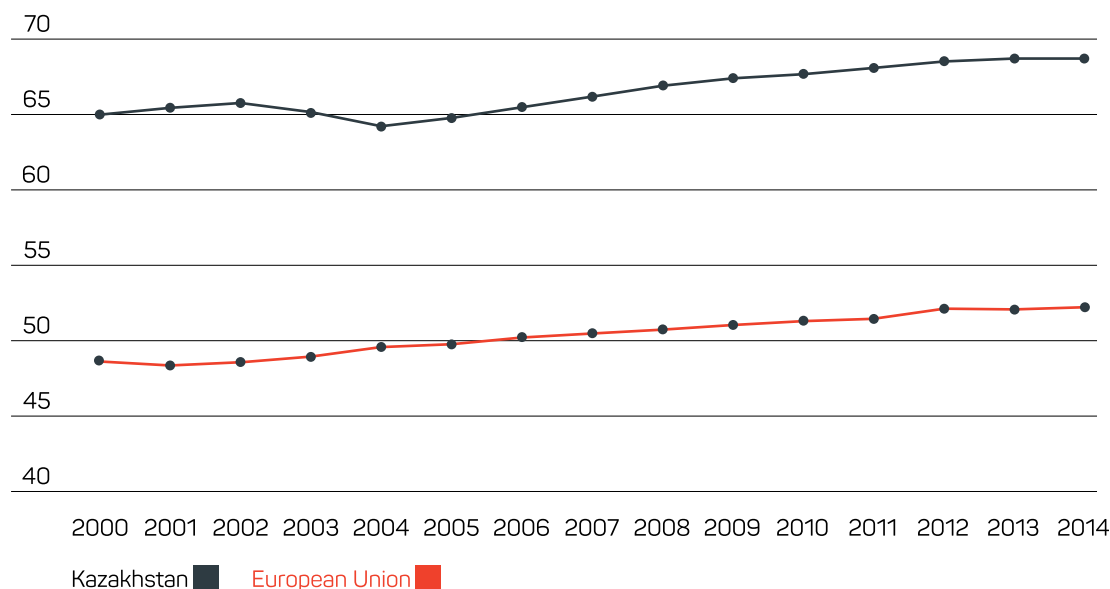


Workshop organized by the UNDP in cooperation with the Supreme Court targeting rule of law principles and citizens' access to justice

Photo by: UNDP Kazakhstan

CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

While Kazakhstan continues to make improvements in the field of civil service reform and public services delivery, several challenges remain.



Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank²

² The World Bank, "Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLFC.ACT.FE.ZS> (accessed 1 September 2016)

Key results



12,206 people surveyed to assess the effectiveness of the judicial system



New laws on Access to Information, Public Councils, Civil Service, and Prevention of Corruption passed with UNDP assistance and input



Concept of Family and Gender Policy in Kazakhstan for 2017-2030 drafted with support of UNDP



Innovative Solutions Scheme launched at the Regional Hub for Civil Service, which also had the number of participating countries grow to 36

Despite the Government's willingness to promote state transparency and accountability, the implementation of the new laws on Access to Information and Public Councils have so far proven difficult, with a lack of supplementary regulations for the practical application of laws, and some government officials yet to be convinced of the benefits. The successful implementation of these laws is expected to require significant capacity building and experience before yielding results. Going forward, this work to improve transparency and accountability of civil servants and government bodies will be coordinated with the lower house of Parliament (the Majilis) and OSCE to ensure continued respect for the constitutional rights of people to obtain and disseminate information, and take part in decision-making processes.

UNDP's work with the Hub will continue. In particular, UNDP will support the development of a long-term strategy for the Hub, factoring in the needs of the participating countries. The results of this process will be recorded in operational and strategy documents. With a long-term strategy in place, support and training will be provided on how to best develop the Hub's facilities and resources in line with that strategy.

Work to improve public administration will also be taken to the regions, where UNDP will support efforts to improve the capacities of public councils. Specifically, UNDP will be working with members of public councils, NGOs, the media and representatives of local executive bodies to support the effective use of public hearings, public expertise,

public monitoring and reporting of executives at public councils' meetings. UNDP will also look to build on the recent events around countering violent extremism to encourage proactive measures to reduce extremism that do not negatively impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, UNDP will continue supporting the efforts of the Government in development of local governance, with a law on local governance expected to be passed in the near future.

Finally, UNDP will continue assisting the Government in its efforts to improve and implement human rights legislation, taking on board the recommendations provided through the UN treaty bodies' mechanisms. This will include the development of indicators to enable effective monitoring of the implementation of the new legislation, as well as capacity building workshops for law enforcement bodies and NGOs to increase awareness on the specifics of international commitments and mechanisms. Public discussion of human rights issues through public councils at the regional level are also planned to increase awareness on existing problems amongst LGUs and civil society.