



**MAPPING THE STATE**

**OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

**IN FORMAL SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**IN KYRGYZSTAN**

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL

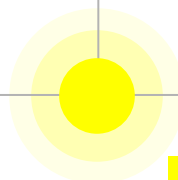


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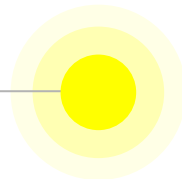
**“Human rights education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in the endeavour to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected.”**

Office of the UN High Commissioner  
for Human Rights<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [ohchr.org/en/issues/education/training/pages/hreducationtrainingindex.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/education/training/pages/hreducationtrainingindex.aspx)



# CONTENTS



<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 The international framework for human rights education	4
1.2 Human rights education in practice	5
<b>2. The education system in Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 The general regulatory framework and school system	6
2.2 The current human rights education system in Kyrgyzstan	7
<b>3. Challenges in implementing human rights education in Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 The need for a holistic approach	10
3.2 Lack of available and appropriate resources	11
3.3 Challenges in teaching and concepts	12
<b>4. Developments and opportunities</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Review of textbooks	14
4.2 Teacher training	15
4.3 Cooperation with civil society	15
<b>5. Key Findings</b>	<b>17</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Human rights education can be defined as any learning, education, training or information efforts aimed at building a universal culture of human rights, has long been a core part of Amnesty International's work. This mapping aims to identify how the organization may best play a role in working on this topic in the formal secondary education sector in Kyrgyzstan.

The mapping covers three main areas:

1. the general context and existing human rights programmes in schools;
2. the current difficulties facing human rights education in schools;
3. and an assessment of the needs and opportunities to develop and expand human rights education in formal secondary education in Kyrgyzstan.

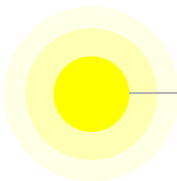
This mapping grew from dialogue and co-operation with partner organizations. It describes how human rights education is represented in international documents, national school curricula, methodological teaching complexes and in practice. It includes current examples and major trends in human rights education in formal secondary education, as well as challenges faced by key stakeholders involved in human rights education. The mapping describes some examples of cooperation between civil society and the Ministry of Education and Science in Kyrgyzstan.

The framework includes:

- a review of international documents, national laws on education, and curricula for subjects that include a human rights component;
- an overview of approved educational and methodological complexes and pilot methodological materials;
- interviews with key people involved in education and human rights work.

Human rights education is one of the key areas of Amnesty International's work in the Central Asian region. Amnesty International bases its work on a holistic approach that includes cooperation with state entities and civil society, national and international institutions and academic structures that work on human rights education.

Amnesty International follows the definition of human rights education given in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education (see Box 1).



**Article 2.1** *Human rights education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.*

*2. Human rights education and training encompasses:*

*(a) Education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection.*

*(b) Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners.*

*(c) Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.<sup>2</sup>*

From the beginning of 2019, Amnesty International's human rights education work in Central Asia<sup>3</sup> focused on Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Currently, the main areas of focus are:

- Promoting human rights education in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan within Amnesty International's annual global letter-writing campaign Write for Rights;
- Building advocacy strategies with partners for quality human rights education in formal secondary education programmes in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan;
- Supporting teachers, trainers and activists in adapting and applying Amnesty International's human rights methodologies and educational materials.

This mapping will contribute to building advocacy strategies together with partners in Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training [https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/declarations/hr\\_education.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/declarations/hr_education.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> For more information on human rights education in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, please visit Amnesty International's regional website <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/education/>

<sup>4</sup> [amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/](https://amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/)

# 1.1 The international framework for human rights education

Human rights education should not be regarded as an optional extra to the curriculum. Kyrgyzstan, like other states, is obliged under international human rights law to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening respect for human rights.<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of international documents that set standards for human rights education, and the main ones are set out in Box 2.

The main international documents that set standards for human rights education are: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 29), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 10), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 7), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 8), and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (Article 2).<sup>6</sup>

In particular, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”.<sup>7</sup>

Article 13 (1) of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges states parties to “strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” through education.

In 1990, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified convention in the world, provided a solid foundation for various human rights education programmes worldwide, stating that the education of children should be aimed at developing respect for human rights and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. The UN Committee that monitors the implementation of the Convention has stressed that the right to education, enshrined in Article 29 (1) of the Convention, is not only about access to education, but also about its content. Education whose content is firmly grounded in values is a necessary tool for the child to find answers to contemporary challenges that take into account human rights. Moreover, respect must be instilled not only through the content of educational programmes, but also through the special design of the educational process, pedagogical methods and learning environments. Learning must respect the child’s inherent dignity and create opportunities for the child to express his or her views and participate in school life.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International Briefing Paper “Human Rights Education: High Level Overview of HRE Instruments, Mechanisms to Be Considered in Central Asia,” EUR 04/9074/2018 (11 September 2018), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur04/9074/2018/en/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/Listofcontents.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (RUS) – <https://www.un.org/rw/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> General Comment No.1 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001 – [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2F6C%2F2001%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2F6C%2F2001%2F1&Lang=en)

In 2011, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, which established a comprehensive framework for integrating human rights learning into national educational systems. Youth empowerment through human rights education is also in the centre of the fourth phase (2020-2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Human rights education in practice

Human rights education is about educating people about human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and how they can be practically achieved and protected. Human rights education also takes place through human rights; educational and training processes should respect the rights of both educators and learners. Human rights education also emphasizes learning for human rights, in the sense that participants are empowered to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. The United Nations has stated that children and young people should have access to human rights education and that schools are a key means by which education on human rights can be accessed.<sup>10</sup>

The school education system should play a major role in teaching young people about human rights by spreading awareness of the values underlying rights, promoting understanding of the concepts and basic mechanisms of human rights protection, and teaching basic skills for asserting human rights. In this regard, it is necessary to create conditions for comprehensive and quality teaching of human rights, including through systematic professional development of teachers and the introduction of modern educational methodologies in the field of human rights.<sup>11</sup>

Human rights education should be present in all areas of the education sector, starting with early childhood development programmes and pre-school education. However, the importance of human rights education specifically for secondary school students has been recognized in commitments by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, which includes Kyrgyzstan). The OSCE Guidelines on Human Rights Education for Secondary School Systems offer participating states comprehensive information for implementing human rights education, including core competencies, curricula, assessment, and teacher support. At the regional interstate level of the OSCE, participating states agreed to “encourage in schools (...) the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms” and to “design effective human rights related curricula and courses for students at all levels.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/WPHRE/Fourthphase/Pages/FourthPhaseIndex.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> World Human Rights Education Programme. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005 – [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ThirdPhaseWPHREducation\\_RU.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ThirdPhaseWPHREducation_RU.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International implemented a Human Rights Friendly Schools project which was aimed to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of school life or a school community where human rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted <https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>

<sup>12</sup> ODIHR’s Human Rights Education Guidelines for Secondary Education Systems <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/5/9/57574.pdf>

## 2.THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

### IN KYRGYZSTAN

Education in Kyrgyzstan is described as “a priority strategic area of public policy” by the Education Act of the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>13</sup> It is based on the principles enshrined in international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is aimed at achieving the goals of the UN’s Millennium Development<sup>14</sup> and Education for All<sup>15</sup> programmes. The government’s vision for education was set out in their strategic framework for 2012-2020, which set objectives including “creating an education system that prepares citizens to have strong communication skills, be able to act independently, express their opinions openly, use creative and innovative approaches, share the values of human rights, freedoms and gender equality, and respect cultural, ethnic and political diversity.”<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1 The general regulatory framework and school system

The main regulatory documents for general education institutions in Kyrgyzstan are: The Education Act of the Kyrgyz Republic;<sup>17</sup> The Development of an Inclusive Education Proposal 2019-2023;<sup>18</sup> The State Educational Standard Of Secondary General Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, Decree No 403 of 21.07.2014;<sup>19</sup> The Education Strategy for 2012-2020 and Action Plan for implementation;<sup>20</sup> and the basic curriculum for general educational organizations of the Kyrgyz Republic.<sup>21</sup>

According to these normative documents, the school system is the main link in the education system, based on an approach orientated towards the individual and aimed at shaping a certain set of key and subject competencies in each student. Basic school education creates a foundation for secondary education, elementary or secondary vocational education, or entry into the labour market. Secondary school education strengthens the differentiation of education through the introduction of profile education, which facilitates the personal and social adaptation of graduates, and provides the opportunity to continue studying in secondary or higher professional educational institutions or to enter the labour market.

<sup>13</sup> Kyrgyz Republic, Education Act – <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/1216?cl=ru-ru#:~:text=Закон%20НР%20от%2030%20апреля%202003%20года%20№%2092%20%2206%20образования%22&text=Настоящий%20Закон%20устанавливает%20принципы%20государственной,служит%20правовой%20базой%20их%20реализации>

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Millennium Declaration, [ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Millennium.aspx](http://ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Millennium.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Education for All by 2015. Will we make it? | Global Education Monitoring Report (unesco.org)

<sup>16</sup> Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic (2012-2020) | Planipolis (unesco.org)

<sup>17</sup> Kyrgyz Republic, Education Act, [edu.gov.kg/ru/docs/zakon-kr-ob-obrazovanii/](http://edu.gov.kg/ru/docs/zakon-kr-ob-obrazovanii/)

<sup>18</sup> Development concept for inclusive education in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/14591>

<sup>19</sup> Government act of July 21, 2014 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/96690>

<sup>20</sup> The Educational Strategy for 2012-2020 is <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/92984/10?cl=ru-ru#p2>

<sup>21</sup> Appendix to the Ministry of Education order <https://edu.gov.kg/ru/schools/school-books/prilozhenie-k-prikazu-moin-kr/>



School learning is the main component of the education system and includes three stages:

- Elementary school grades 1-4.
  - Middle school grades 5-9.
  - Secondary school grades 10-11.
- The time taken to complete a full education is 11 years.

In Kyrgyzstan there are state, municipal and private general education institutions. According to their status, they are classified as general education schools, gymnasiums, and lyceums. There are currently 2,197 schools in Kyrgyzstan with four languages of instruction: Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek and Tajik.<sup>22</sup> Schools are required to implement the State Educational Standard, Subject Standards and curricula regardless of their type of administration, language of instruction and so on.

## 2.2 The current human rights education system in Kyrgyzstan

The mapping undertaken by Amnesty International has shown that there is no comprehensive system of human rights education in formal education in Kyrgyzstan. Such a system would include (but not be restricted to) a national human rights curriculum, programmes and teaching packages for teaching human rights in line with international mechanisms, and professional training and development courses for teachers (or a system of regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality).

In practice human rights education in schools in Kyrgyzstan is implemented mainly through the Subject Standard for a course named “The Individual and Society” and is conducted within the framework of the subject of the same name.

“The Individual and Society” Subject Standard for middle school grades 5-9 was approved in 2018 and developed on the basis of the Education Act of the Kyrgyz Republic and Government Decree No 403: The State Educational Standard for Secondary General Education of the Kyrgyz Republic. It sets the requirements of the state mandatory minimum educational content for the subject, and the level of learning students and graduates in the subject are expected to possess.<sup>23</sup> The subject of “The Individual and Society” is a practice-oriented course about the individual, their place in society and in the global world, tolerant relations between people, and the relationship between the individual and state and public institutions. Human rights and freedoms are among the priorities of the subject standard, along with the democratic individual and citizenship, diversity, multiculturalism, and the unity of the people of Kyrgyzstan.

In general, the Subject Standard describes the foundational ideas of the subject in detail, the basic requirements for how to teach them, the expected results and the frameworks for assessing the skills and knowledge of students. It divides learning into three levels:

<sup>22</sup> There are 1,410 Kyrgyz-language schools, 201 Russian-language schools, 121 Uzbek-language schools, three Tajik-language schools, and 462 multilingual schools. See: Language policy in education: the needs of society and the prospects for multilingual education in southern Kyrgyzstan” – [https://soros.kg/srs/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/policy\\_brief\\_center\\_social\\_integration.pdf](https://soros.kg/srs/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/policy_brief_center_social_integration.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Subject Standard for “The Individual and Society” course for grades 5-9 <https://edu.gov.kg/media/files/9e240494-01c7-4413-8e46-9e93e4fc5689.pdf>

**Stage 1**

(grades 1-4)

acquiring the skills of self-expression, learning about the equality of people through their similarities and differences, the ABCs of human rights, understanding the need to follow established rules of conduct and ethics.

**Stage 2**

(grades 5-9)

at this stage the focus is on a more complex range of issues – including the teaching of practical skills to resolve conflict situations, the establishment of non-discriminatory relations with others, the formation and development of tolerant forms of social behaviour.

**Stage 3**

(grades 10-11)

acquisition of knowledge necessary for the young people to uphold democracy in Kyrgyzstan, creating an active civil position amongst students, a sense of responsibility, good ways of communication, conflict resolution, and an understanding of the mechanisms of interaction between people, society and the state.<sup>24</sup>

The Subject Standard qualitatively describes interdisciplinary links with other subjects such as history, geography, literature, mathematics and physics, but omits such links with the languages taught in schools (Kyrgyz, Russian, English and others). It gives a broad explanation on the construction of the logic behind the subject for teachers. The standard allows teachers to use different tools to teach the subject, for example:

- available textbooks and/or textbooks with electronic applications as well as reference, educational and methodical literature on the subject;
- access to additional print and electronic educational resources on the subject, including the internet.

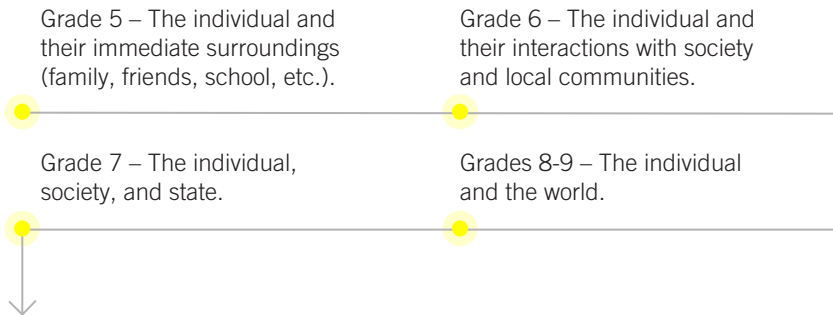
It also describes the basic qualifications for teaching staff who implement the general programme for the subject of “The Individual and Society”:

- knowledge of the individual as a result of the following factors: educational process, age, individual characteristics, and social factors of development;
- observance of the rights and freedoms of students, the ability to provide social assistance and support students;
- possession of systematic knowledge about the pedagogical process, awareness of modern psychological and pedagogical technologies, educational development;
- ability to organize extracurricular activities for students;
- knowledge of the educational systems in institutions and fundamentals of their management;

<sup>24</sup> Subject Standard for “The Individual and Society” course for grades 5 10-11  
[http://lib.intuit.kg/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/%D0%A7%D0%B8%D0%9E-10-11-%D0%BA%D0%BB\\_rus.pdf](http://lib.intuit.kg/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/%D0%A7%D0%B8%D0%9E-10-11-%D0%BA%D0%BB_rus.pdf)

- basic experience in organization of experimental research in the field of education;
- knowledge of modern teaching methods in teaching “The Individual and Society” in general educational establishments of different types, the use of different teaching methods;
- readiness to conduct specialized training on the subject of “The Individual and Society”, willingness to add to the development of author’s programmes.

“The Individual and Society”<sup>25</sup> course is a mandatory part of the curriculum and, along with the requirements of the Subject Standard relating to educational outcomes, is suitable for all general education establishments that provide a basic general education. In grades 5-9 the subject includes the following sections:



In formal secondary education, human rights are taught only within the framework of the subject of “The Individual and Society”. This course distinguishes three main content areas: socialization, activity and regulation. It is positive to note that “human rights and freedoms” are the priorities of the course.

<sup>25</sup> Subject Standard for “The Human and Society” course for grades 5-9 <https://edu.gov.kg/media/files/9e240494-01c7-4413-8e46-9e93e4fc5689.pdf>

# 3. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

The Education Act of the Kyrgyz Republic clearly describes the importance of human rights in education,<sup>26</sup> and The Ministry of Education and Science has been working with civil society to improve the quality of subjects that, in theory, very clearly describe human rights and are based on giving students a strong conception of them.

Challenges remain, however, in ensuring that human rights education in Kyrgyzstan meets the vision of the government and the requirements of international standards. These include the lack of a comprehensive system of human rights education, of available and appropriate textbooks, and of resources on open platforms in the Kyrgyz language. According to local stakeholders, there are also challenges around some concepts in human rights, and resistance from some parents to teaching certain aspects of human rights, such as gender equality, in schools.<sup>27</sup>

## 3.1 The need for a holistic approach

A single subject on its own is not sufficient to create a school environment that respects, promotes and protects human rights for students and teachers alike. It is necessary to create a multi-level system of promoting human rights in schools, where there are opportunities for teachers and students to know, protect and respect human rights. Such a holistic approach to human rights education creates an environment for learning human rights through the practice and experience of human rights themselves.

Tatiana Matokhina from the NGO Foundation for the Development of Educational Initiatives of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan supports this view:



*It is important to begin working with the Ministry at all levels on developing sensitivity to the topics of human rights, non-discrimination and inclusion. A single academic subject cannot ensure the implementation of human rights in the school environment. A holistic approach is required, necessitating an implementation in all subjects and the educational system as a whole, as well as the development of academic self-administration and project and research activities in the field of human rights at the school level. Professional*

<sup>26</sup> Kyrgyz Republic's Education Act – <https://edu.gov.kg/ru/docs/zakon-kr-ob-obrazovanii/>

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with partner organizations were conducted by Amnesty International via Zoom in Kyrgyzstan in March-June 2020.

*development courses should be organized for school staff and representatives such as the principal, deputy principal, social pedagogue, members of the parents' committee and school parliament. I think the inclusion of human rights values in the school's strategic plans would be a concrete result of the work on this issue.*



## 3.2 Lack of available and appropriate resources

During the interviews for this mapping respondents often mentioned a challenge in implementing “The Individual and Society” subject across all school grades because of a lack of textbooks, including textbooks of an appropriate quality. Often textbooks are not sensitive to issues of diversity and tolerance and do not include practical tools to protect and promote human rights.

One consequence of this is that at the moment grades 7-8 do not study the subject as textbooks are still in the process of being developed. Azhara Kasymalieva, executive director of the NGO Kyrgyzstan Youth Development Institute, notes:



*For example, despite the fact that “The Individual and Society” subject should be taught from grades 5 to 11, in practice, the subject is only taught in grades 5-6 and grades 9-11, while grades 7-8 skip over the subject because there are currently no textbooks, with the required grades needing development.*



Other grades lack textbooks of the required quality. For example, a 2018 “The Individual and Society” textbook for grades 5-6 written by O. Osmonov was heavily criticized because of non-compliance with the Subject Standard. A separate working group was created by the Ministry of Education and Science to revise the textbook.<sup>28</sup> As a result, schools were not able to receive textbooks for a year. International organizations such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were involved in the work on this textbook.

Textbooks for grades 9-11 have also not been updated, and “The Individual and Society” module for these grades has been combined with other subjects. Azhara Kasymalieva notes that:



*In 2015, The Legal Framework for The Establishment of a Legal Culture for the Kyrgyz Population for 2016-2020 was developed and enacted. This became the main driving force for working on the development of a textbook and expanding the subject of «The Individual and Society» for elementary and middle grades.<sup>29</sup>*

<sup>28</sup> “The Individual and Society” textbook – 6th grade – <https://www.kitep.edu.gov.kg/ru/view/419>

<sup>29</sup> The concept of improving the legal culture of the Kyrgyz Republic’s population for 2016-2020” <http://minjust.gov.kg/ru/content/753>

*Prior to 2018, it was taught only in grades 9-11. Moreover, in 2020, «The Individual and Society» subject was combined with three other subjects for grades 9-11: Civics, Introduction to Economics, and Ethics. However, the number of hours was not increased, and the justification for combining the lessons was the reduction of the teaching load of students in grades 9-11.*



Teachers are also more likely to face a lack of methodological resources about human rights on open platforms in the Kyrgyz language. The COVID-19 pandemic has created further challenges for Kyrgyzstan in creating new tools for quality distance learning. However, Tatiana Matokhina, coordinator of the Education Initiatives Support Foundation, notes that: *“Due to the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Science is now open to working with new tools to build quality and accessible online distance education.”*

### 3.3 Challenges in teaching and concepts

Teachers can find the subject, and the time resources needed, challenging. Azhara Kasymalieva noted:



*The Subject Standard for «The Individual and Society»<sup>30</sup> is very good in concept, but difficult to study and understand and unfortunately, many teachers do not have the time to get acquainted with the Standard and undergo the mandatory refresher courses, meaning they often teach the subject according to the programme provided by the Ministry of Education. The Standard is updated every five years and in 2020 we are due to update it again.*



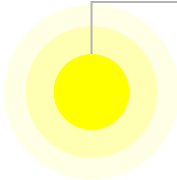
She added: *When combining subjects, for example, the qualifications and training of teachers are not taken into account. Often «The Individual and Society» subject is taught by history teachers, who are not prepared to teach economics.* She also noted, however, that: *“The Institute for Professional Development does progressive work in trying to familiarize teachers with the existing Subject Standards and develop online subject modules for teachers with relevant information.”*

Among the difficulties, respondents also noted the confusion of human rights with the concepts of “citizens’ obligations,” “law and order,” and “deviant” behaviour. In general, in the context of Kyrgyzstan, especially outside major cities, some aspects of the human rights concept are associated with Western and pro-European ideas. As a local stakeholder shared:

<sup>30</sup> Subject Standard for “The Individual and Society” course for grades 5-9 <https://edu.gov.kg/media/files/9e240494-01c7-4413-8e46-9e93e4fc5689.pdf>



*And even if the teacher is capable of teaching students about human rights, if they touch on upon subjects like diversity of identities, the right to sexual education, gender equality, etc., parents can complain about the teacher – because the teacher is seen as teaching the child «bad/unacceptable» things which allegedly do not align with family values.*



In this regard, it is important for human rights education to highlight the universal values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the universal character of the international human rights protection system.

# 4. DEVELOPMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

According to interviews conducted by Amnesty International with experts the State is making a number of efforts to improve the quality of education, for example by attempting to bring educational materials in line with international human rights standards and improving teacher training. There are also further opportunities to promote human rights in schools through cooperation with civil society.

## 4.1 Review of textbooks

In 2018, the Ministry of Education conducted an anti-discrimination and gender appraisal of textbooks based on Article 3 of the Education Act, which established the right to education regardless of gender, nationality, language, social and property status, disability, type and nature of occupation, religion, political and religious beliefs, place of residence and other circumstances. A team of experts reviewed 40 textbooks from grades 1 to 11.

Zulfiya Kochorbaeva, director of the Agency of Social Technologies, concluded, *“Textbooks underwent gender and anti-discrimination appraisal under the following criteria: visual representation of gender\sex, gender characteristics, distribution of family roles and responsibilities, distribution of social roles, professions or occupations, representation of ethnic or vulnerable groups, discrimination and inequality, war, conflict and mass violence. The results of the appraisal showed that the textbooks are based on stereotypical representations of gender roles, that there is no ethnic representation, not to mention children with disabilities. The materials are limited and there are difficulties in translating terminology into Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik.”*

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science founded the “Okuu Kitebi” Training and Research Centre which will be responsible for the quality of textbooks and teaching materials. The objectives of the centre are<sup>31</sup>:

1. Improving the quality of educational materials (textbooks),
2. Creation of a database of textbook authors and their qualifications,
3. Creation of a database of experts to appraise the textbooks, their training and certification
4. Assessing the needs for a new generation of textbooks,
5. Providing students with this new generation of high-quality, error-free textbooks
6. Preparation of electronic books as part of the digitalization process,
7. Conducting four types of appraisal for textbooks prepared by authors and publishers
  - Scientific appraisal
  - Pedagogical appraisal
  - Anti-discrimination and gender appraisal.
  - Practical appraisal (approbation).

<sup>31</sup> “Okuu Kitebi” Training and Research Centre, <http://kao.kg/издательский-центр-окуу-китеби/>



## 4.2 Teacher training

In accordance with the Education Act, every five years teachers receive advanced training at the Institute of Professional Development and Teacher Training, operated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

According to Matlyuba Latipovna Azimova, a teacher at the Department of Pedagogy, Psychology and Socio-Humanitarian Disciplines at the Institute:



*The subject of «The Individual and Society» is taught in grades 5-6 and 9-11. Teachers undergo professional development at the Institute and receive updated information and current trends in the field of human rights by means of the prepared programme for teachers. For example, in 2019, in a joint effort with the Educational Initiatives Support, we developed two modules on gender equality and non-discrimination.<sup>32</sup> Teachers can take the module online and receive a certificate of completion.<sup>33</sup>*



## 4.3 Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations are able to sign short- and long-term memorandums of cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science. This facilitates joint work and opens up access to work in building non-formal/supplementary education for students and teachers in schools.<sup>34</sup>

Some challenges remain, however, including caution in selecting partners and delays in implementing agreements owing to bureaucracy and changes in personnel – which also impact on the ability to conduct long-term planning.

The Ministry of Education and Science, for example, is very careful in selecting partners for cooperation, to avoid public outcry and opposition from parents. One interviewee shared with Amnesty that: “such measures were probably caused by several incidents that occurred as a result of sexual and reproductive health pamphlets produced by the Alliance for Reproductive Health. Parents complained about the inadmissibility of this kind of information for their children. Additionally, such measures were taken because of the state strengthening of institutions against terrorism and extremism” - a reference to the Government Programme on Countering Extremism and Terrorism, 2017-2022.<sup>35</sup>

During interviews, respondents shared information that decision-makers in the Ministry of Education and Science are open to cooperation with civil society organizations but difficulties arise at the stage of practical implementation of the agreements reached: the drafting and signing of the memorandum can take an indefinite amount of time and delay the process. In addition, due to the unstable political situation in Kyrgyzstan and frequent changes of

<sup>32</sup> Teachers introduce principles of gender equality and non-discrimination into schooling

<https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/ru/48913-uchitelya-vnedryayut-principy-gendernogo-ravenstva-i-nediskriminacii-v-shkolnoe-obrazovanie>

<sup>33</sup> Gender equality and non-discrimination in school – <http://gm.ripk.kg/ru/books/2/intro>

<sup>34</sup> Based on the Concept of Cooperation between Public Associations, Public Foundations (Non-Governmental Organizations and) and State Authorities, <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/55210>

<sup>35</sup> The Kyrgyz Government’s Programme on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022 <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/100104>

personnel, including ministers of various departments, there are difficulties in planning long-term projects, as it is necessary to re-build relationships with new faces each time.

### 4.3.1 Civil society as providers of human rights education

Human rights education in schools provided by various representatives of civil society is generally beyond the scope of this mapping, but it is important to note that in Kyrgyzstan this practice is quite extensive. And some examples are quoted here. Public organizations in Kyrgyzstan cooperate with vocational lyceums. For example, NGO IDEA Central Asia shared that they developed a training manual for teachers in vocational lyceums, a civil competency assessment system, and a workbook for students entitled “Legal Frameworks for Professional Activity”.<sup>36</sup> The manual was created to teach human rights through interactive methods, and it encourages teachers to make greater use of information technology. Aizat Ruslanova, the programme officer for IDEA Central Asia, noted:



*Working with vocational lyceums in Kyrgyzstan is a little easier than with schools, as the administration and decision makers in vocational lyceums themselves determine the curriculum and are very happy to receive additional support in the work to develop materials for teachers and students. Despite this, there were difficulties. It was difficult for teachers to talk about human rights and sensitive topics, but teachers felt there was room to grow.*



The Youth Development Institute is also developing non-formal civic education in schools in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>37</sup> The Institute has been implementing the “Developing Civic Competencies for School Students”<sup>38</sup> project and developing a “model for extracurricular educational work”. A key difference from the existing system of educational work is that this model allows to move from didactic way of teaching to a participatory approach where pupils are encouraged to play an active role in decision making on school matters in line with democratic principles.

Another example was shared by the NGO Youth Development Institute which runs the “Open Youth Parliament”. This project aims to promote the values of parliamentary democracy through educating youth and strengthening their participation in decision-making processes.<sup>39</sup> The Institute also develops an informal youth network through the human rights schools “Ukuk” – a national platform for human rights education which includes three phases of core training modules (Basic Course on Human Rights and Public Interest Actions; Advanced Course on Legal Mechanisms; Training for Trainers on Human Rights).<sup>40</sup> The Institute is working together with the Kyrgyz Academy of Education to develop an educational methodology on the subject “The Individual and Society” for the 7th grade.

<sup>36</sup> Working notebook for students “Legal basics of professional activity”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BKk8DOB3RY6gwyPVD2Sm9RuHWuiS899B/view?usp=sharing>

<sup>37</sup> The work of the Institute for Youth Development in Civil Education and Employment [https://jashtar.org/kto-my/\\_gallery/2.html](https://jashtar.org/kto-my/_gallery/2.html)

<sup>38</sup> “Model of extracurricular educational work” – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EZdE13TXCApCS5MAEMd0vK4y03bdAhNq/view?usp=sharing>

<sup>39</sup> Open Youth Parliament “ project – [https://jashtar.org/kto-my/\\_gallery/2/10.html](https://jashtar.org/kto-my/_gallery/2/10.html)

<sup>40</sup> “Ukuk” school of Human Rights <https://ukuk.jashtar.org/o-shkole.html>

## 5. KEY FINDINGS

As a result of this mapping exercise a number of key findings have emerged which are important in building follow-up work on the promotion of human rights education in Kyrgyzstan.

### 1

#### General Context

- Kyrgyzstan is obliged through its commitments as a member of several international and regional organizations to meet international standards in human rights education. These standards include those in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- National legislation directly enshrines the importance of quality human rights education through the Education Act.
- Human rights are taught in curricula under the subject of “The Individual and Society”, and an academic module based on its Subject Standard has been developed and applied in practice. The Standard clearly states human rights as one of its priorities and prescribes the teaching of gender equality and human rights values that allow students to adapt to the changing conditions of the world around them. Moreover, the Standard broadly describes the principles behind the topic and interdisciplinary connections.
- The course focuses on the development of topics such as self-reflection and understanding social environments; oneself as an individual; one’s physical and mental characteristics; and the ability to empathize and respect the values of others. In addition, the course focuses on civil and legal competences; effective use of knowledge and practice of human rights protections and performance of civil duties; respect for human rights; intercultural tolerance; and financial and economic competence, for example understanding the need to plan income and expenses.
- According to representatives from several NGOs, the Ministry of Education and Science in Kyrgyzstan is in principle open to partnership with civil society in the field of human rights education.
- Teacher development programmes in Kyrgyzstan include human rights, and teacher training institutions work with civil society to provide quality teacher training. Moreover, civil society is making every effort to raise awareness among teachers about the teaching of human rights including modern teaching methods.
- Civil society in Kyrgyzstan has some human/expert resources and NGOs are sufficiently competent in developing curricula, evaluation systems and supporting teachers. A project is under way to introduce human rights education in vocational lyceums, and there is also a pilot project on civic education in several schools in Bishkek.

## 2

**Current challenges**

- Limited access to quality human rights textbooks.
- Civil society is engaged in a lot of project-based work that can be interrupted in the absence of regular funding.
- There are limited materials, methods and information on human rights in the Kyrgyz language.
- There is some resistance from parents to teaching certain aspects of human rights, such as gender equality for children in schools.

## 3

**Needs assessment and opportunities to improve human rights education in the formal education system:**

- Trainings for civil society groups to develop skills on advocacy strategies to promote human rights in education and develop and agree on joint and individual advocacy strategies on this issue.
- Technical support for civil society to develop curricula, assessment systems, and teacher support on the topic of human rights for grades 5-11.
- Support in the development of new “The Individual and Society” textbooks for grades 7-8. Training for human rights specialists and textbook authors.
- Extensive advocacy work to promote human rights as a core value in schools. Advocacy for increased learning hours for “The Individual and Society” subject.
- Support for the development of new tools and methodologies in partnership with the Institute of Professional Development and Teacher Training to improve the qualifications of teachers on the topic of human rights and citizenship.
- Technical support for the development of online tools for human rights education; and educational methodologies that would allow engagement with parents.
- The formation of a regional Central Asian Education and Human Rights Network (formal or non-formal)
- Creating platforms for the exchange of experience and best practices to build human rights education in schools.
- Creating accessible and quality content in Kyrgyz, training Kyrgyz-speaking teachers in the field of human rights.

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amnesty.org

## CONTACT US

info@amnesty.org  
+44 (0)20 7413 5500

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