

Kyzylorda Oblast, Kazakhstan

The Kyzylorda Oblast
Medical Center,
Kyzylorda City

General overview

Kyzylorda Oblast (region) is situated along the Syrdariya River in the south-western part of the Republic of Kazakhstan in central Eurasia. The region covers an area of 226 000 km² with a distance of 1000 km between its northernmost and southernmost borders (1). Comprising seven districts and the capital city – also called Kyzylorda – the region is more than 190 years old, one of the oldest in the country. It borders on Aktobe Oblast in the north-west, Karaganda Oblast in the north, South Kazakhstan Oblast in the south-east, and the Republic of Uzbekistan in the south. It has a wide range of mineral resources, the most important being hydrocarbons, non-ferrous metals (lead and zinc), uranium, vanadium, white salt and underground mineral waters. The gross domestic product per capita was T 839 300 in the first half of 2017 (approximately US\$ 2632 as of 21 February 2018). The total population of the region is 780 235 (390 857 men and 389 378 women), more than the half of which lives in rural areas. According to 2015 data, total life expectancy is 71.9 years (67.8 for men and 76.3 for women) (1).

One of the challenges in the region is its very pronounced continental climate with great variations in temperatures, which in summer can reach 46 °C and in winter drop to -37 °C. In

summer, precipitation generally evaporates, and it is only in winter that the soil receives moisture. There are many days with strong wind, and dust storms can occur in summer. The remaining part of the shrinking Aral Sea – the Small Aral Sea – is located in the southern part of the region. The Aral Sea has been described as “one of the worst environmental disasters of the world”(2). The salinity of the remaining water exceeds 100 g/l. In 2008, a project to construct a seawall made it possible to increase the water level slowly in the northern part of the Aral. Currently, the level of salinity is decreasing, which has resulted in the appearance of some species of fish. Fishing in the Sea, as an industry, is reviving and again becoming a source of income.

The Region hosts the space-launch complex, Baikonur Space Base.

The main challenge in the Region is to improve quality of life, particularly in rural areas. Considering the high level of environmental and health risks resulting from the Aral Sea disaster, the adaption of the population to climate change, particularly in summertime, is of the utmost importance. Other key challenges to the sustainable development of population

health include limited access to clean water and sanitation, especially in villages. Efforts have been made to build networks of drinking-water supplies in the rural areas, but problems relating to access to improved sanitation and the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards, especially in educational and health-care facilities, require special attention and are yet to be resolved.

The aim of the current National Health Development Programme, “Densaulyk” (2016–2019), is to improve population health and achieve sustainable socioeconomic growth in the country. The regional health system is an integral part of the national health system, which is controlled by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Ministry takes all the policy decisions regarding health at the national level, while health-care facilities have a certain degree of independency at the local level. Health-care services are provided free of charge by the state and private specialized diagnostic centres licensed by the Regional Health Department. The health system is financed through national and local budgets.

Historically, the rate of morbidity from communicable diseases in Kyzylorda Oblast has been high since it is home to several zoonotic infections, such as plague, Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever, anthrax and brucellosis. Through the effective organization of sanitary and epidemiological welfare services, epidemiological surveillance is being carried out successfully in all communities of the Oblast.

On the other hand, the level of morbidity from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is high despite the health-system reform, which is in progress at the national level to improve population health with a focus on prevention. The reform, which is being managed at the national level, is the shared responsibility of the Government, the health system and the population. Tackling prevention and promoting healthy lifestyles are challenging for health-care facilities at the regional level. Primary-health-care (PHC) professionals lack sufficient competencies in the field of NCDs. Improvement is also needed in the promotion of healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and physical activity.



Strengths

The strengths of Kyzylorda Oblast include:

- ✓ high investment in the health sector, including the provision of resources for health-care facilities and human resources' capacity-building;
- ✓ the National Programme 2016–2019, “Densaulyk” ;
- ✓ effective organization of epidemiological and health monitoring.



Aspirations

The Oblast is interested in:

- ✓ learning about new ways of accessing information about best practice at the global level;
- ✓ sharing its experience in the development of public health and PHC;
- ✓ introducing the health-for-all approach.

Challenges

These are:

- ✓ an excessive load on PHC doctors;
- ✓ need to increase NCD-related competencies;
- ✓ need to better motivate health professionals;
- ✓ difficulties in the delivery of preventive services;
- ✓ too few NCD-prevention programmes;
- ✓ insufficient access to safe water and sanitation;
- ✓ need to promote the rational use of fresh-water ecosystem.

Potential areas of collaboration

Kyzylorda Oblast is interested in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ improving health behaviour and health literacy among the population with a view to NCD prevention;
- ✓ protecting women's health, particularly women of childbearing age;
- ✓ combatting the effects of climate change and providing access to clean water and sanitary services.

Working groups

Kyzylorda Oblast is interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ environment;
- ✓ women's/men's health;
- ✓ health systems/primary health care.

People active in the Regions for Health Network (RHN)

Political focal point

Krymbek Eleuovich Kusherbayev

Governor of Kyzylorda Oblast

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References

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2. Shrinking Aral Sea underscores need for urgent action on environment – Ban. In: UN News [website]. New York: United Nations; 2010 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/04/334402>, accessed 8 May 2018).

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