



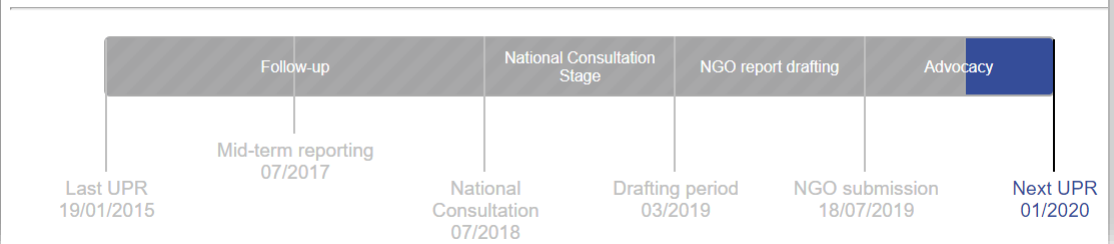
ACTIVITY REPORT

Kyrgyzstan

National Pre-sessions

22 – 29 October 2019

Timeline for UPR engagement in the current cycle



1. Introduction

From 22 October to 29 October, *UPR Info* co-organised with Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office for Central Asia (OHCHR ROCA), the National Center against Torture of the Kyrgyz Republic (NPM) and the Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic, a two-day workshop for civil society representatives in Bishkek, a half day seminar for embassies based in Bishkek and a half-day Pre-session in Bishkek. A regional roundtable on good practices was also organized in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Another half-day Pre-session was organized in Bishkek on 14th November 2019 in the realm of Bir Duino XIII International Festival of Documentary Films on Human Rights with notably embassies covering Kyrgyzstan but based in neighbouring Kazakhstan. The events brought together 64 human rights defenders, including 28 from the regions outside of capital, 9 from Kazakhstan, 9 embassies, 2 regional diplomatic representations and 2 United Nations agencies.

These activities offered a platform to national civil society organisations (CSO) and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to inform resident diplomats on the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan since the last review in 2015 and to propose recommendations that embassies, through their Geneva mission, could formulate to Kyrgyzstan at the actual review in January 2020. Moreover, CSOs and NHRIs prepared thematic factsheets on priority human rights issues to share with diplomats both in-country and in Geneva and learned how to conduct successful and targeted UPR advocacy at national and international levels. Regional resident embassies had the opportunity to receive updated and first-hand information from national CSOs, the National Preventive Mechanism of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Ombudsman on a wide range of human rights issues. Levels of implementation of previously received recommendations as well as new challenges and new recommendations to formulate were discussed among civil society and diplomats.

For all stakeholders to make the most of the Pre-sessions platform, *UPR Info* and its partners organised preparatory workshop and seminars to civil society organisations, national human rights institutions and representatives of resident embassies in Bishkek. Moreover, a regional exchange between CSOs from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan was also organised to share regional experience and good practices in engaging with the UPR prior to the review.

The event represents the second step in a series of UPR activities to be undertaken by *UPR Info* and its partner organisation, Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan, as part of the [in-country programme](#) first phase (2017-2019) and second phase (2020-2022).

2. Activities

2.1. Overview

Civil society preparatory workshop for the in-country Pre-sessions

On 22-23 October 2019, 50 participants, among them, 27 women and 28 participants from the regions, joined *the Civil society preparatory workshop for the in-country Pre-sessions*. After the opening speeches delivered by each co-organiser, the first session was dedicated to a panel discussion composed by the following organisations and institutions: the NPM of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyz Indigo, the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR-Center) Kazakhstan, International Alert Kyrgyzstan and Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan. The objective was to debrief on previous UPR work such as the drafting of the UPR submissions and to share challenges encountered as well as good practices. Ms. Lira Ismailova from Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan presented the previous activities and seminars organised on the UPR process in the country and emphasized on the role of civil society being not only about drafting reports but also advocating around the recommendations that should be made to Kyrgyzstan by recommending States. Kyrgyz Indigo, a local organisation specialised in the promotion and protection of rights of LGBT persons, highlighted the importance to contribute to several joint submissions in order to deal with the different components of the rights of persons belonging to this category without duplication. It was important for them to adopt this intersectoral approach because of the cross-cutting nature of the themes the organisation wanted to address. The representative from CCPR Center shared the experience of Kazakhstan, which is one UPR session ahead of Kyrgyzstan and emphasized on the importance to develop thematic factsheets to effectively advocate to diplomatic representations in-country and in Geneva.

After the break, a technical session on strategic advocacy at the UPR was presented by Laura Sinner, Programme Officer at *UPR Info*. It provided guidance on how to conduct targeted and strategic advocacy to encourage Recommending States to utilise civil society-suggested UPR recommendations at Kyrgyzstan's 3rd review on 20th of January 2020 and stressed the need to keep interventions and advocacy material brief, concise, solution-oriented and impartial to maximize impact. This session helped participants to clearly identify and present their human rights issues and concerns and demonstrated ways to address human rights violations by proposing solutions. CSOs and NHRIs were also introduced to *UPR Info's* database of UPR recommendations to help them identify target States. Participants were further briefed about the development of thematic UPR Advocacy Factsheets to strengthen their advocacy while interacting with diplomats. Based on *UPR Info's* extensive experience with Permanent Missions based in Geneva working on the UPR, details about what information Recommending States need, how they formulate recommendations, what do they expect from a meeting with a CSO were shared with participants.

The wider advocacy opportunities presented by the Pre-sessions both in-country and in Geneva were also addressed in detail by Ms. Lira Ismailova, Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan and *UPR Info* National Focal Point and Ms. Ekaterina Kavlis, CCPR-Center National Coordinator for Kazakhstan. Participants were oriented on the diplomatic dialogue in Bishkek and Geneva.

The last technical session, facilitated by Laura Sinner, *UPR Info*, focused on the drafting of action-oriented recommendations that follows the SMART formula. Participants have also

been sensitized to the importance of linking recommendations, if applicable, to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the outcomes of Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures as well as to integrate a gender perspective when drafting recommendations.

Participants then divided into 8 thematic groups to: work on their advocacy strategy and identify target States to lobby; finalize their thematic advocacy factsheets (all participants); finalize their presentations and practice delivery of statement (for panelists). *UPR Info* staff circulated among all groups to answer to questions and guide the participants in identifying target States and developing advocacy materials and presentations.

The second day was entirely dedicated to the continuation of group work and the presentations of group rapporteurs to the plenary for feedback from *UPR Info* and colleagues. Each thematic group presented the thematic factsheet(s) they developed. All panelists at the in-country Pre-sessions also delivered their statements to avoid duplications and to ensure the inclusion of all human rights issues. Feedback and final advices were provided by *UPR Info*.

Recommending State Seminar in Bishkek

On 24th October, 3 representatives from the embassies of Switzerland and the European Union attended the Recommending States seminar in Bishkek. Participants were briefed about the key characteristics of the UPR mechanism, *UPR Info's* database of recommendations, the drafting of SMART recommendations and the role of Recommending States in the UPR process prior, during and after the review. Emphasis was put on the importance of maintaining contacts with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions prior to the review to get updates and information on the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan in order to draft specific recommendations. *UPR Info* also stressed the importance for Recommending States to follow-up on the implementation level of the recommendations made.

National Pre-sessions in Bishkek

The first National Pre-session was held on 25th October 2019 at Evropa Hotel, Bishkek. It gathered 3 resident embassies and 2 regional delegations. Two panels composed each of 6 representatives of Kyrgyz civil society organisations (among them, 6 were women and 6 were from the regions of the country) briefed the diplomats about the current human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan as well as about efforts and gaps in implementing previous UPR recommendations. The 12 speakers also shared the recommendations and questions that they would like to see addressed to the country at the review in January 2020. Each speaker had 5 minutes to deliver its presentation. Topics covered included: After the presentations from all panellists, informal discussions between civil society representatives, including non-speakers, and diplomats continued in the form of a "Human Rights Café" that lasted over an hour. Depending on their specific human rights priorities, diplomats could circulate among three thematic tables (economic social and cultural rights, civil and political rights and vulnerable

groups) and join civil society organisations specialised in those themes to discuss implementation and recommendations in details.

A second National Pre-session was organised on 14th November 2019 in Bishkek in the realm of Bir Duino XIII International Festival of Documentary Films on Human Rights.

Exchanges on UPR good practices between Kyrgyz and Kazakh CSOs

A UPR regional roundtable was organized on 29th October in Almaty, Kazakhstan. 9 CSOs from Kazakhstan, the OHCHR office in Almaty and 6 CSOs from Kyrgyzstan shared their experience in engaging in the UPR process of their respective country. The approach to conduct strategic advocacy on rather sensitive issues was broadly discussed as CSOs from both countries encountered similar difficulties on that matter. Kazakhstan being one UPR WG session ahead of Kyrgyzstan, CSO representatives from Kazakhstan had already participated to the Geneva Pre-session and therefore, shared their experience as well as advices to make the most of this international advocacy platform.

2.2. Achievements

The high number of CSO participants from regions of Kyrgyzstan has been crucial to ensure

In the margins of the workshop, *UPR Info* and Bir Duino engaged in several high-level meetings with independent and governmental bodies to pave the way for a collaboration among all UPR stakeholders in future UPR activities as well as to discuss how to tailor-made support to national stakeholders based on their capacities and needs.

The workshop succeeded in;

- ✓ Introducing the Universal Periodic Review to newcomers from across Kyrgyzstan;
- ✓ Sharing regional good practices from CSOs engagement with the UPR;
- ✓ Laying the foundation for joint CSO submissions through the establishment of ten thematic groups;
- ✓ Introducing *UPR Info's* database as a tool for strategic advocacy;
- ✓ Introducing national actors to key international stakeholders (international NGOs and UN agencies);
- ✓ Sharing best practices for integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into UPR recommendations;
- ✓ Ensuring gender balance amongst participants (62% women; 38% men);
- ✓ Ensuring participation of CSOs from outside of the capital (42% from other regions; 58% from Bishkek).

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2.3. Lessons learnt

Factsheets to be prepared well in advance to ensure a visually good document and to have the document in English as well. All (almost all) factsheets available at the in-country Pre-sessions were in Russian. Ensure that they are being prepared in advance of the training day. Or to have also a visual template (not only the content template).

It will be important to sustain the participation of representatives from all regions of Kyrgyzstan to increase nationwide ownership of the UPR process and ensure the inclusion of all human rights issues. Through their regional offices, the OHCHR and Bir Duino demonstrated their willingness to help CSOs in regions by providing technical and logistic support. The collaboration between civil society and Bir Duino and OHCHR regional offices will thus be of paramount importance for the continuous engagement of regional CSOs.

3. Way forward

It will be important to decide whether each of the thematic groups will contribute to a joint cross-sectoral submission in addition to submitting a joint submission on behalf of the respective group. The decision on which route to follow must be based on consultations between the members of their respective cluster. In the meanwhile, each Group Rapporteur is expected to submit the roadmap which they worked on during the workshop to Bir Duino and *UPR Info*. This will constitute the baseline for the CSO submission/s. Bir Duino, OHCHR and *UPR Info* will continue to discuss the potential of conducting additional activities to finalise the submissions ahead of the deadline on 18 July 2019. In October 2019, an In-country Pre-session will enable national CSOs to discuss the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan and share their suggested recommendations with resident diplomats three months before its third UPR in January 2020.

4. Testimonies



Murat Karyov
Deputy Director - "Nash Vek"
Bishkek

"It was my first experience with the UPR and the first time that I get the opportunity to learn about the UPR. I learned how CSOs can submit UPR reports and about the other activities that UPR Info is implementing to strengthen CSOs capacities and engagement in the UPR. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are active, independent and oriented on the rule of law. Even though there are many ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan, CSOs from all regions are working together. In this vein, my organisation plans to gather all opinions, including views from the different CSO representatives from other regions in order to submit one joint UPR submission on persons with disabilities. Next week, we will organise a meeting with local NGOs working on persons with disabilities to include their views. The objective is to submit one report containing views from all regions of Kyrgyzstan. My organisation will engage in future UPR Info activities and we will do our best to get the most out of this collaboration. To strengthen capacities of CSOs across the country, it would be great for UPR Info to organise webinars on the UPR so that more CSOs can be reached and informed about the UPR. Having more CSOs trained on the UPR would be useful for exchanging important information on the human rights situation in the country."



Olga Djanaeva
Director - Women's public
association "Alga"
Chuy region

"Thanks to this workshop, I learned about the UPR mechanism, the procedure, content and format of a CSO UPR report as well as important information on the different aspects of UPR preparation. It was crucial for CSOs to understand how they can participate in the improvement of the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan through the UPR. To have participants from all regions of the country added much value to the workshop since the UPR is not well known and understood here. The workshop was not only a training since time was allocated to practical sessions. Within my group work, we identified specific problems related to women's rights and then we discussed together with grassroots organisations on how to mitigate them. We also discussed about data and evidence of the problems identified as well as indicators that we can use for the drafting of our joint report. We analysed all previous gender equality related recommendations made to Kyrgyzstan and assessed the level of implementation in order to draft five priority recommendations for the 3rd cycle. Since I work in Chuy region, I will organise a consultation meeting with our local women's organisations and activists and share the skills that I have learned at the workshop. I will gather their opinions about the existing problems in the field of gender equality and compare with what we have developed at the workshop. The objective of this consultation meeting is to gather information from different grassroots organisations in order to draft one joint submission on gender equality for the 3rd cycle of the UPR of Kyrgyzstan."



Amadaliva Feruza

Consultant and social worker
"Info Center Rainbow"
Osh region

"At the workshop, we reviewed what happened at the previous UPR cycles of Kyrgyzstan. The workshop helped us to analyse and systematize knowledge on human rights issues. We knew the problems the country is facing in terms of children rights, but it was a general overview. Thanks to the workshop, we learned how to focus on more specific sub-issues and analyse baseline information as well as existing national legislation to assess the current situation concerning children rights. To write relevant UPR recommendations and a convincing report based on evidence, we need to gather this baseline information. We will now analyse information from first source. Even though the workshop was very helpful in strengthening CSOs reporting skills, it was hard to digest all information in two days. It would have been great to receive all information in advance so we can come to the training with questions. My organisation has been working on vulnerable groups and collaborated with NGOs working on child rights and ESC rights. Recently, we worked more specifically on HIV positive children and persons with disabilities. We will participate in further trainings and events around the UPR and provide inputs to the joint UPR submission which will cover many aspects of vulnerable groups including children with HIV and children with disabilities"



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