

A full-page background image of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a stack of rocks with orange lichen sits on a grassy ridge. The middle ground shows a valley with green fields and a river. The background features snow-capped mountain peaks under a cloudy sky.

ACTED Kyrgyzstan

COUNTRY STRATEGY 2023 - 2025

ACTED GLOBALLY

We go the last mile. Founded in Afghanistan, against the backdrop of a forgotten crisis, Acted's mission is to save lives and support people in meeting their needs in hard-to-reach areas. Millions of vulnerable people around the world need humanitarian assistance today, and hundreds of millions will need it tomorrow, in the face of the growing threat of climate change. We believe that our assistance must be conceptualised and delivered within the framework of people's natural environments, and the territories on which they depend. Therefore, Acted pursues a triple mandate as a humanitarian, environmental and development aid actor, contributing to the relief, stabilisation, and recovery of crisis-affected people in fragile areas.

This vision is guided by the motto "Think Local – Act Global" - reflecting the need to rely on a deep understanding of local territories and contexts to develop and implement actions based on local knowledge, structures and capacities.

This local thinking contributes to a global response - running through all ACTED programming and operations - as we work together towards the building of a 3ZERO world: a world with Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, and Zero Poverty.

KEY FIGURES



Active in 43 countries worldwide



€540M budget in 2022
97% dedicated to operations



7,700 dedicated staff



Over 20 million beneficiaries reached



Over 550 projects a year

Programme Strategy 2020-2025

Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty

- **Zero Exclusion:** because society is enriched when it can benefit from all the voices and ideas of its members, and no-one should be left behind;
- **Zero Carbon:** because we only have one planet, and we want to pass on to our children social, political and economic systems that respect and protect natural balances.
- **Zero Poverty:** because everyone should have the opportunity to develop their potential





Kyrgyzstan

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Kyrgyzstan is located in the heart of Asia and boasts a rich history, influenced by and influencing diverse interactions and exchanges with its neighbours and the wider world. The country is home to 6.8 million people and has been called an island of democracy and openness in Central Asia since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

However, Kyrgyzstan remains one of the region's poorest countries, with government data putting one-third of the population below the poverty line. Women and young people bear the brunt of the hardship, with every third child living in poverty. Gender inequality is a driver of poor economic performance, with women's contribution to GDP 2.5 times lower than men's. This unlocked potential reflects deeper social norms and barriers for full participation in society for women; nearly one in three women experience domestic violence.

The World Bank puts unemployment at 9.1 percent but in reality the economy depends on migration, mostly to Russia, and informality. Indeed, Kyrgyzstan is often ranked as one of the world's most remittance dependent countries (31 percent of GDP in 2020). At the same time, the government estimates that the shadow economy represents 21 percent of total economic activity, while analysts believe the real share may be closer to 50 percent.

Kyrgyzstan is experiencing major rural-urban migration to the only two major cities in the country (the capital Bishkek in the North and Osh in the South), leading to the spread of *novyiostroika* (informal settlements) in these urban hubs, which in turn places additional pressures on the labour market, and already underfunded public services.

Still, officially, agriculture remains the main source of employment, accounting for 40 percent of the labour force. However, only 7 percent of the country's surface area is arable and Kyrgyzstan is already feeling the effects of climate change. Intensifying droughts, melting glaciers, landslides, and the degradation of the small amount of arable land available will adversely affect stability and economic development in the coming years.

National Development Strategy

Accordingly, Kyrgyzstan's priorities are ensuring a decent standard of living, social protection, healthcare, and nutrition by creating productive jobs without affecting the fragile ecosystem.

In its 2040 National Development Strategy (NDS), the country aims to promote the rational use of resources for socio-economic development, to preserve ecosystems for future generations and make the switch towards a green economy.

The NDS also indicates the need for peaceful coexistence between people of different religions and cultures within the country, while developing deeper socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian relations with neighbouring countries in the region. As such, the strategy emphasises transboundary cooperation and introducing Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) at all levels to improve the efficient use of resources.

The government has aligned its national plans with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and a range of local, national and international agencies and institutions have been investing in projects to this end, but progress remains slow.

Key development challenges

- Increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters exacerbated by climate change
- Unsustainable natural resource management
- Lack of income opportunities
- High outbound labour migration
- Gender inequality
- Challenging operating environment for civil society actors

KYRGYZSTAN IN FIGURES

199,945 sq km • 6.8 million inhabitants • 8.5 billion USD (GDP) • 3.6% GDP growth •
1,275.9 USD (GDP per capita) • 33.3% of the population lives below the poverty line •
17.4% infant mortality rate • 118/189 HDI • 29 Gini Index • 17% of the population is food insecure

ACTED IN KYRGYZSTAN

ACTED has been operating in Kyrgyzstan since 1999, working to address the country's main challenges by fostering opportunities for sustainable and inclusive development, especially for remote and marginalised communities. Over the years, ACTED has built diverse sectoral expertise and used participatory approaches to build resilience across an array of sectors. All of ACTED's ongoing projects strengthen the institutional capacity of partners, stakeholders and/or communities. As a result, ACTED has long standing partnerships with communities, government agencies, civil society and international development partners.

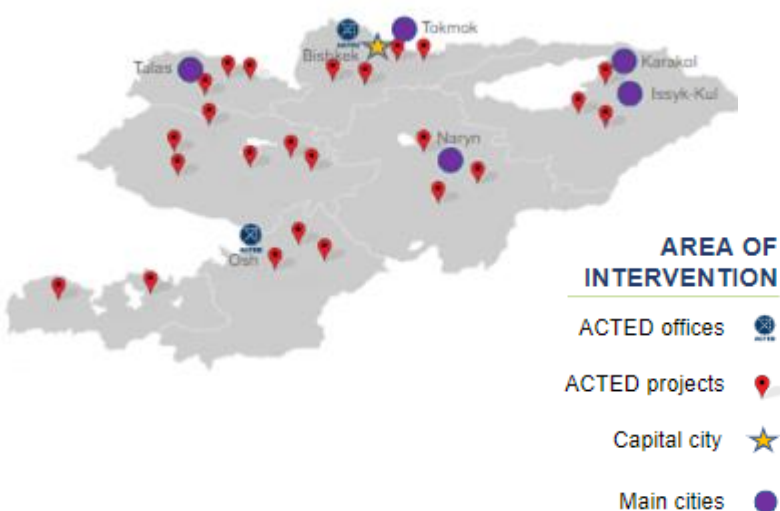
Main sectors of experience:

- Civil society development and good governance;
- Advancing women's rights and preventing gender-based violence;
- Inclusive rural development and green transition;
- Climate change adaptation and resilience;
- Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM);
- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), preparedness and emergency response



ACTED'S OPERATIONS

ACTED operates across the whole of Kyrgyzstan, with 30 staff nationwide and offices in Bishkek and Osh.



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022



143 Civil Society Organisations and government institutions received capacity building support



369 micro, small and medium enterprises supported with technical training and advisory services



104 households reporting increased income following participation in our project activities



2,546 affected people benefitted from cash assistance following the Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict in 2022

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY 2023-2025

In line with development challenges identified, ACTED Kyrgyzstan will focus its programming strategy for 2023-2025 on **three strategic pillars** of intervention that respond to the needs of the people of Kyrgyzstan, in alignment with the Government of Kyrgyzstan's NDS and the SDGs.

The programmatic approach will focus on three key areas of intervention linked to ACTED's global 3Zero strategy:

- **Zero Carbon:** supporting climate change adaptation by building resilience and increased sustainability;
- **Zero Poverty:** fostering sustainable, inclusive economic growth; and
- **Zero Exclusion:** strengthening civil society, social accountability and good governance.

This programmatic strategy will allow ACTED to increase **synergies** between existing and new projects, increase the **sustainability** of actions in Kyrgyzstan, and fully capitalise on existing **lessons learned**.

Regional approach. While acknowledging the unique trajectory of each country, ACTED in Central Asia is operationalising a regional approach among its missions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As many of the current development challenges in these countries share similar root causes, given their shared history, we strive for greater harmonisation to capitalise on our 27-year long presence in the region.

Gender. As a norm, ACTED is mainstreaming gender into its overall operations and is committed to promoting the transition from *gender sensitive* to *gender responsive* programming; with the overall objective of reaching *gender transformative* operations. Such a commitment will be made feasible through integrating gender gap analysis into project design and implementation as well as working on gender issues directly.

Coordination. ACTED strives to share experience and expertise with other actors working in development cooperation and sharing common values. Partnership with local authorities and civil society is at the core of our operations as demonstrated by our commitment to good governance, and participation in various fora, including a new Peacebuilding Hub, the Disaster Response Coordination Unit and working groups in the Development Partners Coordination Council

ZERO CARBON



ZERO POVERTY

ZERO EXCLUSION

OUR ACTION IN PICTURES



Civil society development and good governance:

Pre-Acceleration programme on social entrepreneurship for civil society in Bishkek, supported by blended finance mechanisms to provide interest free loans.

Advancing women's rights and preventing gender-based violence:

200 media representatives from across Central Asia and Afghanistan participated in a hybrid master class on gender transformative approaches to discuss how to better cover cases of violence against women and girls.



Inclusive rural development and green transition:

From their workshop in Arslanbap, woodcraft artisans joined together to form a public association, ArsUsta, and a brand identity to promote their unique products.

OUR ACTION IN PICTURES



Climate change adaptation and resilience:

In At-Bashy, a community-based tourism MSME gets technical support to go green and will install solar panels at their recently expanded guesthouse.

Integrated natural resources management:

Team members meeting with local government representatives while visiting Ak-Suu, a transboundary river shared by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



Emergency preparedness and response:

Interviews at an Internally Displaced Persons centre in Batken after the 2022 Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict. ACTED provided cash assistance to 531 affected families.



STRATEGY PILLAR 1: Supporting Climate Change Adaptation by Building Resilience and Sustainability

Our objective

Supporting climate change adaptation, building resilience and environmental sustainability, and promoting renewables

Areas of Intervention

- 1) Promoting Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR);
- 2) Advocating for green transition while ensuring climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- 3) Strengthening inclusive and sustainable rural development for Green economy.

ZERO CARBON

Responding to the challenges posed by climate change, ACTED will continue implementing projects that promote sustainable development and the green transition in Kyrgyzstan, in partnership with civil society, international partners and the government. We will strive to: reduce the carbon footprint of our operations, in line with ACTED's organisational Greening Strategy; ensure sustainable energy supply, through business development for green energy; attract green financing; continue advocating for improved policy for the green economy (policy recommendations, public-private dialogue platforms, etc.); and promoting eco-tourism.

To drive a sustainable tourism agenda that benefits communities and the environment, ACTED supports **green tourism** by: increasing uptake of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices; building an enabling environment for renewable energy and energy efficient (RE/EE) technologies; creating linkages between suppliers and consumers of RE/EE products and services; promoting green financing; and establishing eco-certification schemes.



The misuse of natural resources, disasters, and climate change are interconnected, and often catalyse one another. ACTED will strengthen its work on climate change adaptation and resilience-building through **participatory and integrated management of natural resources**. ACTED's integrated approach is based on an in-depth understanding of the needs of each community where we work, and ensuring that civil society plays a fundamental role.

OUR ACTIONS

Energy Efficiency and
Renewable Energy in
Community-Based Tourism

Green Financing

Sustainable Consumption and
Production practices

Integrated Natural Resource
Management

STRATEGY PILLAR 2: Fostering Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Growth

Our objective

Poverty reduction and value chain development

Areas of Intervention

- 1) Promoting access to knowledge, skills, and inclusive financial resources;
- 2) Supporting the development of climate smart and/or digital solutions, and a more favourable business environment for entrepreneurship;
- 3) Minimising the economic effects of disasters by investing in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response.

ZERO POVERTY

ACTED will continue developing its programming on sustainable, inclusive economic growth across Kyrgyzstan. This includes working with local development planning modalities to help create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and vulnerable groups. As part of this pillar of the strategy, ACTED's existing initiatives on MSME incubation and acceleration, and social entrepreneurship, will be strengthened.

Through new partnerships, we will innovate in our activities on providing capacity-building, knowledge, and skills to MSMEs, in the tourism sector and beyond. We will empower small and medium entrepreneurs through market linkages, skills development, branding and certification schemes, and by providing access to inclusive financing mechanisms especially to social enterprises for the most vulnerable and or in remote areas.

Increasingly, ACTED will also pioneer dynamic, climate smart technologies and or digital solutions to improve the productivity and resource efficiency of MSMEs generally.



To ensure that people can recover when natural or man-made disasters strike, ACTED is re-developing its portfolio on disaster risk reduction and preparedness, having launched a rapid and effective response to border tensions in recent years. ACTED will further strengthen our partnerships with national and local authorities and actors to strengthen existing capacity and response systems.

OUR ACTIONS

MSME Support and Strengthening

Social Enterprise Development

Sustainable Livelihoods through effective NRM

Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Response

STRATEGY PILLAR 3: Strengthening Civil Society and Good Governance

Our objective

Develop and enhance local civil society and social accountability mechanisms

Areas of Intervention

- 1) Contributing to civil society empowerment and localisation, and building capacities of communities and local authorities;
- 2) Building social cohesion, promoting social accountability;
- 3) Strengthening CSOs to promote gender equality, women's entrepreneurship, GBV prevention, and economic development.

ZERO EXCLUSION

ACTED's conceptual approach to effective governance is based upon an empowered, pluralistic civil society, social cohesion, and effective and responsive public institutions.

We strongly believe that positive change comes from people. ACTED will continue focusing on empowering and building capacity of **civil society organisations** to work for the benefit of their communities, promote inclusive and sustainable local development, and gender equality. We will utilise our signature Grassroots Organisations Capacity Assessment (GOCA) tool to strengthen CSO's technical, financial and operational capacity.

We will work with **local authorities** and CSOs to promote data-driven decision making, that increases economic growth and social cohesion, while putting in place social accountability mechanisms. ACTED will support CSOs to produce, analyse and use data for advocacy with authorities; to engage in public-private dialogue on economic policy issues and improve socio-economic planning processes; and to develop the capacity of media to deliver data-driven, analytical reporting on economic policy.



ACTED promotes **gender equality**. We aim to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) by raising awareness on women's rights across all layers of society, advocating for policy changes, supporting the establishment of local response mechanisms, and breaking persistent gender stereotypes. ACTED will also broaden its economic empowerment and social enterprise work to include more women, youth and people with disabilities as well as survivors of GBV.

OUR ACTIONS

Civil Society Capacity Building

Data-driven Decision-making
for Economic Development

Advancing Women's Rights

Public-private-civil
Partnerships for Socio-
economic Planning

IMPACT

Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives

IMPACT Initiatives, is a leading Geneva-based **think-and-do tank** which aims to improve the impact of humanitarian, stabilisation and development action through data, partnerships, and capacity building programmes. IMPACT has been active since 2010 and is presently active in over 35 countries. In Central Asia, IMPACT has been active in Afghanistan since 2016 and in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since 2022.

Within the region, IMPACT has assisted the humanitarian and development communities by providing a **growing evidence base for aid response** planning through the REACH and AGORA Initiatives, conducting sectoral, multi-sectoral and area-based assessments as well as information management services. This includes extensive experience on mapping climate-related stresses.



OXUS is a transparent and responsible **microfinance network** offering microcredits and other financial inclusion services to individuals, workers and MSMEs that are excluded from traditional banking services in **Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**. Globally, OXUS is dedicated to ensure that its microfinance operations contribute to a world without exclusion, carbon and poverty.

OXUS is dedicated to creating and offering the most efficient microfinance services and providing **sustainable livelihoods to its beneficiaries**. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, OXUS focused on financing interest rates of small-holder farmers' credits in order to support the agricultural sector and insure financial inclusion.

FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES



Created in 2016, AGORA is a **bottom-up territorial approach** that promotes the resilience and recovery of crisis affected communities in fragile contexts by putting local territories at the center, supported and guided by local knowledge structures and capacities. As a **partnership between ACTED and IMPACT**, AGORA is about evidence-based planning and programming, combining IMPACT's know-how in terms of data collection and analysis with ACTED's program expertise and ability to deliver to the last mile.

AGORA has been piloted in nine countries through thirteen projects to date. In Central Asia, the AGORA approach is being used as part of a multi-stage assessment model to **inform community engagement on integrated natural resource management**.



THRIVE – Towards Holistic Resilience in Vulnerable Environments – was developed to address both the **immediate and structural issues of climate change and land degradation** in a holistic manner in rural rangeland ecosystems. It revolves around three pillars: **REVIVE** aiming to rehabilitate degraded soils; **EMERGE** supporting agricultural communities beyond poverty and **INTEGRATE** working to foster a constructive, equitable and peaceful approach for natural resource sharing.

In Kyrgyzstan, THRIVE will be piloted within a integrated natural resource management programme to **restore degraded land and enhance effective resource sharing** in order to strengthen intercommunal exchange, improve livelihoods and reduce conflict.



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