

Lebap Velayat, Turkmenistan

Amu Darya,
Lebap Velayat

General overview

The Lebap Velayat (region), one of the five velayats in Turkmenistan, is situated in the north east of the country, bordering Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. With an area of 93 730 km², it ranks third among the regions in terms of territory. The area runs alongside both sides of the Amu Darya (river) with the Gyzylgum Desert on the east side and the Garagum Desert on the west. The name Lebap is the Turkmen equivalent of the Persian بآب (lab-e āb), which means “riverside”. Thanks to a sunny climate and an abundance of water resources, the Velayat produces cotton and wheat, the quality of which ranks among the highest in the world. It is known for its natural parks, such as Repetek and Koytendag, and for being home to the country’s highest mountain, Ayrybaba (3137 m) (1).

The economy of Lebap Velayat is determined by its significant reserves of raw minerals and gas, and its water resources. Specializing in the extraction of natural gas and oil, as well as the processing of oil, and in chemical, electrical, food and light industry, Velayat produced 24.8% of the country’s industrial output in 2016. It produces 41.3% of all gas in the country, generating 6.4% of electricity (1). The Turkmenistan–China gas pipeline starts in the Lebap Velayat.

One of the main sources of the economy of the Velayat is light industry. The entire production of non-woven materials is concentrated there, as well as 30.8% of the country’s production of cotton fiber and 10.5% of its production of knitwear. The chemical industry in the Velayat is oriented to the production of mineral fertilizers from local raw materials. The construction industry has a significant local raw-material base and the prospects of further expanding production are favourable. The Velayat also produces 30.5% of the cement manufactured in the country (1). Traditionally, Lebap Velayat has a strong culture of farming. Its main agricultural products include cotton, grain (wheat and rice), and vegetables.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan is responsible for health policy on and the provision of health care for the whole population. The local government system comprises three levels: velayat (regional), etrap (district) and city/village. The last mentioned is the main unit of local self-governance for cities, settlements and villages. According to the legislation, local government undertakes socioeconomic planning, budgeting and taxation activities and makes rational use of the natural resources available. The health-care system is

organized at the national level as follows. While policy-making for the health sector falls within the scope of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry is responsible for the actual operation of the health services. The provincial governor (velayat hakim), who is appointed by the President, finances the regional health services. The regional health administration reports to the provincial governor regarding the organization of the health services and to the Ministry on technical matters. Each velayat has a large number of health facilities. In the Lebap Velayat the total numbers of family doctors, mid-level medical personnel and hospital beds in 2016 were 659, 4600 and 5600, respectively (1).

Intersectoral mechanisms for health-related action are established at the national level in the form of coordination committees. These include representatives of different ministries, state organizations, civil society and international organizations. In 2014, Turkmenistan adopted a national strategy aimed at implementing the objectives of the *Ashgabat Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs in the Context of Health 2020* and its plan of action. A national coordination committee, comprising representatives of 38 line-ministries, was established to oversee the implementation of the national strategy.

One of the best examples of multisectoral involvement in NCD control was the implementation of an information campaign on the early detection of breast cancer at the national level. This project was successfully implemented in all velayats of the country.

The National Programme for the Support and Development of Sports and Physical Education in Turkmenistan 2011–2020 has been approved. Its main objectives include the promotion of physical

education, sports and healthy lifestyles, and the active engagement of the population in physical education and mass sports. The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry is collaborating with the State Committee of Sports, other ministries, the municipalities of the regions and Ashgabat, and social organizations to ensure their active participation in fulfilling the objectives of the National Programme.

In the Lebap Velayat, there are many sports clubs for youth, among which the most active are judo and sambo clubs. The Velayat also boasts two women's football teams and often hosts women's football competitions and festivals. Among the most famous schools in the Velayat is Turkmenabat 5th Sports School of Gymnastics, which has great sports facilities and trains performance athletes. All the efforts to promote, and the investments made in, sports activities for youth were proven to have a positive effect by the success of the Lebap athletes who won the absolute majority of the olympic medals at the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, which took place in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in 2017, under the leadership of the Asian Olympic Council.

An initiative entitled "Improving access to regular physical activity among women affected by noncommunicable diseases, living in the Velayat (regional) area" has been developed, based on the findings of the Stepwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) survey on the prevalence of NCD risk factors in adults, conducted in Turkmenistan in 2013. The survey revealed that 58,9% of women do not comply with the WHO recommendations on physical activity with the highest proportion in the 55–64 age group. The regional initiative is aiming to improve access to regular physical activities for women aged 35 years and over living in the Velayat's urban and rural areas (2).



Strengths

The strengths of the Lebap Velayat are:

- ✓ strong will at the political level to succeed in NCD risk-factor control;
- ✓ availability of commitment documents, such as the National programme for the transformation of social and living conditions of the population of villages, towns, cities of etraps (districts) and etrap centers by 2020, and the National Strategy "Saglyk" for 2014–2020;
- ✓ readily available sports facilities;
- ✓ experience in the intersectoral implementation of a health-promotion project at the regional level;
- ✓ well-organized intersectoral collaboration for NCD prevention and control.



Aspirations

The Lebap Velayat aims include:

- ✓ finding new networking possibilities in the field of health promotion;
- ✓ contributing to the improvement of physical-activity indicators in the adult population;
- ✓ introducing innovative approaches in the field of public health;
- ✓ identifying examples of good practice for new projects in the field of health promotion.



Challenges

These are:

- ✓ many barriers to the participation of women in regular physical activity;
- ✓ low level of knowledge among the population about the importance of regular physical activity in preventing NCDs;
- ✓ low participation level of women in health-promotion activities.



Potential areas of collaboration

The Lebap Velayat is interested in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ initiatives in the areas of prevention and health promotion;
- ✓ women's health;
- ✓ intersectoral approach to health promotion.



Working groups

The Lebap Velayat is interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ women's/men's health;
- ✓ the all-of-government approach/intersectoral action;
- ✓ health systems/primary health care.

Lebap Velayat, Turkmenistan



Contact persons

Abdyhalykow Maksat

Deputy Head of the Regional Health Care Department
Turkmenabat
Lebap Velayat

Ata Boppyev

Leading Specialist
Information Centre
Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan
Ashgabat
Email: ataboppyev@mail.ru

References

1. State Statistics. Ashgabat: State Statistics Committee; 2016
2. STEPwise approach to noncommunicable disease risk factor surveillance (STEPS). In: Noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors [website]. Geneva: WHO; 2018 (<http://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/steps/en/>, accessed 14 May 2018).

Lebap Velayat, Turkmenistan