

Carbon Sequestration through Climate Investment in Forests and Rangelands (CS-FOR) in Kyrgyzstan

Gender Assessment

Overview of gender inequalities in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan

1. FAO conducted a gender assessment in 2016, titled 'National gender profile of agricultural and rural livelihoods: Kyrgyz Republic'¹. The assessment has informed the formulation of this project, including this section, as it will inform as well its implementation.
2. Prior to its independence in 1991, about three quarters of women of Kyrgyzstan were in the official labour force, including those who worked in the state and collective farms². During the period of transition to the market economy Kyrgyz women lost much economic, social and political power. By 2002 the official employment rate for women decreased by half. The period also saw weakening and disappearance of public services available during the Soviet time for working women, such as daycare centers, kindergartens, extended maternity leave, and access to basic health care. The loss of such services meant that women's shouldering of the responsibilities to care children and the elderly increased.
3. The Kyrgyz Republic ranked 90 out of 159 countries on Gender Inequality Index (GII). GII reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity), and the higher the GII value the more unequal the country from the gender point of view. Kyrgyzstan's gender inequality, with GII score of 0.394, is higher than neighboring Tajikistan (0.322) and Uzbekistan (0.287). While Kyrgyzstan fares well in terms of political representation and education attainment, it lags behind the two countries on maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rate (see Table 3).

Table 3: Gender Inequality Index of Kyrgyzstan and Selected ECA Countries

	GII value	GII rank	Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Female seats in parliament (%)	Population with at least some secondary education (%)		Labour force participation rate (%)	
						Female	Male	Female	Male
Kyrgyzstan	0.394	90	76	39.6	19.2	100.0	99.9	49.4	77.1
Tajikistan	0.322	65	32	38.1	14.7	98.1	88.2	59.4	77.5
Uzbekistan	0.287	57	36	17.7	16.4	99.9	99.9	48.3	76.2
ECA	0.279		24	26.6	19.0	78.1	85.7	45.4	70.5

Source: *Human Development Report 2016*, UNDP

4. Kyrgyzstan's legal framework guarantees women's equality. Its constitution mandates equality between women and men and prohibits gender-based discrimination. Civil, penal, labour and family codes guarantee equal rights for men and women. In 2008 the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was promulgated to ban gender discrimination in the public administration. The Government has also addressed gender equality in key policy measures, and in 2012 approved a comprehensive and forward-looking gender strategy, entitled 'Gender Equality Strategy to 2020'. The strategy was translated into the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2017, which was approved in December 2015 and the latest, as of 2018-2020, approved in November 2018. Ministry of Labor and Social Development (MLSD) is an entity

¹ FAO, *National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Kyrgyz Republic* (Country gender assessment series), 2016. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5763e.pdf>

² ADB, *Country Gender Assessment: Kyrgyz Republic*, 2005

that is responsible for the gender mainstreaming and monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (GE NAP). The gender strategy and action plan highlight: (i) women's economic empowerment; (ii) functional education for girls and women; (iii) improving women's access to justice and eliminating discrimination; and (iv) gender parity in decision making and expanding women's political participation (v) regulatory policy to ensure gender mainstreaming across the state agencies and the standardization of national gender statistics. The strategy and action plan pay special attention to improving rural women's non-formal education in such areas as information and communication technology with a view to facilitating their better access to employment and business opportunities³ as well as engaging women in income-generating projects, training for women in nutrition education and agrotechnology.

5. Despite the adequate legal framework and Government's proclamations of gender equality, researchers and development practitioners point out that Kyrgyzstan faces high gender inequalities. Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and conventional beliefs of women's roles and responsibilities in the family and society serve to perpetuate gender inequality. While women's councils exist at the rural municipality level to address gender issues and support women, many are not strong. Some argues that gender inequalities are on the rise due to recent revival of Islam⁴. Economic empowerment of women is lagging behind as barriers to their equal employment opportunities and entrepreneurship development continue to remain. In 2015, the average wage of men was 1.3 times higher than that of the women (14,743 soms for men, compared to 11,125 soms for women)⁵. While both men and women take agricultural loans from microfinance institutions (MFIs), women borrow smaller sums than men, and are more likely to borrow as a group⁶. A recent study revealed that men are usually the primary decision-makers within the household on such matters as finance (saving, spending and taking loans), choice of crops and the sale of agriculture and livestock products while women have more agency over non-economic decisions (such as child care) and some economic decisions related to the spheres of their influence (i.e. kitchen garden)⁷.

6. Violence against women is widespread, and there are reported cases of domestic violence, bride kidnapping, trafficking, early marriages and physical abuse. In rural areas, in particular, bride kidnapping and early marriages remain a matter of great concern. In its 2014 review of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the country reported a research finding that '60 percent of marriages in the countryside in mono-ethnic areas are accomplished through bride kidnapping, of which two thirds are performed without consent of the girl'⁸. According to the 2006 data cited in the same Beijing+20 National Review, over 12% of women in Kyrgyzstan get married before the minimum marriage age of 18. The incidence of such marriages is higher in rural areas (14.2%) than in urban areas (9.7%). Early marriages are more common among poor households (16.5%) than in rich families (9.1%). Although more updated information is not available, an increase in fertility rate among young women – 4.4 children per 1,000 women aged 15-17 in 2006 to 7.7 children in 2012 – may indicate that early marriages are on the rise.

7. According to a population and health survey in 2012, 27% of all households are headed by a woman⁹. Rural area records a lower percentage of FHHs (21%), compared to urban area (36%). Sex of the household head is not a strong factor to influence the poverty level of the family. The NSC data suggests that female-headed, one-parent families are not poorer than male equivalents, but among the two-parent families, poverty is higher if they are headed by a woman (see Table 3 below). Similarly, assessments found that FHHs in Kyrgyzstan are not more likely to be food insecure than male-headed households (MHHs)¹⁰. Although FHHs are slightly more likely to be severely insecure (10% of FHHs in comparison to 7% of MHHs), the reverse is true for moderately food insecure households (16% of MHHs

³ FAO (2016).

⁴ Muldoon, R. and Casabonne, U., *Gender Norms in Flux: Bride Kidnapping and Women's Civic Participation in the Kyrgyz Republic*, World Bank, 2017.

⁵ UNFPA, *Gender in Society Perception Study*, 2016.

⁶ According to data from *Annual Report of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic 2015*, quoted in FAO (2016).

⁷ FAO (2016)

⁸ Ministry of Social Affairs, *National review of the 20th year anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in Kyrgyzstan*, 2014.

⁹ National Statistical Committee, Ministry of Health, and IFC International, *Kyrgyz Republic: Demographic and Health Survey 2012*, 2013.

¹⁰ FAO (2016).

and 12% of FHHs)¹¹.

Table 3: Poverty Rates by Sex of Household Head (2014)

	Female- headed		Male- headed	
	2-parent family	1-parent family	2-parent family	1-parent family
Not poor	64.4	91.4	70.0	81.4
Poor	35.6	8.6	30.0	18.6

Source: NSC, *Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2010-2014*, 2015, cited in FAO (2016)

8. Although no data or comprehensive analysis is available on the situation of wives of migrant workers, some reports mention extra challenges such women face. Episodes include wives not directly receiving remittances, which are instead sent to the migrant's mother or elder sister¹². On the other hand, a large number of women migrate for work both to foreign countries, as well as inside Kyrgyzstan. According to 2016 data from Russia, nearly 40% of the Kyrgyz citizens among official migrants in the country were women¹³. Compared to other Central Asian countries, where the migrants in Russia originate, Kyrgyzstan records the highest proportion of women among the migrants in Russia. As for internal migration, women outnumber men: 64% of inter-regional migrants in 2014 were women, mainly rural women migrating to urban areas¹⁴. Women may migrate together with males or alone, and a significant proportion of Kyrgyz women migrants are the primary breadwinners¹⁵. It is pointed out that the massive out-migration Kyrgyzstan has been experiencing is 'affecting gender norms in multiple and conflicting ways'¹⁶. While negative consequences, including those for women and girls, may be numerous, some argue that such a large social disruption, which makes previous social norms and mental models untenable, may bring about some positive changes to women, such as males' taking more childcare responsibilities and women's seeking more work outside the home¹⁷.

Women in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management

9. Agriculture underscores the lives of the rural population as almost all adults engage in some work related to crop and livestock production. Rural women work in crop cultivation, livestock production, food processing and marketing. In terms of formal labour, agriculture is the largest sector of employment for both women and men. Around a third of all working women and men are employed in agriculture, according to the statistics¹⁸. It must be noted that the share of women employed in agriculture has increased considerably in recent years. While women's share in the agriculture (including forestry and fisheries) was about 40% during the decade leading to 2012, it increased to 44.5% in 2014¹⁹. This may have been caused by the tendency of male labour's increased entrance into other sectors and their out migration. It could be also possible that this reflects women's limited employment opportunities in other sectors.

10. Employment patterns between women and men in agriculture differ. Women are more likely to be self-employed, while men are more often engaged as hired (contracted) workers. According to the NSC data, 73.9% of all self-employed women worked in agriculture in 2014, compared to 58.4% of all self-employed men²⁰.

11. Women's equal rights to properties, including agricultural land, are legally protected. The Land Code (1999) and Law on Introduction of Land Code of the Kyrgyz Republic (#46, 1999) are the main documents

¹¹ NSC data cited in FAO (2016).

¹² International Federation for Human Rights, *Women and children from Kyrgyzstan affected by migration: An exacerbated vulnerability*, 2016.

¹³ Data from the Russian Federal Migration Service, quoted in FAO (2016). Total number of Kyrgyz citizen among the official migrants was 574,194, of whom 351,121 (61.2%) were men.

¹⁴ NSC data quoted in FAO (2016).

¹⁵ Data from *A Needs Assessment of Women Migrant Workers: Central Asia and Russia*, UN Women, 2009, cited in FAO (2016).

¹⁶ Muldoon and Casabonne (2017).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ NSC data from 2015 cited in FAO (2016).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

regulating land relations and establishing the grounds for the commencement, procedure for the exercise and termination of land titles. The Law on Agricultural Land Management (2006) enable women to 'obtain and register individual rights to land shares by dividing land plots in plots into individual parcels for independent management and transactions'²¹. The law recognizes men's and women's equal right to inherit land. Only 3 percent of rural women have sole ownership of land, whereas there are about 22 percent of rural men who own land. About 60 percent of rural women do not own any land²²

12. Researchers and development practitioners argue, however, that exercising such rights is a challenge for women due to the prevailing notion that males are natural heads of the household. Land is usually registered under husband's name. According to a 2011 country assessment of access to land, the formal law in Kyrgyzstan 'has not in most cases been successful in protecting and improving women's rights, including rights to access and own land'²³. For example, although women who leave her birth families to marry have the right to sell her land shares to the families, they seldom do so because such a demand is seen as shameful²⁴. Women who are divorcing have similar challenges in claiming their land shares. It is pointed out that young wives, ex-wives, daughters-in-law and widows are 'least likely to challenge patriarchal traditions about property rights'²⁵.

13. A Livelihood Study conducted during the project preparation organized focus group discussions in the project area, including those with women. The results revealed that women and women's groups are not considered as separate groups that have special needs, for which special approach is required. A major difficulty that women in the project area face is stereotypes and traditional rights that limit the participation of women in the management of natural resources. In communities, the public role of women is reduced to solving the problems of benefits and pensions, or to resolving social issues related to the upbringing of children and motherhood. Often women are not informed about meetings held on pasture and forest issues, so their interests are not taken into account.

14. In spite of this, the participants of the discussion note that in recent years there has been opportunities for women and women's groups in solving various issues related to natural resources. Despite the fact that there are no women in the forestry and pasture committee, especially in the management body, women's committees often became involved in the discussion of problems in the use and management of natural resources.

15. **Livestock.** Women's engagement in animal husbandry is significant. Women are particularly active in raising young animals, milking, and preparation and sales of dairy products. Women in households which graze animals in distant pastures during summer would travel with the husbands and children, maintain seasonal home in the pasture and carry out domestic tasks in addition to their responsibility in animal raising and other economic and livelihood activities of the family²⁶. However, women's participation in the livestock sector is considered secondary to males' under social norms prevailing in rural areas which label livestock production primarily a male-led activity. Official data on individual ownership of livestock are unavailable. Studies found that FHHs are less likely to own livestock (41%) than male-headed households (56%), but there is no significant difference in terms of the number of livestock owned by each type of household²⁷.

16. Women's involvement in pasture management is also limited. A recent study on gender and pasture management points out that traditionally women's rights to pastures are secured through their male kin members - husbands or, if the family is headed by a woman, her male relative²⁸. Women's representation in the executive committees (Pasture Committees or PCs) of Pasture Users Unions (PUUs) is very low.

²¹ FAO (2016), page 9.

²² EuroPlus Consulting & Management Helen Dubok Dilbar Turakhanova. 2018 (p. 39). Gender Study for Central Asia. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/kyrgyzstan_final_report_09.01.2018_approved_workshop_final.pdf

²³ USAID, *Property Rights and Resource Governance: Kyrgyzstan*, 2011.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., page 32.

²⁶ A recent FAO assessment indicates a tendency that women are increasingly staying behind because far-away pastures because of danger, lack of services and poor infrastructure (Gender equity and pasture management assessment: Technical report under the project TCP/KYR/3503, 2015).

²⁷ FAO (2016).

²⁸ Scalise, E. and Undeland, A., *Gender and Kyrgyz Community Pasture Management: a Case Study*, Paper prepared for presentation at the 2016 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, 2016.

Of 454 PUUs in total in 2016, only 11 (2.4%) had PCs chaired by a woman²⁹. The aforementioned study argues that PUUs' investment tends to reflect more of men's priorities, which are related to overseeing of the grazing animals, and focuses on infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. On the other hand, services and goods prioritized by women during the families' stay at the pasture land, such as electricity, drinking water, child support and health care are often lacking.

17. **Forestry.** The National Action Plan on Forestry Development for 2006 to 2010³⁰ addressed gender and included a task to improve gender policy including employment of women in *leskhoz*es (Forest Enterprises or FEs), but due to weak implementation of the action plan, gender-related goal (goal 2.4) were not achieved. It is important to mention that even though National Action Plan on Forestry Development for 2006 to 2010 did not achieve its gender-related goals and AE can use this case as an opportunity to learn in order to assist the project to contribute to improving the implementation of its action plan and including this in the project-level gender action plan of the project. First of all, the National Action Plan on Forestry Development failed because in this sector is poorly funded, where forestry specialists have low wages and that fact does not attract youth and women. Secondly, the responsibilities for the implementation of gender-responsive policies was laid on international projects (not specified) solely, without the involvement of the state and community (lack of a sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability). Third reason is that the document does not provide clear mechanisms and tools. Fourth reason, lack of monitoring and control over the implementation of the gender-related activities. To tackle this issue of project allocation special budget line for the Gender and Social Inclusion Plan, assigns clear responsibilities in ToRs of EG and PIU staff, it also works in close partnership and cooperation with state representative Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration (MAFIM) and its relevant departments, State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF), local councils, communities who support the project and help in planning, monitoring and implementation phases.

18. Studies found typical leaseholders of forest lands are older males, and women and young men have limited access to such arrangements. Young women, in particular, are constrained to accessing pertinent information, as well as participating in meetings organized by EFs or community authorities 'due to their domestic responsibilities and also gender stereotypes about women's role in resource allocation and management'³¹. Another gender bias was identified in collaborative forest management, which was designed to provide communities with rights to use and manage the forests for income generation, according to a study³². The model did not work due to several factors, such as small plot size and labour requirements. It is noteworthy that FHHs and poor households were not given opportunities to participate in the scheme because they were seen to be incapable of handling labour requirements or lacking sufficient resources to carry out the works.

19. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are important sources of income and household consumption among families living near the forest land, particularly for FHHs and poor households. FHHs gather firewood, make hay and pick fruit for consumption, but collect nuts to sell³³. According to Undeland (2012), many women access forest land and resources without any agreement or only with informal agreements. Poor families and women who do not have other means to access forest resources are allowed by lessees to collect leftover nuts and fruits for free under a system called *mashak*.

20. In order to visualize the gender gaps in agricultural sector, three figures are presenting recent sex-disaggregated data on misbalanced representation of women and men in the Kyrgyz Republic. (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3)³⁴.

Figure 1. Skilled workers within agricultural sector (disaggregated by gender)

²⁹ FAO (2016).

³⁰ National Action Plan on Forestry of the KR 2006-2010. Available at <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/57841>

³¹ Biodiversity International, *How gender-specific knowledge is inspiring change in Kyrgyzstan's walnut forests*, 2014, quoted in FAO (2016).

³² Undeland, A., *Development Potential of Forests in the Kyrgyz Republic*, PROFOR, 2012.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The National Statistics Committee. *Women and Men in the KR 2013-2017*

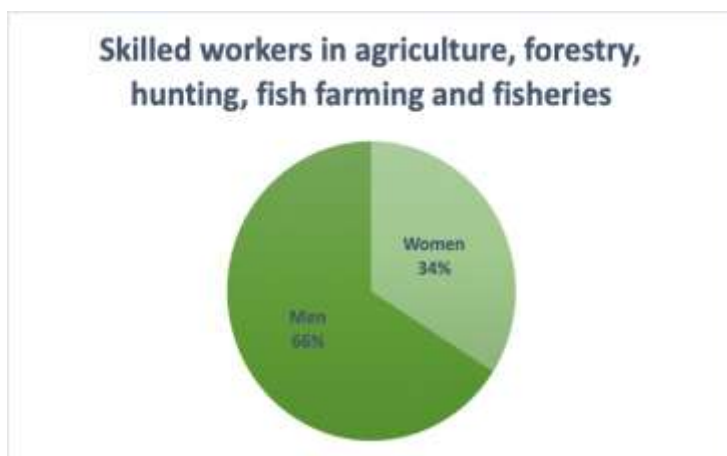


Figure 2. Employment status in agriculture sector.

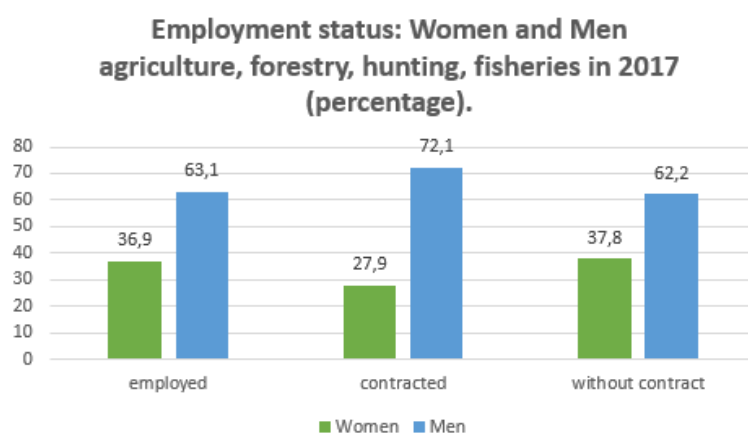
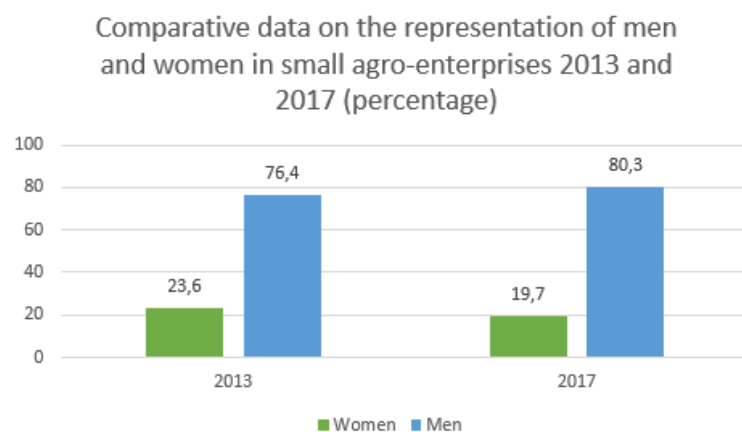


Figure 3. Comparative diagram: representation of women and men in small agro-enterprises 2013-2017.



Gender Dimensions in Climate Change

21. It is argued that, generally speaking, women are disproportionately affected by impacts of climate change and related weather events due to the existing discriminatory norms and practices that impede equal access to land, water and other productive assets for livelihoods. According to a recent WHO report, natural disasters, such as droughts, floods and storms, kill more women than men. The report also points out that gender-gap effects on life expectancy tend to be higher in severer disasters; and climate-sensitive health impacts, such as undernutrition and malaria, show important gender differences³⁵.

22. Women's unequal participation in the decision making processes also constraints engendering of the planning and implementation of climate-related interventions³⁶. In the meantime women actively participate in the resilience and mitigation actions by contributing to resilience building and livelihood improvements, such as climate smart agriculture³⁷.

23. A 2013 publication on gender and climate change in Kyrgyzstan points out a substantial institutional gap between the climate and gender discourses, and a subsequent lack of gender mainstreaming in climate programmes in the country³⁸. The report warns that '[l]ack of gender analysis of climate change effects and other aspects of the ecological crisis leads to a lack of a clear picture of the distribution of risks for different social groups', reducing the effectiveness of the climate programmes³⁹. Misbalanced gender-representation is common at local level institutions, such as local councils, village administration, Water Users Associations (WUAs) and the aforementioned Pasture Committees (PCs)⁴⁰. Reduction of vital natural resources as a result of climate change can fuel conflicts, which could lead to further exclusion of women and the poor. In addition, depletion and quality degradation of drinking water could increase water-related illnesses, which in turn will increase the labour of women and reduces their income earning opportunities.

24. The aforementioned Livelihood Study found that women put secure access to water – both in pasture and farm land – as the high priority action for climate change mitigation.

Youth

25. Kyrgyzstan is a young country with nearly 50% of its total population in Kyrgyzstan under the age of 25. Youth (aged between 15 and 29) account for 27%⁴¹. According to an ILO survey, Kyrgyzstan has the highest youth labour underutilization rate (55.3%) among six countries in the region⁴². Female youth labor underutilization rate is higher (59.6%) than that of male (50.5%). Informal employment rate of the youth is highest in the region (79.5%), and as many as 46.6% of young workers in the country are engaged in the agricultural sector – with higher shares among young women than young men. The majority share of young workers (41.9%) is engaged without pay in a family establishment or farm. What the study reveals is a picture of typical Kyrgyz rural youth working on family farm as informal labour force with little prospect for career and income growth. This would create pressure for migration out of rural areas.

26. It must be noted that the district consultation meetings organized as part of the project's stakeholder

³⁵ WHO, *Gender, Climate Change and Health*, 2014.

³⁶ UNFCCC, Gender and Climate Change (http://unfccc.int/gender_and_climate_change/items/7516.php), accessed in March 2018.

³⁷ Green Climate Fund and UN Women, *Mainstreaming Gender in Green Climate Fund Projects: A practical manual to support the integration of gender equality in climate change interventions and climate finance*, 2017.

³⁸ Korotenko V.A. (ed.), *Gender Environment and Climate Change*, UNDP, UN Women and BIOM, 2013.

³⁹ Ibid., page 67.

⁴⁰ Two large and vital associations in the agricultural sector Water User's Associations (WUAs) and Pasture User's Association (PUAs) play crucial role increasing opportunities and gaining access to resources. Within 486 WUAs there are only 11 percent of women working in the leadership positions. There are only 4 pasture committees which are chaired by women out of 454 PCs.

⁴¹ 2017 data, NSC.

⁴² Elder, S., et al, *Labour market transitions of young women and men in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, ILO, 2015. The data in the report were derived from School-to-work transitions survey (SWTS) carried out in six countries (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine). Kyrgyz data is from 2013. Youth labor underutilization is defined as 'the sum of shares of youth in irregular employment, unemployed (relaxed definition) and youth neither in the labour force nor in education/training (inactive non-students) as a percentage of the youth population'.

engagement recognized needs for special actions to promote youth participation, which included ensuring their access to the project information, involvement in the community level natural resource management planning process, and support to business start-up.

Stakeholder Engagement

27. Stakeholder engagement is a process that must be undertaken during the project formulation as well as throughout the project implementation phases. During project formulation phase this process took place during five project design missions that were held in Kyrgyzstan from March 2017 – April 2018. Different formats for stakeholder engagement process (workshops, meetings, structured consultations) were used and consultations carried out to date included wide-range of stakeholders (national-level institutions, local government representatives, NGOs, CSOs, donors, private sector). The main objectives of these events were to brief participants on the Green Climate Fund, review climate change impact and trends in the country, identify gaps and lessons learned, and set priorities for the formulation of a proposal to the Green Climate Fund. At one of such events, at the National Facilitation Workshop on Green Climate Fund Project Formulation that was held in Bishkek on March 28-29, 2017 the State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations when working on preparation of a project proposal for the GCF identified gender gaps and actions to fulfill the gaps⁴³:

Gender gaps

- Management of households by women from vulnerable groups of the population.
- Lack of women on senior positions.
- Lack of gender statistics.
- Misbalance in the profiles of specialists and in public authorities.
- Gender stereotypes.
- Misbalance of profile specialties (forestry faculty and other specialties).

Actions (approaches) to fulfill the gaps

- Capacity building of specialists, Evidence-based training, Program monitoring and evaluation.
- Work with decision-makers (parliament, ministries).
- Improvement of public-private partnerships; Attraction of investments in agriculture.
- Data collection (Data disaggregated by sex) methodology.
- Involvement of women in production in greenhouses, nurseries, etc.
- Strengthening of the value chains for processing products.
- The quota for female entrants in environmental specialties (forestry faculty, etc.).

Based on work of the second day, it was decided to include the results of the working groups in the project proposal for the Green Climate Fund.

28. At the district-level consultations participants suggested including members of women council or female representatives should be members of the Community Landscape Management Group (CLMG). One of the groups stressed that at least 30% of the membership should be women⁴⁴. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that at the district level consultations there was a gender misbalance that is quite representative and illustrates the gender misbalanced situation within the country - out of about 120 participants of the district-level consultations, women constituted only about 10%. Gender gap is formed as it was highlighted in the previous paragraph is strongly related to gender stereotypes that leads to misbalance in the positions of specialists and in decision-making positions (very low level of women's involvement in such sectors as pastures, forestry, WUAs, PUUs,

⁴³ CS-FOR Stakeholder Engagement.

⁴⁴ CS-FOR Stakeholder Engagement.

local self-government bodies, village councils and etc.). Taking into consideration the cultural and structural gender-related inequalities, it is necessary for the project to target vulnerable and underrepresented groups such as women, especially, female-headed households, unemployed, youth.

Target Area

29. Vulnerability to climate change was the most important parameter for the target area selection. The design team collected a large number of data sets at national and sub-national scale and using the Earth Map tool, performed a series of vulnerability analysis to identify project's core target areas⁴⁵. Target areas have been selected according to the following criteria:

- a. Exposure of ecosystems and communities to natural hazards triggered by climate change;
- b. Vulnerability of ecosystems and communities to climate change;
- c. Mitigation potential in terms of forest and pasture rehabilitation;
- d. High dependency of communities from natural resource exploitation; and
- e. Socio-economic vulnerability of communities.

30. The core intervention area of the CS-FOR project will be located in selected rural municipalities (aiyl aymak) in four contiguous districts of Ak-Talaa, Toguz-Toro, Suzak and Uzgen. . *Aiyl aymaks* are local self-government units, comprising the administrative body (*ayil okmotu*) and the council of elected members (*ayil kenesh*, *those are represented only by 8%*). Each rural municipality has several villages. Suzak and Uzgen have a fairly large ethnic Uzbek population (34.6% of the total district population in Suzak; 22.2% in Uzgen), as well as small percentages of Turkish (1.9% in Suzak; 3.1% in Uzgen). Uzbek households in Suzak and Uzgen are found in rural villages and engaged in agricultural activities.

31. **Livelihoods.** Rural households in the target area have several sources of income, most important of which are livestock production and crop farming. According to a Livelihood Study conducted during the project preparation⁴⁶, households in the project area have about 1.0 – 1.5 ha of own agricultural land⁴⁷. Among the households with irrigated agricultural land, those in Ak-Talaa have smallest plots (0.7 ha) compared to the three other districts which have 1.5 ha (Uzgen) and 1.2 ha (Suzak and Toguz Toro)⁴⁸. Most of the households have homestead garden (often called 'kitchen garden') in the size of 0.15 – 0.17 ha, where vegetables are typically grown for household consumption. The size of leased forest land in among the households in the project area is 5.0 ha⁴⁹. Two thirds of the households who lease forest land have long-term (49 years) lease agreements, while and 27.8% have annual contracts.

32. Livestock owning households have on average 3 – 4 cattle and about 20 sheep⁵⁰. Among the households who graze animals on pasture, 65.6% said they send their animals to distant pastures under State Land Fund (SLF) during summer in contrast to 11.1% who answered that their animals graze in State Forest Fund (SFF)⁵¹. A great majority of the livestock owners who send their animals to summer pastures (74.0%) rely on shepherds, while 15.2% answered they graze animals by themselves.

⁴⁵ Data and analysis that allowed the identification of the proposed target areas were organized in form of an atlas that presents the rationale behind areas' selection and that form the main part of the baseline in terms of distribution, density, status and vulnerability of target ecosystems (forests and pastures) and communities. The atlas presents key information such as climate variables, including trends, demography, agriculture productivity, infrastructures' distribution, pasture user associations grazing areas, forest fund lands and others. The ensemble of presented data constitutes the context generating the assessed needs as well as the context into which the validity of the paradigm shift will be objectively demonstrated. The atlas will include also available historical data so to create, in GE, time series analysis as well as interactive videos.

⁴⁶ Livelihood Study for CS-FOR collected data from 907 households, 600 of which were in the project area (Ak-Talaa, Toguz-Toro, Uzgen and Suzak districts). In addition, qualitative information was obtained through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Separate FGDs were organized for women.

⁴⁷ The figures are based on median values of those with own agricultural land, disaggregated at district level.

⁴⁸ Median values.

⁴⁹ Median value. Only 8.9% of the total sample use forest land through leasing arrangement.

⁵⁰ Average values. Medians are not available.

⁵¹ Of the total sample. No figures for the project area are not available. SLF pastures are managed by Pasture Users Unions (PUUs) at ayil aymak level, whereas SFF pasture is under forest enterprises (leskhoz).

33. Results of focus group discussions (FGDs) in the Livelihood Study revealed that forest resources are popularly used in the Suzak and Uzgen districts as the main source or an additional source of income⁵². The use of forest resources in comparison with the management of agriculture is of greater interest to the residents of these districts and constitutes an important part of their income, especially for women. Collecting such forest resources as nuts, apples, mushrooms and wild rose brings a significant income as residents of these districts have access to the markets of large cities such as Osh, Jalalabad, Uzgen. Participants in the FGDs noted that residents invest income from the sale of forest products to purchase livestock. In Ak-Talaa and Toguz Toro districts, on the contrary, there are less users of forest resources because there are fewer forests and types and volumes of non-wood resources that generate income are limited. Marketing channels for products are also limited.

34. **Vulnerability.** The aforementioned Livelihood Study categorised the surveyed households by the economic activity on which the household's welfare depends (livestock production, crop farming, forest resource use, beekeeping, off-farm commercial activities, and employment in the public sector). In addition, qualitative information was obtained through interviews and focus group discussions. The results indicates that households whose welfare depends on the use of forest resources are vulnerable to climate change as forest ecosystems are subject to negative effects of natural disasters. Meanwhile analysis of the household data found a relatively higher percentage of vulnerable households (households with low income and limited savings and assets) in both livestock and farming households. Those households that receive seasonal income are particularly at risk. Less vulnerable households are those in which at least one member of the family has is formally employed or those with additional income from businesses.

35. **Disadvantaged groups.** The same study found that unemployed people (both women and men), low-income families, single-parent households (both headed by women and men), and young families are in disadvantaged position in the rural communities due to their weak social and economic standing. It was highlighted that such disadvantaged groups may further weaken their social and economic situation if their access to natural resources decreases or natural disasters intensify.

Target Groups

36. The primary target group of the CS-FOR are all the *de facto* users (both women and men) of pasture and forest resources (both formal and informal) in the target area of the four districts where interventions will be undertaken. Special attention will be paid to ensure inclusion and informed participation of poor families, women and young women and men (for specific project actions to ensure their inclusion and participation, see the next section: Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan⁵³). It is estimated that about 90,000 rural families in the target area will directly benefit from the project as the primary target group.

37. In addition, the project will benefit the following categories of people:

- i. **Institutions at national level:** the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF), the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration (MAFIM), the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), the Agency for Local Self Government and Interethnic Relations (ALSGIR), the Climate Finance Center (CFC), the Ministry of Economy (ME), the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism (MoCIT), various research and educational institutions and NGOs, with the focus on those, specializing in rural women's empowerment.
Institutions at local level: Leskhozoes (Forest Enterprises), National Parks, self-government bodies (*ayil okmutu* and *ayil kenesh*), women's councils, Pasture Users' Unions and other natural resource users groups.
- ii. **Agribusinesses and their raw material suppliers** participating in the project supported value chains.

⁵² The study conducted 12 FGDs, in which a total of 197 people participated, including 66 women in FGD for women.

⁵³ At the onset of the project implementation, the project's Expertise Group, under the overall responsibility of Gender and Social Development Specialist, will organize a workshop to validate the proposed Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan and sensitize key stakeholders.

38. Direct beneficiaries of the project include 432,450 individuals (7% of the country's population) of which 246,497 are women in the Project Area. By reducing the exposure of rural communities to natural disasters such as landslides, mudslides and floods, the project will also include 540,563 (8% of the country's population) individuals of which 380,121 are women, as indirect beneficiaries in the Project Area, who will benefit from the significant increase of forest coverage and rangeland rehabilitation in hotspots with high risks of hazards.

39. Due to structural, cultural and system-wide barriers women from various groups (rural and urban women, religious women, ethnic minorities, young rural women and women from transboundary communities and other) face multiple discrimination in decision-making and resource allocation at the community and family levels⁵⁴. The main barriers that women face are related to time poverty⁵⁵, lack of family/public support, extreme economic constraints (poverty, economic marginalization, lack of differentiated access to/control over financial resources), lack of experience in politics, business, unequal distribution of labor between women and men⁵⁶, misbalance/lack of women of profile specialties and senior positions⁵⁷.

Gender Strategy

40. CS-FOR, while promoting positive shifts in the natural resource management through policy instruments, capacity building and investments for restoration on the ground, presents a major opportunity to mainstream gender empower women and eliminate, where possible, gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes in the forestry and livestock sectors whereby gender equality and women's rights have had faced a number of challenges. The gender strategy of CS-FOR is informed by Gender Assessment (Section B) and recognises that rural women in Kyrgyzstan play a key role in the natural resource management, and that they have a high stake in both climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. It also reflects the understanding that women's equal participation and as active actors and agents of change in the project needs to be facilitated through a set of specific measures, including those, related to leadership and decision-making skills. The gender strategy of CS-FOR therefore aims to use every possible opportunity in the project actions to advance towards gender equality and women's rights.

41. The gender strategy is also framed by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality⁵⁸, the FAO Environmental and Social Management Standards⁵⁹ and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security⁶⁰.

42. Underlying principles and key features of the gender strategy of CS-FOR are as follows:

- women will equally participate in the project implementation at all levels and benefit from its opportunities; for this, pro-active measures will be taken to address existing burdens that could

⁵⁴ Beijing +25: National-Level Review of the Kyrgyz Republic on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action. Progress and Challenges. 2019

⁵⁵ Case Study on combating gender inequality in political participation in Kyrgyzstan. UNDP (2016). Regional Human Development Report. Progress at Risk: Inequalities and Human Development in Eastern Europe, Turkey, and Central Asia - "survey on time budgeting conducted in 2015 showed that the most burdened with domestic work were women living in rural areas, who spent roughly 303 minutes per day on housework. Women living in rural areas spend 1.5 times more time on housework than women in urban areas (197 minutes per day). Men from urban areas (59 minutes per day) and rural areas (87 minutes per day) spent 3.5 times less time on domestic work than rural women did". P.7

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/kyrgyzstan/Publications/gender/Case%20study_Eng10Oct2016.pdf

⁵⁶ Beijing +25: National Level Review of the Kyrgyz Republic on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action. Progress and Challenges. 2019

⁵⁷ CS-FOR Stakeholder Engagement. National Facilitation Workshop on Green Climate Fund Project Formulation on March 28-29, 2017 in Bishkek.

⁵⁸ FAO (2012) *FAO Policy on gender equality. Attaining food security goals in agriculture and rural development*. (Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3205e/i3205e.pdf>)

⁵⁹ FAO (2015) *Environmental and social management guidelines*. (Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4413e.pdf>)

⁶⁰ CFS and FAO (2012) *Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security*. (Available at: http://rs.one.un.org/content/dam/unct/serbia/docs/Publications/Recovery_Needs_Assessment.pdf)

limit women's opportunities to benefit from the project, and where considered necessary a minimum of women's quorums will be set;

- the project, through the inclusive participation of stakeholders will support the strengthening of a national policy on gender equality, in collaboration with MLSD, targeting such areas as livelihood adaptation, natural resource management and disaster prevention and warning
- project will target female headed households and women to support the opportunities to participate at decision-making levels: in the executive committees (Pasture Committees or PCs) of Pasture Users Unions (PUUs)
- women's informed engagement in decision making processes on related matters (e.g. livelihood adaptation, natural resource management and disaster prevention and warning) – both at community and household levels – will be facilitated;
- opportunities for women's social and economic empowerment, as well as their leadership and decision-making opportunities, will be identified and supported
- needs for women's capacity enhancement on relevant topics will be addressed and acted upon, and all trainings will take gender issues into consideration in the modules, selection of participants, communication and mobilization channels, selection of venues and logistical issues (including transportation needs, timing, baby-sitting services, etc); Needs assessment will be part of the M&E system to collected data on a systematic basis.
- all project stakeholders will be sensitized and trained on the importance of gender mainstreaming under the project and of specific GAP actions;
- gender equality and mainstreaming are adequately introduced to the target communities, project staff and other stakeholders; all communication materials and project messages address gender aspects and use gender-sensitive languages;
- staff in the project unit (Expertise Group) will include a qualified personnel (Gender and Social Development Specialist) who oversees gender mainstreaming in the project and GAP implementation; and
- knowledge management of the project mainstreams gender, and the project will monitor and evaluate gender-differentiated outputs and outcomes through sex-disaggregated M&E indicators and other tools.

43. **Inclusion of the poor, youth and other disadvantaged groups.** The Livelihood Study and stakeholder consultations informed that certain groups in the rural community are socially disadvantaged, particularly poor families, single-headed households (both headed by women and men), and youth, due to their weak social and economic standings⁶¹. The project therefore incorporate special actions to ensure their equal participation in the project. For youth, in addition to ensuring their equal access to project information and benefits, particular attention will be paid to promote their engagement in business opportunities in the project supported value chains by proactively including them in business related capacity building activities.

44. Similar to the gender strategy above, the project will raise awareness among stakeholders on the risks of potential exclusion of the disadvantaged groups and importance of inclusive approach, and ensure their informed participation through a set of specific actions. The project manager will take the full responsibility to ensure gender mainstreaming and social inclusion of the project as per FAO standards. All members of the project team will be held accountable for gender mainstreaming and social inclusion, and will be technically assisted by the Gender and Social Development Specialist (part of the PMU).

⁶¹ Stakeholder consultation meeting for Uzgen and Suzak districts invited Uzbek community leaders.