Gender Assessment

FP322: Climate-resilient landscapes in Central Asia

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Gender Assessment and Gender and Inclusion Action Plan

to the GCF Funding Proposal

Climate-resilient landscapes in Central Asia

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
ARIS	Community Development and Investment Agency
AMA	Auslandsmitarbeiter*innen/International Personnel
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CCAP	Climate Change Action Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEP	Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of Tajikistan
CIIP	Centre for Implementation of Investment Projects
CIFOR-ICRAF	Center for International Forestry Research – World Agroforestry
CRLE	Climate Resilient Low Emission
CFC	Climate Finance Center
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
CWFA	Committee on Women and the Family Affairs
EE	Executive Entity
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMS	Environmental and Social Management System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FI	Financial Institution
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAP	Gender & Inclusion Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GRM	Grievance Mechanism
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPHR	International Partnership for Human Rights
KG	Kyrgyz Republic
KGS	Kyrgyz som (currency)
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex plus
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MNRETS	Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
MoWRAPI	Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NABWT	Association of Women of Tajikistan
NDA	National Designated Authority
NCECC	National Committee on Ecology and Climate Change
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDS	National Development Strategy
NMA	Nationale Mitarbeiter*innen/ National Personnel
NSC	National Statistical Committee
OPSZ	Public Prevention Centres (local governance structure referenced as OPSZ)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SCLMG	State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
TJ	Tajikistan
TTF	Technical Task Forces
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN OHCHR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UZS	Uzbekistani som (currency)
UZ	Uzbekistan
WBL	Women, Business and the Law
WCU	Women's Councils
WUA	Water User Association

1. Introduction

1.1 Programme Overview

The 'Climate Resilient Landscapes in Central Asia' programme directly addresses the critical climate risks impacting the agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU) sectors in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, concentrating on the highly vulnerable and ecologically important Fergana Valley, and Surkhandarya, and Khatlon regions. Ranging from plains dominated by agriculture to pastures and forests widely distributed on foothills and mountain slopes, the selected intervention areas are interconnected, and inseparable elements of continuous and transboundary landscapes characterised by different land uses and natural ecosystems that necessitate an integrated regional approach.

Climate change is exerting significant adverse effects on the selected regions through rising temperatures, increasing drought frequency, and more intense rainfall events, which are altering seasonal water availability, intensifying heat and drought stress, and accelerating land degradation processes, including soil erosion, landslides, and mudflows. These dynamics are projected to produce cascading impacts across agricultural production systems and ecosystems, resulting in reduced crop productivity and stability, diminished pasture carrying capacity, and the deterioration of forest functions. Moreover, although the energy sector remains the principal source of GHG emissions, emissions from the AFOLU sectors have been rising in the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan since the 1990s, driven by increasing agricultural emissions and a decline in forest carbon sequestration.

The programme's integrated landscape approach fully recognises the interconnectedness of the selected transboundary landscapes and addresses climate risks by institutionalising climate-informed AFOLU planning, coordination, and monitoring. It strengthens climate and land-use decision-support systems; enhances capacities to access and manage climate finance, and promotes the adoption of climate-resilient, low-emission (CRLE) practices and technologies through improved sub-national planning, extension services, and targeted investments in agriculture, forests, and pastures. At the regional level, the programme will reinforce cooperation through foresight processes, regional AFOLU pathways, knowledge exchange, and a climate investment platform to coordinate and mobilise finance for transboundary adaptation actions.

The programme will enhance the climate resilience of 1,046,062 people directly and 1,480,919 people indirectly, mitigate 6.95 million tCO2e of GHG emissions, and bring 939,354 hectares of land under sustainable management, conservation, or restoration in 180 municipalities across the three countries.

To achieve its overall objective, the programme will be implemented through three interlinked components that collectively catalyse and sustain a paradigm shift toward a CRLE development pathway in the AFOLU sectors at the national, local, and regional levels.

1. The first component (national) establishes the foundation for systemic transformation by creating an enabling environment for change. It strengthens climate informed land-use planning and decision-support systems, improves the public finance landscape and promotes innovative financing mechanisms that mobilise both public and private resources to support the transition beyond the programme period.
2. Building on this foundation, the second component (local) supports large-scale investments and field-level implementation, directly contributing to the programme's climate adaptation and mitigation objectives.
3. The third component (regional) addresses the transboundary nature of ecosystems and climate challenges by promoting coordination and collaboration across countries, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and innovation, and establishing financing vehicles for the collaborative management of ecosystems.

1.2 Purpose and structure of the Annex

This Annex seeks to ensure that the "Climate Resilient Landscapes in Central Asia" programme (hereafter referred to as "the programme") is designed, financed, implemented and monitored in a gender-responsive and socially inclusive manner. The GAP goal is to achieve equitable, barrier-free access for women, youth, and marginalized groups to all programme interventions, CRLE practices, and consultations within the targeted landscapes, ensuring that programme processes smooth existing structural constraints. It has been developed in accordance with both the GCF's Gender Policy, and its Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan Templates.

The Annex adopts the GCF's three-pronged approach to mainstreaming gender – analysis, assessment and action. It is informed by a review of existing literature and secondary databases, stakeholder consultations and

expert input. It presents a robust gender analysis that considers the various factors (including those exacerbated by climate change) that influence gender inequality in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sectors; it assesses the underlying gendered barriers and gaps of particular relevance to the programme context; and it identifies opportunities for women, men and youth to contribute to inclusive resilience building through programme support.
These opportunities are translated into gendered actions that promote gender equality and youth empowerment, and reduce disparities in the sector, which are captured in a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework (i.e. the Gender & Inclusion Action Plan).

This Annex sits within the context of the broader funding proposal and should be read as such.

- 2 presents an overview of the status of gender equality in each of the programme's three countries. The analysis focuses specifically on two aspects of gender equality, which are of primary relevance to this programme – namely, i) gender and the AFOLU sector; and ii) gender and climate change. It also outlines the legal, policy and stakeholder landscapes specifically as they relate to the intersection of gender, climate and AFOLU sectors in each country – providing an important framework within which the programme's gender and social inclusion interventions sit.
- 3 describes the approach, findings, and recommendations derived from stakeholder engagements. Together with Chapter 2's analysis, this chapter then summarises gendered preferences, notable gender gaps and challenges, and potential opportunities that could be offered by the programme to ensure meaningful, sustained and equitable programme delivery.
- 4 consolidates the recommendations from Chapter 3 into a Gender & Inclusion Action Plan, which contributes to – and aligns with – the programme's broader Theory of Change.
- Chapter 5 concludes the Annex by outlining the overarching principles and approaches that will guide consistent, gender-responsive and inclusive programme delivery, all of which are aligned with GIZ's existing institutional commitments and protocols.

2. Country and sector-level analyses

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of gender equality and women's roles within the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sectors across the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. By examining the unique social, economic, and environmental contexts of each country, we explore the progress made toward gender equality, the persistent barriers to effective policy implementation, and the intersection of gender with climate change risk, adaptation and mitigation. Each country profile includes an overview of national commitments, an assessment of women's participation in AFOLU, and a mapping of the legal, policy, and stakeholder landscape. Through this multi-dimensional approach, the chapter aims to complement the stakeholder-driven, localised approach in Chapter 3, toward identifying opportunities for advancing gender-responsive strategies and highlighting areas where targeted interventions can foster more inclusive and resilient AFOLU approaches in the region.

2.1 Kyrgyz Republic

2.1.1 National overview: status of gender equality

The Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to advance gender equality take place within a rapidly growing and predominantly rural population. As of 2024, the country is home to approximately 7.4 million people, including around 3.6 million women (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2026). Nearly 60% of the population, about 4.4 million people, live in rural areas, underscoring the importance of addressing gender disparities not only nationally but also in communities where access to services, economic opportunities, and institutional support remains uneven. Gender-disaggregated data from the National Statistical Committee reinforce this picture of an evenly balanced population across the southern regions. In Batken Region, for example, the 2022 census recorded 561,443 residents, comprising 283,322 males and 278,121 females (National Committee for Statistics of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2021). Socio-cultural dynamics also shape gender outcomes at the national level. Recent assessments by UN human rights experts and international monitoring bodies underline potential limitation to religious freedom, especially for minority groups, including through the introduction of fines for wearing certain religious attire such as *niqab* in public places and institutions (UN OHCHR, 2025). This may contribute to certain expectations and potential limitation to women's mobility, roles in public life, and decision-making in some communities, which intersects with economic disparities: women remain concentrated in feminised sectors such as healthcare (79%), education (78%), and social services, despite having higher levels of professional education (32% of employed women vs. 20% of employed men for 2024) (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, n.d.). These patterns reflect persistent labour-market segmentation that continues to limit women's access to diversified and better-paid employment, particularly in rural settings.

Within this demographic context, the Kyrgyz Republic has positioned itself as a committed signatory to major international frameworks promoting women's rights and gender equality. Amongst others, the country ratified It ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the Convention on Nationality of Married Women, and the Convention concerning Maternity Protection all in 1996, as well as CEDAW Optional Protocol in 2002, along with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995 (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Additionally, the Kyrgyz Republic is a participant in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Nationally, the Kyrgyz Republic has developed a robust legal and policy framework to advance gender equality. The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women serves as the foundation for anti-discrimination, while the National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030 sets priorities for women's economic empowerment, cultural transformation, prevention of gender-based violence, and gender parity in decision-making. Complementing these frameworks are targeted programs such as the State Programme for Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship (2022–2026), which provides legal definitions and support for women-led businesses, and the State Programme on Supporting Women's Leadership (2024–2030), which aims to increase women's participation in executive and political roles (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Legislative reforms have further criminalised domestic violence and forced marriage, notably through the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Family Violence (2017, amended 2024), which introduced "economic violence" as a distinct category. The Kyrgyz Republic has also demonstrated leadership by ratifying ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the workplace and developing a National Action Plan to Prevent Child and Forced Marriages (2023–2024). Despite these advances, implementation gaps persist, including the absence of gender-responsive budgeting systems and the recent repeal of reproductive rights legislation, which has weakened guarantees for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Ongoing efforts, such as gender-responsive budgeting pilots and mobile outreach initiatives, reflect the government's commitment to translating legal commitments into lived realities for all women and girls in the Kyrgyz Republic (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025).

Despite these obligations, the Kyrgyz Republic remains ranked below regional averages on both the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) Index and the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). With a WBL score of 76.9/100, the country achieved perfect results across the mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, entrepreneurship, and assets indicators (World Bank Group, 2024). However, significant legal gaps persist. Until early 2025, legislation limited women's access to industrial employment by prohibiting them from working in occupations classified as hazardous, reflecting a regulatory approach that treated women and men differently (Anti-Discrimination Centre, 2025). Moreover, there is still no statutory mandate for equal remuneration or guaranteed paid parental leave, provisions that are critical to support women's sustained labour-market attachment after childbirth (World Bank Group, 2024). The primary areas requiring reform, therefore, continue to be pay, parenthood, and pensions. This score has remained unchanged in recent years due to persistent shortcomings in legal and supportive policy frameworks and the limited capacity to translate formal rights into genuine economic opportunity for women. Although the comprehensive list of prohibited jobs was abolished in 2025, restrictions continue to apply to pregnant and breastfeeding women, and the absence of mandated equal pay and adequate parental-leave schemes still constrains women's workforce participation and career progression. In addition, weak enforcement of gender-equality legislation and insufficient complementary measures have further slowed progress in closing gender gaps under the law.

A similar pattern is evident in the GGGI assessment. The Kyrgyz Republic ranks 95th out of 148 countries, having fallen five places between 2024 and 2025, largely because the subindex score for economic participation and opportunity dropped by 19 places. Nevertheless, the country continues to perform strongly in other dimensions, ranking joint 1st for both educational attainment and health and survival (World Economic Forum, 2025). These contrasting results suggest that while human-capital outcomes are comparatively equal, structural barriers in employment and social protection continue to hinder women's full economic empowerment.

Barriers to effective implementation of policies, legislature and commitments

Despite the Kyrgyz Republic's robust legal and policy framework for gender equality, including the National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030, there remain notable challenges in translating these commitments into consistent, practical outcomes. Recent policy changes, such as the repeal of mandatory gender analysis and reproductive rights legislation, have made systematic gender mainstreaming more difficult and removed some guarantees for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. The absence of a national system for tracking gender equality budget allocations means many programs rely on donor funding, which can affect their long-term sustainability. UN monitoring bodies have observed ongoing gaps, such as delays in anti-discrimination legislation, the use of broad terms like "traditional family values," and barriers to justice for women (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Enforcement of GBV laws and coordination within national gender institutions could also be

strengthened. These factors highlight the ongoing gap between legal commitments and the everyday experiences of women and girls.

Women's limited agency within the household further constrains the translation of policy commitments into practice. Recent national time-use data show that women spend 260 minutes per day on unpaid domestic and care work, compared with 55 minutes for men, reinforcing norms that confine women to the home and limit participation in leadership roles or training opportunities (National Committee for Statistics of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2021). Deeply rooted patriarchal expectations, including the "kelin" daughter-in-law custom, place additional labour, surveillance, and emotional pressure on newly married women, often resulting in psychological or physical abuse (Zhussipbek, 2021). These entrenched norms significantly weaken the implementation of gender-responsive rural development and climate policies.

Across several key areas, the difference between policy and practice is evident. Gender quotas have helped increase women's representation in elected local councils, yet women are still underrepresented in appointed leadership roles and continue to face economic constraints (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Women's employment rates have declined over recent years, with many concentrated in lower-paid sectors or informal work, contributing to a persistent wage gap. Women also carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care, have lower rates of asset ownership, and remain underrepresented in entrepreneurship and land-use decision-making forums. Digital inclusion continues to lag, particularly for rural women, who face lower internet access and reduced participation in ICT and technical education. Gender-based violence remains a serious concern: crisis-centre coverage is limited, prevention strategies are uneven, and justice processes can be slow, while technology-facilitated violence is increasingly noted (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Women with disabilities and LGBTQI+ individuals face additional barriers to protection. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is also shaped by systemic healthcare constraints and maternal mortality rates that remain elevated relative to the regional average.

Women in AFOLU

Agriculture

Agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods in the Kyrgyz Republic, with two-thirds of the population living in rural areas and 46% of employed women working in the agricultural sector. Until the beginning of 2025, however, women were legally prohibited from serving as agricultural machinists and tractor drivers – roles that are among the better-paid and more skilled positions in the sector. This restriction, rooted in outdated labour regulations, limited women's access to mechanised farming and reinforced occupational segregation. The lifting of this prohibition in early 2025 marks a significant step toward gender equality in agricultural employment, opening new opportunities for women to participate fully across all aspects of the sector (Anti-Discrimination Centre, 2025).

Despite their substantial contributions to crop cultivation, livestock production, and food processing – often combined with unpaid domestic labour and care work – women in the rural Kyrgyz Republic face persistent disadvantages. According to the latest national statistics, women hold only 18.5% of land titles, and out of more than 428,000 functioning farm businesses, only 20.2% are headed by women (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Customary norms and inheritance practices mean that land and productive assets are typically passed to male relatives despite Kyrgyz law guaranteeing equal rights to property and inheritance. This leaves women dependent on family holdings and limits their ability to access credit or invest in agricultural enterprises. In addition to asset-based constraints, systemic barriers within the banking system – such as collateral-heavy lending requirements, cumbersome loan procedures, and the absence of financial products tailored to small-scale women farmers – further restrict women's ability to invest in productivity improvements or climate-resilient technologies. While women's wages in agriculture have recently approached parity with men's, the majority of female agricultural workers remain self-employed or unpaid, working primarily on family farms and for relatives. Women's businesses are often concentrated in very small enterprises with limited opportunities for growth, and representation in large enterprises remains low, ranging from 0% in agriculture to 32.2% in services (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Access to agricultural inputs, extension services, and market opportunities is further constrained by limited mobility, time poverty, and a lack of technical training. These disparities contribute to persistent yield gaps and economic vulnerability, particularly among female-headed households (FAO, 2016).

Forestry

Forestry in the Kyrgyz Republic is a vital source of livelihoods, biodiversity, and climate resilience, with women playing increasingly important, but often underrecognised, roles in forest management and conservation. Women contribute significantly to the sustainable use and stewardship of walnut forests, fruit orchards, and community-managed woodlands, drawing on traditional knowledge and local networks (Elias, et al., 2018; Global Forest Coalition, 2020). However, women face persistent barriers to secure tenure and participation in forest governance: most forest land leases are held by older men, and women are underrepresented in decision-making

bodies and forest user groups (CIFOR-ICRAF, 2023; Bioversity, 2014). Despite these challenges, women-led cooperatives and community groups are driving innovation in forest product value chains, from harvesting and processing walnuts and berries to marketing and enterprise development (UNDP, 2021). International projects and research highlight that empowering women in forestry not only improves household incomes and food security, but also strengthens biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation (FAO and GCF, 2025).

Other Land Uses

Women in the Kyrgyz Republic play crucial but often undervalued roles in the management and use of pastures, rangelands, and other communal lands. Pasturelands are central to rural livelihoods, supporting livestock production and food security for much of the population (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). However, women face significant barriers to participation and leadership in land-use governance: participation in both formal and informal decision-making mechanisms remains limited, reducing women's influence over how pasture and forest resources are allocated and managed. These mechanisms are critical for decisions on grazing rights, resource allocation, and adaptation to climate change, yet customary tenure systems and land ownership requirements often exclude women from meaningful participation. Unlike in crop agriculture, where women may have some visibility as workers or farm managers, their contributions to sustainable rangeland management, biodiversity conservation, and communal resource governance are frequently informal and unrecognised (FAO and GCF, 2025). Their limited engagement with land-management structures, municipal enterprises, and technical advisers further restricts women's access to timely and actionable climate information for planting, fodder planning, and grazing decisions, reducing their ability to adapt to shifting environmental conditions.

Nevertheless, women's traditional ecological knowledge and community organising are increasingly acknowledged as vital for the resilience of these landscapes. International projects and local initiatives are beginning to support women's participation in pasture user groups and communal land governance, but closing the gender gap in access, leadership, and benefits remains a critical priority for the sector's sustainability and equity (FAO and GCF, 2025; Global Forest Coalition, 2020).

Climate change and gender equality

The Kyrgyz Republic's latest Nationally Determined Contribution (The Kyrgyz Republic, 2025) explicitly recognises that climate impacts are not gender neutral, and the ongoing development of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is guided by a commitment to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion throughout climate action. Women, especially in rural and mountainous regions, are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events due to persistent inequalities in access to land, finance, water, energy, and education. These disparities have significant implications for household resilience and the broader economy, given women's central roles in agriculture, natural resource management, and care work (The Kyrgyz Republic, 2025; UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025)

In practice, women's reliance on the natural resource base for both productive and reproductive activities makes them highly vulnerable to climate uncertainty. Prolonged droughts have historically led to high rates of household food insecurity and malnutrition, while extreme flooding destroys crops and infrastructure, increases the incidence of waterborne disease, and hinders access to essential services such as health care, education, and markets. These impacts fall disproportionately on women, who are typically responsible for securing water, fuel, and food for their families, and who shoulder the bulk of unpaid domestic and care work (UN Women Kyrgyzstan, 2025). Within this broad group, pregnant women, female heads of household, elderly women, and schoolgirls are especially vulnerable. Notably, recent evidence indicates that climate-related shocks, including extreme heat and flooding, are associated with disruptions to maternal and reproductive health services in rural areas, compounding existing barriers to care for women and increasing health-related vulnerability during climate emergencies (UNFPA, 2025). Men, by contrast, are less tied to domestic responsibilities and often migrate in search of income after climate disasters, leaving women with increased workloads and new responsibilities, including tasks previously managed by men. This dynamic can exacerbate existing gender inequalities and heighten women's vulnerability to climate risks.

The Kyrgyz Republic's latest NDC 3.0 and the ongoing development of its NAP both emphasise the importance of gender equality and social inclusion in climate action. While the NAP is still under development, the NDC 3.0 sets out clear commitments to mainstream gender in adaptation planning, including broad stakeholder engagement and integration of gender-responsive measures across sectors. The NDC 3.0 calls for gender analysis of all draft climate regulations, integration of gender indicators into monitoring systems, and the development of special mechanisms to support women's business projects in adaptation and mitigation (The Kyrgyz Republic, 2025). These measures are grounded in broad stakeholder engagement, including women's organisations, and align with the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.

2.1.2 Legal, policy and stakeholder landscape

The Kyrgyz Republic's commitments to gender equality are articulated in constitutional guarantees, dedicated equality legislation, long-term gender strategies and sectoral agendas on climate and green economy. Recent climate instruments (notably NDC 3.0, 2025) and the draft NAP process embed gender as a cross-cutting principle and increasingly link climate action with rural livelihoods and agriculture.

National instruments and commitments

Table 1: Legal and policy landscape: Kyrgyz Republic

Instrument	Relevant content
Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (2010)	Enshrines equality and non-discrimination, providing the legal foundation for gender-responsive policymaking across sectors, including natural resource management, agriculture and climate action.
Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women *(2008; building on an earlier 2003 act)*	Defines gender equality, prohibits discrimination, mandates gender statistics, legal gender expertise and representation in public bodies – key enabling tools for gender-responsive governance in agriculture, environment, and climate policy.
National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality to 2030 *(approved with rolling National Action Plans – 2022–2024 completed; 2025–2027 draft under consultation)*	Sets five priority areas, including women's economic opportunities and political participation; advances gender statistics and monitoring, with ongoing efforts to standardise SDG-aligned gender indicators and strengthen national gender data systems relevant to rural and climate-vulnerable populations.
Updated Nationally Determined Contribution	Positions gender and inclusion as cross-cutting principles; outlines adaptation measures through 2035 with sector components for agriculture, water and rural resilience; developed via inclusive national dialogue.
National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process	Establishes medium/long-term adaptation planning; sector adaptation plans include agriculture & irrigation, health, biodiversity, disaster & emergency management. The NAP is under development, with emphasis on inclusive approaches and climate-responsive indicators
Green Economy Development Program	Mainstreams green agriculture, low-carbon transport and climate-aligned industrya unified Coordination Council on Green Economy and Climate Change, chaired by the Prime Minister, strengthens cross-government steering and policy coherence.
Climate governance & finance arrangements	The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision (MNRETS) is the NDA to the GCF and leads climate policy; the Climate Finance Center (CFC), operating under the Cabinet of Ministers, acts as secretariat to the Coordination Council, mobilising climate finance and supporting GEDSI integration in climate projects.
Sector strategies and data systems (agriculture & gender)	The Ministry of Agriculture advances sector reforms; FAO's earlier country gender assessment (2016), together with ongoing NSC and UN Women statistical publications, strengthens sex-disaggregated evidence on land, labour, and rural services – critical inputs for gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and AFOLU interventions.
Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 270 (2021): Program for the Support and Development of Women's Entrepreneurship, 2022–2026	Supports women's entrepreneurship and access to finance through targeted measures, with a focus on small and medium enterprises and rural livelihoods; relevant for women's economic empowerment, income diversification, and resilience in climate-vulnerable rural and agricultural contexts.

Source: Own elaboration

Key stakeholders

The table below provides a high-level overview of national-level policy, coordination, and enabling institutions relevant to gender, climate, and land-use governance. Sectoral ministries and sub-national authorities play an important role in implementation and are discussed elsewhere in the Funding Proposal.

Table 2: Stakeholder map: Kyrgyz Republic

Stakeholder	Mandate
Ministry for Labour, Social Welfare and Migration	Amongst other areas of expertise, it takes the lead on addressing women's and gender issues, including coordinating with bodies like UN Women and implementing national strategies like the National Strategy for Gender Equality until 2030.
Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision (MNRETS)	Leads climate change, environment and natural resource policy; houses dedicated climate policy and international cooperation units; serves as National Designated Authority (NDA) to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

	Coordinates cross-sector integration of climate, environment and ecology, including oversight of NDC and NAP processes with cross-cutting gender and inclusion considerations.
Climate Finance Center (CFC)	Acts as Secretariat to the Coordination Council on Green Economy and Climate Change; develops national climate project pipelines, and advances climate finance mobilisation. Plays a coordinating role in integrating GEDSI considerations into climate investments and project design, though implementation remains project-dependent.
Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industries	Leads sector policy on crops, livestock, irrigation, land and pasture governance; implements climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and rural development programmes. Directly influences rural women's access to land, extension services, markets, water and climate-resilient livelihoods, including AFOLU-related interventions.
National Council on Family, Gender Development, Social Protection and Children's Rights under the Cabinet of Ministers	Coordination and monitoring of the implementation of measures on social protection and the protection of children's rights, strengthening and promoting family values based on strengthening the institution of marriage and family, fatherhood, motherhood and childhood, combating gender discrimination and violence, protecting children in difficult life situations, promoting gender development and women's leadership, social and women's entrepreneurship, contributing to the expansion of women's economic opportunities, and strengthening the role of women in ensuring peace and security.
Women's Rights Council under the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic	Promoting the improvement of the legislative framework to ensure respect for the rights of women and children, within the legislative function of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic; - Promoting the implementation of gender approaches and the principle of the best interests of the child in national policies and state programs to ensure the rights and protection of children and women; - Assisting government agencies in fulfilling the international obligations of the Kyrgyz Republic to protect the rights of women, children, and gender equality, including fulfilling obligations under the Convention on Women's Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Source: Own elaboration

2.2 Tajikistan

2.2.1 National overview: status of gender equality

Tajikistan's efforts to advance gender equality unfold within a rapidly growing and predominantly rural population. According to the 2020 Population and Housing Census, the country is home to 9.66 million people, including approximately 4.76 million women (Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan). Rural areas account for nearly threequarters- of the total population, with 7.12 million residents – 3.50 million of whom are women – living outside urban centres, where access to services, economic opportunities and institutional support remains highly uneven (Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan). These demographic dynamics shape the context in which gender policy must operate, highlighting the particular importance of responding to the needs and constraints experienced by rural women across Tajikistan's diverse regions. Gender-disaggregated census data from the Statistical Agency confirm similarly balanced population patterns in select regions. In Sughd Region, the northern part of the Fergana Valley, the 2020 census recorded 2,769,261 residents, comprising 1,399,208 men and 1,370,053 women. In Khatlon Region, which is predominantly rural, the census recorded 3,436,420 residents, with district-level tables providing full male and female counts across all subdivisions, reflecting an overall gender ratio that closely approximates a 50:50 split (Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan).

Within this demographic landscape, Tajikistan is a committed signatory to key international agreements promoting gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified in 1993, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995 (UN Women, 2025).The country has also aligned its national priorities with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on SDG 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Nationally, Tajikistan has established a comprehensive legal and policy framework to advance gender equality. The Law "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Men and Women and Equal Opportunities for their Implementation" (2005) provides the foundation for anti-discrimination, while the National Development Strategy

2030 and the State Program for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2014–2023) set out priorities for women's empowerment, prevention of gender-based violence, and gender parity in decision-making (The World Bank Group, 2021b). The Committee for Women's and Family Affairs serves as the central institution for coordinating gender policy, supported by targeted initiatives such as the Presidential Quota System, which aims to increase female enrolment in higher education, and ongoing reforms to improve women's access to finance and entrepreneurship (The World Bank Group, 2021b; UNDP, n.d.). Recent legislative reforms have strengthened protections against domestic violence, notably through the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2013), and have expanded women's rights in the workplace, including equal access to night work and maternity leave benefits (The World Bank Group, 2021b). However, implementation gaps remain, particularly in the enforcement of anti-discrimination provisions and the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Restrictions on women's employment in hazardous occupations persist, and gender-responsive budgeting is still in its pilot phase (ICJ, 2025).

Despite these advances, Tajikistan continues to rank below regional averages on both the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) Index and the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). With a WBL score of 78.8/100, Tajikistan has achieved full marks in mobility, marriage, entrepreneurship, and assets, but significant gaps remain in workplace protections, pay, parenthood, and pensions (World Bank Group, 2024). Legislation continues to limit women's access to certain professions, and there is no statutory mandate for paid parental leave, which constrains women's sustained labour-market participation. Enforcement of gender-equality legislation and complementary measures remains inconsistent, slowing progress toward closing gender gaps under the law (The World Bank Group, 2021b). A similar pattern is evident in the GGGI assessment. Tajikistan ranks 129th out of 148 countries, with persistent disparities in economic participation and political empowerment, despite near parity in educational attainment and health outcomes (World Bank Group, 2024). Structural barriers in employment, asset ownership, and social protection continue to hinder women's full economic empowerment. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, disproportionately affecting women's employment, access to education, and exposure to violence (UNDP, n.d.)

Barriers to effective implementation of policies, legislature and commitments

Tajikistan has ratified key international conventions on gender equality and established a comprehensive legal and policy framework, including the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Men and Women, the National Development Strategy 2030, and the State Program for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Despite these advances, translating such commitments into consistent, practical outcomes remains a significant challenge. Targeted initiatives, such as the Presidential Quota System for higher education, demonstrate government intent, yet gaps persist between policy and practice. Recent assessments highlight several systemic barriers: implementation of gender equality legislation is often hindered by limited institutional capacity, insufficient funding, and fragmented coordination among government agencies and civil society actors. (The World Bank Group, 2021b; UN Women, 2025). Many programs rely on donor support, and the absence of a unified system for tracking gender-responsive budget allocations affects the sustainability and reach of gender initiatives (Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020). Comprehensive gender statistics and monitoring mechanisms are still under development, making it difficult to evaluate progress and hold institutions accountable. Addressing these structural constraints requires targeted interventions that combine access to resources, institutional inclusion, and capacity development across key land-use systems.

Legal reforms have strengthened protections against domestic violence and expanded women's rights in the workplace, but enforcement remains inconsistent. For example, domestic violence is not criminalised as a standalone offence, and survivors face procedural obstacles such as limited access to shelters, legal aid, and effective protection orders (ICJ, 2025). Social stigma, discriminatory attitudes, and lack of legal literacy further discourage reporting and access to justice, particularly in rural areas. Restrictions on women's employment in hazardous occupations persist, and there is no statutory mandate for equal remuneration or paid parental leave for fathers, which constrains women's sustained labour-market participation (The World Bank Group, 2021b). Across key areas, the gap between policy and practice is evident. Women's representation in parliament and local government has increased, but remains below national targets, and women are underrepresented in appointed leadership roles. Economic constraints, persistent wage gaps, and limited asset ownership continue to affect women's empowerment. Gender-based violence remains a concern, with limited survivor-centred services and fragmented prevention strategies. Judicial processes can be slow, and technology-facilitated violence is increasing. Women with disabilities and other marginalised groups face additional barriers to support and protection. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is affected by systemic healthcare barriers, high maternal mortality rates, and challenges for women with disabilities.

In rural areas, local governance dynamics further shape the implementation of gender policies. Community-level decision-making often occurs through informal structures such as jamoat administrations, village leaders, mahalla committees, and respected elders. While these structures play an important role in local coordination and social cohesion, they may also reinforce traditional gender norms that limit women's participation in public

meetings, training programmes, and community decision-making platforms. As a result, national gender policies may not always translate into inclusive participation at the local level.

Women in AFOLU

Agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of rural livelihoods in Tajikistan, with over 70% of the population residing in rural areas and more than 60% of the total workforce employed in the sector (FAO, 2025a). Women constitute a significant majority of the agricultural labour force, 59% as of 2021, yet their contributions remain undervalued and largely unpaid. The sector's importance is heightened by the high rate of male labour migration, which has led to the "feminisation" of agricultural labour: women are increasingly responsible for both household management and the continuity of agricultural production, often under challenging economic and social conditions (FAO, 2025a). Additionally, a large share of women's agricultural work is informal, leaving many without formal contracts and unprotected by labour legislation, with limited access to social protection, maternity benefits, or pensions, and increasing their vulnerability to poverty and dependence in later life. Despite their central role in crop cultivation, livestock rearing, and food processing, women in rural Tajikistan face persistent disadvantages.

Within the agricultural sector, gender roles differ significantly by production system. In staple crop production, particularly wheat, men dominate mechanised activities, land allocation decisions, and market engagement, while women are primarily engaged in labour-intensive tasks such as weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing, often without remuneration. In contrast, women play a more central role in horticulture and vegetable production, particularly in kitchen gardens and small-scale irrigated plots, which are critical for household food security and nutrition. However, women's limited control over irrigation infrastructure and access to quality inputs constrains productivity and adaptive capacity in the face of increasing climate variability, including water scarcity and rising temperatures.

These production-level disparities are reinforced by unequal access to land and productive assets. Only 22.4% of dehkan (private) farms were registered to women in 2022, and women's land plots are typically smaller, less fertile, and further from irrigation sources than those managed by men. Customary norms and inheritance practices mean that land and productive assets are usually passed to male relatives, despite legal guarantees of equal rights. This leaves women dependent on family holdings and limits their ability to access credit or invest in agricultural enterprises. As a result, women's economic returns from agriculture remain constrained. While women's wages in agriculture have approached 80% of men's in recent years, the majority of female agricultural workers remain self-employed or unpaid, working primarily on family farms and for relatives (FAO, 2025a; Asian Development Bank, 2020). Women's agricultural enterprises are therefore often concentrated in very small-scale activities with limited opportunities for growth. Representation in large enterprises remains low, and gendered mobility constraints, limited collateral, low financial literacy, time poverty, and a lack of technical training further constrain access to agricultural inputs, extension services, and market opportunities (Asian Development Bank, 2020). These disparities contribute to persistent yield gaps and economic vulnerability, particularly among female-headed households. For example, in 2022, female-headed dehkan farms had lower yields than male-headed farms for nearly all major crops, and only 13.3% of land dedicated to crops was cultivated by female-headed farms (The World Bank Group, 2021b; FAO, 2025a).

These economic constraints are compounded by unpaid care and domestic responsibilities. On average, rural women spend nearly 10 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men, leaving little opportunity for formal employment or business development (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Social norms and stereotypes continue to restrict women's agency, mobility, and participation in decision-making, both within households and in public life. Failure to address these differentiated gender roles across land-use systems risks reinforcing existing inequalities and may result in maladaptation, where climate interventions unintentionally increase women's workload without improving their access to resources, decision-making, or economic benefits. Similar patterns are evident across specific agricultural sub-sectors. In orchard systems and perennial crops, women are actively involved in planting, pruning, harvesting, and processing, yet long-term investment decisions and land tenure arrangements are typically controlled by men. This limits women's ability to benefit from higher-value chains and reduces incentives to adopt climate-resilient practices. Similarly, in livestock and dairy production, women are primarily responsible for feeding, milking, and processing dairy products, while men tend to control sales, income, and access to veterinary services and improved breeds. This "feminisation of responsibility" combined with a "masculinisation of control" reduces women's economic returns despite their substantial labour contributions and increases their vulnerability to climate-induced shocks such as pasture degradation and feed shortages (FAO, 2025a; The World Bank Group, 2021b).

Recent years have seen some progress. The government has recognised these challenges in national strategies and policies, including the National Development Strategy 2030 and the State Programme for the Development

of Women's Entrepreneurship through 2027. These initiatives aim to improve women's access to land, credit, training, and leadership opportunities, and to promote gender equality in agricultural employment. However, implementation gaps remain, and women's representation in governance and decision-making structures is still limited (FAO, 2025a).

Forestry

Forests in Tajikistan cover only about 3% of the country's territory, making them one of the most limited natural resources in Central Asia, yet they play a crucial role in soil protection, water regulation, and biodiversity conservation, particularly in mountainous regions increasingly affected by erosion and climate-related hazards (FAO, 2025a). Rural households rely heavily on forest resources, especially fuelwood, fodder, and non-timber forest products, due to limited access to alternative energy sources, and women bear much of this burden as they are primarily responsible for collecting fuelwood, medicinal plants, and other daily necessities, adding to their already substantial load of unpaid domestic labour (UN Women, 2025). Pressures from population growth, poverty, and climate change have intensified the scarcity of forest resources, with deforestation and overharvesting continuing as major challenges, exacerbated by weak enforcement of management regulations and limited availability of affordable energy alternatives (FAO, 2025a). These pressures disproportionately affect women, who spend considerable time gathering resources, leaving reduced opportunities for education, paid work, and participation in community-level decision-making structures, and constraining livelihood diversification and resilience-building options (Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020).

While national frameworks such as the Forestry Agency and the National Forestry Programme aim to restore degraded lands and promote afforestation, women remain largely excluded from governance and decision-making roles in forest user groups due to persistent gender norms and limited access to land, credit, and training (The World Bank Group, 2021b). Recent initiatives by FAO, ADB and other partners have supported gender-responsive forestry approaches, including livelihood diversification activities such as small-scale agroforestry and beekeeping, but scaling these efforts requires addressing structural inequalities and ensuring that women, who are among the most affected by forest degradation, are fully integrated into planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing processes (FAO, 2025a; Asian Development Bank, 2020). Overall, Tajikistan's forestry sector, although small, is essential for ecological resilience and rural livelihoods, and strengthening gender-inclusive forest management and expanding access to sustainable energy alternatives remain critical priorities for reducing pressure on forests and improving women's wellbeing.

From a systems perspective, forestry-related livelihoods in Tajikistan are closely linked to household energy use, small-scale agroforestry, and non-timber forest product value chains. Although women play a central role in sustaining these systems through resource collection, processing, and local use, their participation remains largely informal and concentrated in subsistence activities, with limited access to higher-value segments such as commercialisation, storage, market linkages, and benefit-sharing mechanisms (FAO, 2025a; The World Bank Group, 2021b). This disconnect means that women's labour underpins household resilience without translating into proportional economic benefits or decision-making authority. Evidence indicates that women's participation in forest governance improves resource sustainability and community resilience, highlighting the importance of strengthening women's representation in forest user groups and afforestation initiatives. At the same time, limited access to alternative energy sources and efficient technologies continues to increase pressure on forest resources and heighten women's exposure to climate-related risks (FAO, 2025a; The World Bank Group, 2021b). Integrating gender-responsive solutions, such as clean energy alternatives, fuel-efficient technologies, and women-led forest-based enterprises, therefore, represents a critical opportunity to reduce deforestation while improving livelihoods and strengthening climate resilience outcomes.

Other Land Uses

Beyond agriculture and forestry, Tajikistan's remaining land uses, including rangelands, pastures, orchards, and degraded lands, play a critical role in rural livelihoods but are under increasing pressure from climate change, population growth, overgrazing, and limited access to sustainable land management practices. Rangelands cover more than 80% of the country's agricultural land area and serve as a primary source of feed for livestock, yet decades of overstocking, weak governance structures, and inadequate pasture rotation systems have resulted in widespread degradation, reducing productivity and increasing the vulnerability of pastoral communities (FAO, 2025a; The World Bank Group, 2021b).

Within these land-use systems, women play a central but often overlooked role. Women are heavily involved in livestock rearing, small-scale dairy processing, and fodder collection, yet their participation in pasture management associations and land-use decision-making remains limited due to gender norms, mobility constraints, and restricted access to information and institutional spaces (The World Bank Group, 2021b; UN Women, 2025). As pasture degradation reduces fodder availability, women's labour burdens increase, intensifying time poverty and constraining their ability to pursue income-generating activities or adaptive practices.

Land degradation and tenure insecurity further compound these challenges. Degraded lands, which have expanded due to soil erosion, salinisation, and unsustainable cultivation practices, further exacerbate rural poverty and food insecurity, particularly among female-headed households who have less access to fertile plots, irrigation, and extension services. Land tenure insecurity, compounded by complex regulations and male-dominated inheritance practices, adds to women's marginalisation, limiting their ability to invest in orchards, horticulture, or small-scale land rehabilitation initiatives despite policy commitments to equal land rights (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

Across these land-use systems, gender roles are differentiated along value chains. Women are typically concentrated in labour-intensive activities such as small-scale horticulture, orchard maintenance, seed preparation, and post-harvest processing, while men retain control over land allocation, irrigation infrastructure, mechanisation, and access to commercial markets. This division of roles constrains women's productivity and limits their ability to adopt climate-resilient technologies or diversify into higher-value agricultural activities (FAO, 2025a).

Recent donor-supported programmes have introduced gender-responsive approaches to rangeland governance, climate-smart land restoration, and livelihood diversification (such as horticulture, seed production, and small-scale processing), but these remain small in scale compared with the magnitude of land degradation and structural gender barriers that restrict women's participation and benefit-sharing. Overall, sustainable and inclusive management of rangelands and other land uses is essential for resilience, yet meaningful progress will require strengthening tenure security, expanding targeted support for rural women, and integrating gender perspectives into land-use planning and climate adaptation strategies. In particular, women's central role in dairy production and small livestock systems represents an important but underutilised entry point for climate-resilient livelihood development. Despite being primarily responsible for feeding, milking, and processing, women often lack access to veterinary services, improved breeds, climate-resilient fodder systems, and formal market channels. Addressing these constraints can significantly enhance both household resilience and women's economic empowerment (The World Bank Group, 2021b).

Overall, sustainable and inclusive management of rangelands and other land uses is essential for resilience. Meaningful progress will require strengthening tenure security, expanding targeted support for rural women, and integrating gender perspectives into land-use planning, pasture governance, and climate adaptation strategies. Without addressing women's exclusion from decision-making bodies that regulate grazing, resource allocation, and adaptation measures, climate interventions risk overlooking critical local knowledge and limiting their effectiveness.

Climate change and gender equality

Tajikistan's latest Nationally Determined Contribution (Republic of Tajikistan, 2021) acknowledges that climate impacts are not gender neutral and affirms the government's commitment to integrating gender responsive- approaches throughout adaptation and mitigation planning (UN Women, n.d.). The ongoing development and phased implementation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) similarly recognise gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting priorities, emphasising the need to address the disproportionate vulnerabilities faced by women, particularly those in rural, mountainous, and low-income households. Tajikistan's mountainous geography exposes rural communities to a range of climate-related hazards including glacier retreat, increased frequency of floods and mudflows, changing precipitation patterns, and accelerating pasture degradation. These environmental pressures disproportionately affect women, who are responsible for household water management, food preparation, and livestock care. Reduced water availability, declining pasture productivity, and increased climate variability often translate into increased labour burdens for women and girls (The World Bank Group, 2021b). Persistent inequalities in access to land, finance, water, energy, education, and climate relevant institutions significantly shape women's exposure to climate risks and their ability to cope with or recover from extreme events. These disparities have direct implications for household resilience and national development, given women's central roles in agriculture, natural resource management, and unpaid domestic and care work. These vulnerabilities are further differentiated across land-use systems. For example, women engaged in vegetable production and small-scale horticulture are particularly affected by water scarcity and temperature variability due to limited control over irrigation resources. Women involved in livestock and pasture systems face increased labour burdens as pasture degradation reduces fodder availability, while those dependent on forest resources experience heightened time poverty as resource scarcity increases collection distances. These system-specific vulnerabilities highlight the need for targeted, gender-responsive adaptation measures across different land-use systems (FAO, 2025a).

Women's reliance on natural resources for both productive and reproductive labour heightens their vulnerability to climate uncertainty. Recurring droughts, already a major driver of food insecurity in rural Tajikistan, disproportionately affect households where women are responsible for crop cultivation, food processing, and

ensuring household nutrition (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Severe flooding and accelerating glacial melt damage agricultural land, destroy infrastructure, increase the incidence of waterborne disease, and restrict access to essential services such as health care, education, and markets. These impacts fall most heavily on women, who are typically responsible for sourcing water, fuelwood, and food, and whose workloads increase significantly during climate shocks. Within this broad group, pregnant women, widows, female-headed households, elderly women, and adolescent girls face heightened vulnerability due to limited mobility, reduced access to resources, and constrained decision-making- power (Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020). Men, by contrast, often migrate – temporarily or seasonally – following climate -related livelihood losses, leaving women with expanded responsibilities and new tasks previously performed by men, which can exacerbate existing gender inequalities (Asian Development Bank, 2020; UN Women, n.d.).

Tajikistan's NDC and the draft NAP underline the importance of ensuring that climate policies are informed by gender analysis and grounded in inclusive consultation processes. The NDC explicitly calls for mainstreaming gender into sectoral adaptation measures, integrating gender disaggregated indicators into monitoring systems, and strengthening mechanisms that support women's leadership, participation, and entrepreneurship in climate -relevant- sectors (Republic of Tajikistan, 2021). These commitments align with the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and reflect growing recognition that women's knowledge of local ecosystems, household resource management, and community resilience strategies offers valuable contributions to adaptation. However, while these frameworks establish clear policy intent at the national level, implementation capacity remains uneven across sectors and local contexts, requiring sustained investment in gender-disaggregated data, institutional capacity- building, and the removal of structural barriers that limit women's access to land, finance, training, and decision-making spaces. Effective implementation will depend on collaboration with women's organisations, local authorities, and community based groups to ensure that climate action is both equitable- and transformative (The World Bank Group, 2021b). Without explicitly addressing these differentiated gender roles and constraints across land-use systems, climate interventions risk reinforcing existing inequalities and may lead to maladaptation, whereby women's workloads increase without corresponding improvements in access to resources, decision-making, or economic benefits.

Legal, policy and stakeholder landscape

Tajikistan's commitments to gender equality are articulated through constitutional protections, dedicated equality legislation, national gender strategies, and sectoral policy frameworks covering climate change, environmental protection, agriculture, and disaster risk management. Recent climate instruments, including the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2023) and the ongoing National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, position gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting priorities and increasingly link climate action with rural livelihoods, agriculture, water management, and community resilience.

National instruments and commitments

Table 3: Legal and policy landscape: Tajikistan

Instrument	Relevant content
Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan (1994, amended in 1999, 2003, and 2016)	Enshrines equality and prohibits discrimination, forming the legal basis for gender-responsive policymaking across sectors, including natural resource management, environment, and climate action.
Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Men and Women and Equal Opportunities (2005)	Defines gender equality and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination; mandates gender expertise of legislation, gender statistics, and representation in public bodies – critical enablers for integrating gender considerations into agriculture, environment, and climate governance.
National Strategy for Advancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan 2021–2030	Sets long-term gender equality priorities, including women's economic empowerment, political participation, and enhanced gender statistics; supports monitoring of SDG-aligned indicators, improving evidence for gender responsive rural and climate programming.
Nationally Determined Contributions	Positions gender equality and social inclusion as crosscutting principles; includes gender responsive adaptation measures in agriculture, water, disaster risk reduction, and community resilience; developed through multistakeholder consultations.
National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Process (ongoing)	Establishes medium and long-term adaptation planning; sectoral components cover agriculture, water resources, health, biodiversity, disaster risk management and energy. The NAP process emphasises inclusive planning and integration of gender responsive indicators across climate-sensitive sectors.
Concept of Transition to Green Economy	Sets pathways for green agriculture, sustainable land use, renewable energy, and resource efficiency. The associated Roadmap introduces

	institutional coordination mechanisms relevant to gender-responsive climate and AFOLU planning.
Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2019–2030	Recognises gender as a crosscutting theme; highlights the need for inclusive and community-based approaches in preparing for floods, mudflows, droughts, and glacial hazards.
National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change to 2030 (Resolution No. 482)	Provides the overarching national framework for climate adaptation, identifying priority sectors, institutional responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms; creates strategic entry points for gender mainstreaming in resilience planning.
2024–2026 Action Plan of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change	Operationalises the 2030 Strategy through targeted sectoral measures, defined institutional roles, and implementation timelines; supports integration of gender responsive indicators, capacity building, and improved monitoring for sector level adaptation delivery.
Government-approved three-year adaptation plan (2025–2027)	Provides short-term implementation guidance and financing priorities for adaptation activities, including community-level resilience measures and opportunities to strengthen women's participation and local adaptive capacity.
National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan to 2030 (NDS-2030, 2016)	National long-term development framework; includes human capital development and reduction of social inequalities as core pillars, providing entry points for embedding gender equality in inclusive growth and resilience planning.
Medium-term Development Program 2021–2025 (MTDP 2021–2025)	Operationalises NDS-2030 priorities; explicitly targets improved welfare alongside reduction of social and gender inequality, and frames economic adaptation and environmental sustainability through "green economy" principles.

Source: Own elaboration

Key stakeholders

The table below provides a high-level overview of national level policy, coordination, and enabling institutions relevant to gender, climate, and land use governance. Sectoral ministries and sub-national authorities play an important role in implementation and are discussed elsewhere in the Funding Proposal.

Table 4: Stakeholder map: Tajikistan

Stakeholder	Mandate
Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) under the Government of Tajikistan	Leads national climate, environment, and natural resource policy; houses climate change units overseeing NDC implementation; plays a coordinating role with line ministries on adaptation planning and cross-cutting issues including gender and inclusion.
State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy (SCLMG)	Manages land governance, cadastre systems, and land registration processes; influences women's land rights, tenure security, and access to key AFOLU interventions.
Committee on Women and the Family Affairs (CWFA)	National gender machinery; develops gender policies, coordinates gender mainstreaming across ministries, provides guidance for gender responsive climate action, and supports national gender data systems.
Association of Women of Tajikistan (NABWT)	Community level gender and youth platforms; mobilise women and young people in rural areas, facilitate their participation in climate and land-use initiatives, support inclusive consultations, and strengthen locally led decision making and livelihood resilience.

Source: Own elaboration

2.3 Uzbekistan

2.3.1 National overview: status of gender equality

Uzbekistan's pursuit of gender equality takes place within a rapidly expanding and almost evenly balanced urban–rural population. As of October 2024, the country's permanent population had reached 37.36 million people, including 18.55 million women (Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan). Rural areas remain home to 18.31 million people, just under half of the national population, with women making up approximately 49.4 % of rural residents. These population patterns highlight both the scale and complexity of gender related constraints in the country, from disparities in access to services and economic opportunities in rural regions to the evolving social and labour market dynamics of its growing urban centres. Gender-disaggregated population data from the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of

Uzbekistan also show balanced male and female population distributions across the regions included in the programme area. As of January 2026, Andijan Region had 1,737,400 women, Namangan Region 1,568,500 women, and Surkhandarya Region 1,486,600 women, reflecting the near-equal gender shares identified across the country's demography (Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan).

Against this backdrop, Uzbekistan is a signatory to core international gender-equality instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (ratified 1995) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. National commitments have expanded in recent years, supported by the country's engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5. These international obligations have informed a series of domestic reforms intended to strengthen gender equality and reinforce the protection of women's rights (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2024).

Nationally, Uzbekistan has developed an increasingly comprehensive legal and policy framework. The Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) provides the foundation for anti-discrimination efforts, while the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality to 2030 outlines national priorities for enhancing women's economic participation, improving representation in decision-making, and strengthening protection against gender-based violence (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). Institutional mechanisms such as the Committee for Family and Women and the government-organised Gender Madad centre support coordination and service delivery. In 2023, Uzbekistan adopted long-awaited legislation criminalising domestic violence – an important step in closing protection gaps – although reconciliation procedures remain permissible in some cases, reflecting the ongoing influence of social norms and family-based dispute resolution (IPHR, 2023). Building on these reforms, in February 2026, Uzbekistan introduced green and gender-responsive budgeting into the state budget framework, requiring fiscal strategies and annual budget proposals to integrate environmental sustainability and gender-equality considerations, including measurable indicators. This reform strengthens alignment between public financial management, climate objectives, and gender-equality commitments, though effective implementation will depend on institutional capacity and oversight (Daryo, 2026). These national efforts are reinforced by Uzbekistan's United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030, which identifies gender equality and climate action as cross-cutting priorities and emphasises inclusive, data-driven governance to address structural inequalities and environmental risks. Despite these advances, gender-neutral legal definitions, limited police and judicial capacity, and social stigma continue to impede full implementation (United Nations Uzbekistan, 2025).

Uzbekistan scores 82.5/100 on the Women, Business and the Law (WBL) 2024 Index, performing strongly on mobility, pay, marriage, entrepreneurship and assets but showing persistent gaps in workplace, parenthood, and pensions. While sexual harassment is prohibited in Uzbekistan, including in the workplace, reliance on administrative remedies, uneven enforcement, and social stigma continue to limit women's ability to seek effective redress and protection, leaving many vulnerable to discrimination and slowing progress toward gender equality (World Bank Group, 2024). On the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) 2025, Uzbekistan ranks 110th of 148 countries, with strong performance in education attainment and health and survival, but continued underrepresentation of women in political empowerment and economic participation (World Economic Forum, 2025). Although the Electoral Code introduced a 30% quota for women candidates, observers note that constrained political competition and a restrictive civic space limit the extent to which these gains translate into substantive influence. Encouragingly, the country's stance on promoting women's education is particularly progressive – women pursing tertiary education have access to 7-year interest-free loans, and loans for low-income families require no collateral (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022).

Barriers to effective implementation of policies, legislature and commitments

Despite notable legislative and policy advances, Uzbekistan continues to face structural, institutional, and normative barriers that limit the effective implementation of gender-equality commitments. A key challenge is the persistence of gender-neutral legal definitions, which do not fully capture the specific forms of discrimination women experience. This is particularly evident in the domestic-violence framework: despite criminalisation in 2023, reconciliation clauses permit cases to be closed if survivors agree to settle with perpetrators, which, given strong family and community pressure, significantly weakens enforcement and protection mechanisms (Amnesty International, 2022; IPHR, 2023). Limited institutional capacity, especially among police, mahalla committees and local courts, further undermines survivors' access to justice and reduces the deterrent effect of the law (CEDAW, 2022).

Deeply rooted patriarchal norms and stigma also constrain implementation. Social expectations surrounding women's domestic roles, deference to male authority, and the prioritisation of family reputation continue to restrict women's mobility, decision-making autonomy and willingness to seek services. Survey data indicate that attitudes condoning violence and unequal household roles remain widespread, particularly outside major urban centres (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2024). These norms also

contribute to the underreporting of violence and limit uptake of reproductive-health services, despite the existence of formal guarantees.

Beyond the legal and normative sphere, these constraints translate directly into economic and livelihood barriers, particularly in land- and water-dependent sectors. Women hold a very small share of memberships in Water User Associations (WUAs), severely limiting their influence over irrigation scheduling and water allocation decisions for the plots they manage. This exclusion reduces women's capacity to respond to water scarcity and undermines productivity in household-based farming systems (FAO, 2025b). The informal nature of women's labour, often as unpaid family workers or daily-wage *mardikors*, further restricts access to formal financial services (Asian Development Bank, 2018). Many women are unable to meet employment or income documentation requirements for bank loans, contributing to persistent financial exclusion. Access to credit remains limited, and land titles are typically registered in the name of male household heads, even where laws are formally gender-neutral (FAO, 2025b). Taken together, these interlocking barriers constrain women's ability to invest in productivity, mechanisation, and climate-resilient practices.

Women in AFOLU

Agriculture

Women play a central role in Uzbekistan's agricultural sector, particularly through dehkan farming, horticulture, livestock care, and household-level processing. They are the primary managers of *tomorka* (household plots), typically ranging from 0.06 to 0.15 hectares, where they grow vegetables and fruit for household consumption and local sale. Through *dehkan* farming systems, women also play a central role in small-scale livestock production and dairy processing (The World Bank, 2024). Although these systems occupy a relatively limited share of irrigated land, they contribute a substantial proportion of domestic food production and are critical for food security and rural livelihoods. Despite their importance for food security and rural livelihoods, *dehkan* farms have historically remained outside the main focus of formal government agricultural policy, extension services, and support schemes, limiting access to inputs, mechanisation, and investment (FAO, 2025b).

Within the broader agricultural economy, women's work is concentrated in labour-intensive and informal segments, while men dominate commercial farming and mechanised operations. Although land rights are formally gender-neutral, land use contracts and registration processes typically favour male household heads, constraining women's access to credit, subsidies, and state programmes (FAO, 2025b). Women also interact less frequently with district agricultural authorities, producer groups, and extension services, which reduces their access to agronomic advice, subsidy schemes, and information on new technologies (UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 2025). Extension systems remain largely male-dominated, and training activities are often organised in ways that assume male participation, further limiting women's opportunities to learn about water-efficient irrigation, improved seed varieties, or diversification options.

These structural constraints are reinforced by women's limited participation in agricultural value chains and resource-governance institutions. Women's engagement is largely confined to low-return or informal activities, such as small-scale processing and household-based production, while barriers to markets, certification, storage, and transport restrict entry into higher-value chains. Financial products tailored to smallholders are not widely accessible to women, further constraining investment in productivity or enterprise expansion. Women's ability to influence agricultural decision-making is also constrained by exclusion from key water-governance institutions. Women manage only 12% of irrigated land, and female membership in Water User Associations (WUAs) remains extremely low – approximately 8 % in 2023 – severely limiting women's influence over irrigation scheduling and water allocation decisions that directly affect their productivity (Green Climate Fund, 2025).

Broader socioeconomic dynamics further shape women's agricultural roles and vulnerabilities. In areas characterised by high levels of male seasonal migration, women increasingly manage day-to-day farming decisions, often without commensurate control over assets or income (CEDAW, 2022). Limited financial inclusion and a lack of risk-management tools reduce their ability to absorb production shocks or invest in adaptation strategies. Climate-related pressures, particularly unreliable irrigation and declining soil fertility, disproportionately affect the crops and tasks where women's labour is concentrated. With lower access to irrigation equipment and climate-resilient inputs, women have fewer opportunities to adjust production practices or shift to more resilient crops (UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 2025). Together, these structural, institutional, and environmental constraints limit women's productivity, profitability, and resilience within Uzbekistan's agricultural sector.

Forestry

In rangeland and forestry systems, women's roles are centred on subsistence activities, including collecting fuelwood, gathering fodder, and processing non-timber forest products. These activities are essential for household energy supply and income diversification, particularly in rural and environmentally stressed areas.

However, women remain almost entirely absent from the formal institutions responsible for resource allocation, afforestation planning, and landscape restoration.
(FAO, 2025b).

Men tend to dominate paid forestry work and state-run afforestation initiatives, while women's contributions are more informal and typically unpaid. Limited opportunities to participate in forestry training and community consultations restrict women's access to technical knowledge and benefit-sharing schemes linked to restoration or forest-based livelihoods (UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 2025). As vegetation loss and desertification accelerate, especially in the Aral Sea region, women face growing challenges in meeting household fuel and resource needs yet remain underrepresented in programmes designed to rehabilitate degraded landscapes (CEDAW, 2022).

Other Land Uses

Women play important roles in land use systems beyond formal agriculture and forestry, including managing household plots, small orchards, and rangeland-based activities such as fodder collection and the processing of natural products. These activities are vital for household food security and income diversification but are often overlooked in formal -land use planning and support schemes. Representation in rangeland councils, and local -water management bodies remains- limited, reducing women's input into decisions on grazing allocations, irrigation scheduling, and land rehabilitation priorities (FAO, 2025b).

Women who depend on small-scale or home-based production face barriers accessing markets, credit, and extension due to limited mobility, time constraints, and the informal nature of their work (UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 2025). Environmental degradation, including water shortages and declining communal resources, increases the labour needed for gathering household essentials. Yet women's restricted access to land, income, and participation in local governance reduces their options for adapting their livelihoods to ecological pressures (CEDAW, 2022).

Climate change and gender equality

Uzbekistan's evolving climate and gender policy landscape increasingly recognises that climate impacts are not gender neutral, reflected in recent legislative reforms and national strategies aimed at strengthening gender equality and social inclusion. The Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) and the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality to 2030 signal the government's commitment to mainstreaming gender across sectoral planning, including climate-relevant institutions (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). Ongoing efforts to strengthen adaptation frameworks similarly acknowledge the disproportionate vulnerabilities faced by women, particularly those in rural, low-income, and agriculturally dependent households (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2024). Persistent inequalities in access to land, finance, irrigation, water, energy, information, and decision-making mechanisms significantly shape women's exposure to climate risks and their capacity to cope with or recover from extreme events. These disparities have direct implications for household resilience and national development, given women's central roles in agriculture, household-level food production, natural resource management, and unpaid domestic and care work (FAO, 2025b).

Women's reliance on natural resources for both productive and reproductive labour heightens their vulnerability to climate uncertainty. Increasingly frequent droughts and chronic water scarcity, persistent environmental challenges across Uzbekistan, disproportionately affect households where women are responsible for water collection, fuelwood sourcing, food preparation, and maintaining kitchen gardens. These pressures intensify women's workloads, limit opportunities for income generation, and exacerbate food and livelihood insecurity, particularly in rural areas affected by land degradation and water stress. Climate-exacerbated shocks such as flooding, extreme temperatures, and declining soil fertility further disrupt agricultural production, damage essential infrastructure, and restrict access to services such as health care, markets, and education (CEDAW, 2022; FAO, 2025b).

Environmental degradation, particularly drought and declining soil fertility, intensifies women's "triple burden" of household responsibilities, childcare, and agricultural labour. Empirical evidence using the Pro-WEAI index shows that many rural women exceed a daily workload threshold of 10.5 hours, with work balance identified as a major contributor to women's disempowerment (Malapit, 2019). These pressures reduce time available for income generation, skills development, or participation in community decision-making. Women also face a pronounced mechanisation gap, as they are often denied unrestricted access to agricultural equipment needed to adapt farming practices to ecological stress. Limited access to irrigation technology, machinery, and climate-resilient inputs further constrains adaptive capacity (Alvi, 2025).

Within this context, certain groups face heightened vulnerability, including widows, elderly women, female-headed households, pregnant women, and adolescent girls, due to reduced mobility, limited access to

resources, and constrained decision-making power (IPHR, 2023). Women's exclusion from climate governance- structures, particularly water and agricultural decision-making bodies, further limits their access to early warning information and adaptation resources, despite evidence that their participation leads to improved resource management outcomes. Men, by contrast, frequently migrate temporarily or seasonally in response to climate-related livelihood pressures, leaving women with expanded responsibilities and new tasks previously performed by men – a shift that can exacerbate existing gender inequalities (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2024).

Uzbekistan's strengthening gender policy framework underscores the importance of ensuring that climate policies are informed by gender analysis and grounded in inclusive consultation processes. Uzbekistan's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0, 2025) prioritises the integration of women into climate-change adaptation programmes and recognises that constraints in access to water and energy services disproportionately burden rural women, contributing to heightened labour demands and reduced adaptive capacity. Recent reforms, including the establishment of institutional mechanisms such as the Committee for Family and Women and the adoption of legislation criminalising domestic violence, reflect increased recognition of the structural inequalities that shape vulnerability to climate impacts (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). National climate-related commitments highlight the need to integrate gender across sectoral adaptation measures, embed gender-disaggregated indicators into monitoring systems, and strengthen mechanisms that support women's leadership, participation, and economic empowerment in climate-relevant sectors. These efforts align with international commitments to gender-responsive climate action and reflect growing recognition that women's knowledge of household resource management, local ecosystems, and community resilience offers valuable contributions to effective adaptation. However, translating these commitments into practice will require sustained investment in gender-disaggregated data, institutional capacity building, and the removal of structural barriers that continue to limit women's access to land, finance, training, and decision-making spaces. Effective implementation will depend on collaboration with women's organisations, local authorities, and community-based groups to ensure that climate action is equitable, inclusive, and transformative (The World Bank Group, 2021a).

2.3.2 Legal, policy and stakeholder landscape

Uzbekistan's commitments to gender equality are articulated through constitutional guarantees, dedicated equality legislation, long-term national gender strategies and a rapidly evolving climate policy framework. The Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019) and the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality to 2030 form the core of the country's gender-equality architecture, supported by institutional mechanisms such as the Committee for Family and Women. Emerging climate instruments and ongoing adaptation planning processes increasingly recognise gender as a cross-cutting principle and link climate action with rural livelihoods, agriculture, water management and community resilience, reflecting growing national acknowledgement that women – particularly those in rural and low-income households – face disproportionate climate-related vulnerabilities.

National instruments and commitments

The table below provides a high-level overview of national-level policy, coordination, and enabling institutions relevant to gender, climate, and land-use governance. Sectoral ministries and sub-national authorities play an important role in implementation and are discussed elsewhere in the Funding Proposal.

Table 5: Legal and policy landscape: Uzbekistan

Instrument	Relevant content
Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan	Enshrines equality and non-discrimination; establishes the legal basis for gender-responsive policymaking across sectors, including natural resource management, agriculture, environment, and climate action.
Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019)	Defines gender equality, prohibits discrimination, and strengthens mechanisms for gender expertise and implementation across public institutions – key enablers for equitable agricultural, environmental, and climate policy.
Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality to 2030	Sets long-term gender equality priorities, including economic participation and leadership; advances gender statistics, monitoring frameworks, and SDG-aligned indicators relevant to rural and climate-vulnerable populations.
Emerging National Adaptation Planning process	Embeds gender and social inclusion as cross-cutting principles; early sectoral adaptation components increasingly focus on agriculture, water, biodiversity, and rural resilience, with growing emphasis on inclusive planning processes.
Strategy for the Development of Agriculture 2020-2030	Defines the national framework for agricultural reform and modernisation; recent updates strengthen climate-smart services for smallholder dehkan farmers, including expanded agro-meteorological systems, with direct

	relevance for women's adaptive capacity in water- and climate-sensitive production systems.

Source: Own elaboration

Key stakeholders

Table 6: Stakeholder map: Uzbekistan

Stakeholder	Mandate
Committee of Family and Women	Leads national gender policy coordination; implements gender strategies, supports protection systems, and engages in cross-sector processes relevant to climate, agriculture, and rural development.
National Statistical Committee	Advances gender data and SDG-aligned indicators; works with UN Women and FAO to strengthen sex-disaggregated rural and agricultural datasets needed for gender-responsive climate action.
Ministry of Agriculture	Responsible for crops, livestock, irrigation, land and pasture governance; central to women's access to land, extension services, water, markets, and climate-resilient agricultural livelihoods.
Climate Council (established under the President, 2024)	Highest advisory and coordination body on climate change mitigation and adaptation; oversees implementation of Uzbekistan's commitments under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, coordinates ministries and agencies, and monitors national progress on climate policy, including gender-inclusive adaptation.
National Agency for Social Protection	Leads development and implementation of a unified national social protection policy; coordinates social assistance, social services, and protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and low-income households, with relevance for climate-related vulnerability and shock-responsive support.
Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction	Responsible for national employment policy, labour relations, poverty reduction, and labour-market programmes; plays a key role in women's economic inclusion, livelihoods diversification, skills development, and access to income-generating opportunities relevant to climate resilience.
Youth Affairs Agency	Implements state youth policy and programmes; supports youth participation, skills development, employment, and civic engagement, including for young women and rural youth, with relevance for intergenerational climate resilience and social inclusion.

Source: Own elaboration

3. Programme-level gender analysis

The country-level analyses in Chapter 2 provides the foundation for a more detailed assessment of the gendered dimensions that underpin gender and social inclusion issues at a localised level. This chapter considers the gender relations and social dynamics within select regions in each of the three countries, offering targeted insight into the most pressing gender gaps and challenges faced by women, as well as clear opportunities to deliver benefits to them. The chapter focuses on describing the findings from applying a stakeholder-centred approach (complementing the above country-wide data and desk-based literature review), serving as a basis for developing the Programme's Gender & Inclusion Action Plan (Chapter 0).

3.1 Approach

In February 2026, a series of two-day stakeholder engagements were facilitated in two selected districts per country representing the different geographical and land use characteristics of the envisioned programme target region. The first day was structured as a **programme-wide multipurpose workshop**, bringing together a range of representative participants – women, men and youth from local government institutions; women's committees; youth committees; local banking institutions; pasture user unions; forestry sector representatives; water user associations; local NGOs; and agriculture, environment and education departments1. The agenda covered all core components of the programme, which provided the necessary framing for the afternoon ESS and Gender sessions. These sessions were facilitated by experienced, local female sociologists. The Gender Session comprised three parts: 1) an introductory presentation that explained the purpose of the GCF Gender Annex and a summary of key findings from the desk-review; 2) a **plenary discussion** that drew on insights from participants on the **roles and responsibilities** of women, men and youth in current land-use practices; and 3) a **breakout session**, that split participants into smaller groups to discuss **four primary gender domains**: practices and participation; knowledge, beliefs, and social norms; legal and customary rights and status; and power, decision-

[1] This presents a broad representation - participant groups differed per country, as appropriate

making and access to assets and financial resources. Appendix 1 contains the activity sheets that were used to guide these group discussions.

The second day was dedicated to a series of Key Informant Interviews (**KIIs**) and Focus Group Discussions (**FGDs**) with select individuals, focused **specifically on ESS and Gender considerations**. Women-only FGDs were held in each district, where discussions centred on gender-specific needs, barriers and potential support required to ensure women and youth are meaningfully engaged, empowered and represented across the planned programme activities. The following question prompts were used to guide these discussions:

- How can we improve women and youth's access to information and technical advisory services on land use practices?
- What support is needed to create sustainable women and youth -led cooperatives and MSMEs?
- What support could help overcome the mobility, time, and domestic burdens that affect women's ability to participate in income-generating land use practices?
- What support is needed, and what barriers exist, to women and youth's access to financing (loans, setting up savings accounts, etc.) and insurance mechanisms?
- How can we improve women and youth's involvement and elevate their voices in community, district and policy-level decision-making platforms?

KIIs with local Women's Affairs representatives were also facilitated – covering both ESS and Gender topics.
The following sub-sections summarise the findings from these engagements, focussing specifically on differentiating the roles and responsibilities of women, men and youth in current land-use practices; the impacts of climate and environmental changes/conditions on women in these communities; challenges and considerations that affect women and youth's ability to participate in land-use activities; and potential support measures that could overcome or mitigate these. Appendix 2 presents these findings in table format.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Kyrgyz Republic

Findings from our stakeholder engagement illustrate how women and youth sustain much of the agricultural labour in Bazar-Kurgan and Kara-Suu yet continue to operate with restrictive gender norms and increasing climate pressures. Participants described women as central to household-level agriculture, often balancing childcare, domestic responsibilities and small-scale production such as kitchen plots and livestock care, whilst also supporting seasonal tasks and, in some cases, temporarily managing farms when men migrate for work. Youth, particularly adolescents, play an important role during labour-intensive seasons such as the cotton harvest, though many face constrained economic prospects. In Kara-Suu, for example, high outmigration among youth was said to contribute to household vulnerability and instability.

Participants explained that mechanisation has reduced the need for women's manual labour in certain crops but has not lessened their overall workload, which is increasingly shaped by climate-related stressors. Women, particularly in Kara-Suu, mentioned experiencing severe water scarcity and extreme heat that limits their ability to work outdoors and reduces the yields of potatoes and maize. Community members also noted gradual ecological degradation on summer pastures, including declining availability of wild herbs traditionally collected by children, signalling broader environmental changes affecting household livelihoods. Across both districts, participants consistently highlighted entrenched socio-cultural norms as major barriers to women's meaningful participation in decision-making, training, and external engagement. These constraints are particularly pronounced in Kara-Suu, where women explained that they do not speak in front of men, rarely attend meetings, and cannot independently organise transport or participate in field-based activities. Male-dominated authority structures, particularly influential elders, reinforce these limitations, and rising religious conservatism was described as further narrowing women's public and economic roles.

Additionally, participants described practical constraints that shape their participation. Many require permission from husbands or mothers-in-law to attend trainings, while childcare responsibilities and limited control over land or property restrict access to finance and decision-making. Some participants flagged social risks, such as jealousy or family conflict arising from interactions with programme staff, which influence whether women feel safe engaging in external activities. These challenges contribute to low levels of trust in outside initiatives, with some women preferring not to attend meetings at all.

Despite these constraints, women in Bazar-Kurgan reported emerging opportunities to strengthen their skills and confidence. Participants highlighted access to gender schools, community-based training sessions where women receive practical instruction that builds their agricultural knowledge and technical competence, and specialised training preparing women to serve as local bio-inspectors as important avenues for expanding agricultural knowledge and building leadership capacity. These initiatives were described as helping women gain technical

competence and gradually enhancing their recognition within households and the wider community. Participants also noted that some women are beginning to benefit from state-provided financial support. In Kara-Suu, women reported using a 150,000 KGS social benefit to establish micro-enterprises such as sewing workshops, bread-baking businesses, or small-scale livestock ventures. Alongside this, stakeholder engagement identified existing government-supported credit lines through Aiyl Bank, including special financing for drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation systems, which were viewed as critical for addressing climate-related water scarcity. Single women with property were said to have access to online or small collateral-free loans, while youth can sometimes secure financing using parental collateral. Local institutional structures also play a central role in shaping women's access to support, protection, and information. Women's Councils (WCU/Zhensovet) and Public Prevention Centres (OPSZ) were consistently identified as trusted mechanisms through which women seek help, raise concerns, and access referrals for sensitive issues, including domestic conflict. These structures coordinate with social workers, village authorities, and police where necessary, positioning them as key partners for programme mobilisation, grievance handling, and gender-responsive engagement.

Given these findings, participants emphasised the need for culturally sensitive, gender-responsive programme support. Women stressed the importance of women-only spaces and facilitation by trusted intermediaries to ensure safe and meaningful participation. They also noted that logistical barriers, such as transport, travel allowances, and accommodation for multi-day trainings, must be addressed to improve access. Ensuring equal access to training, finance, and leadership opportunities, including support for women-led cooperatives and emerging training pathways, will be important for strengthening agency. Close collaboration with Women's Councils and OPSZ structures was repeatedly highlighted as essential for effective mobilisation, inclusive participation, and confidential reporting.

3.2.2 Tajikistan

Women play a significant yet largely informal role in land use and agricultural practices in both Devashtich and Qubodiyon. Female-managed farms in both districts range from 5-7% of all farms, and joint cooperative models are still predominantly led by male members. In Devashtich, women are heavily engaged in orchard maintenance, kitchen gardening, small-scale horticulture, soil preparation, post-harvest processing, livestock rearing, and local market sales. While in Qabodiyon, women also contribute significantly to irrigated crop production (planting, weeding, harvesting), particularly in vegetable cultivation, and seasonal agricultural labour. This work is almost always unpaid on family farms, meaning their financial contributions to household economy are considered "invisible" – although in Devashtich, one agricultural institution reported that 45 of 61 formal employees are women. Women-led enterprises exist but are mainly small-scale, focusing on product processing, lemon cultivation, fruit drying, preserves, sewing, and handicrafts.

Conversely, male-owned and -managed farms are characterised by larger plot sizes, commercial crop types, utilisation of machinery and logistics-support to allow access to distance / wholesale markets. However, because of seasonal male migration, women are increasingly assuming expanded responsibilities for both farm operations and household food security. This means women are now performing both traditionally male and female roles. These additional labour demands during peak agricultural seasons lead to increased physical workload for women and youth (which can result in negative health impacts) and reduced time for youth's educational opportunities. Youth migration is also relatively high in both areas, but those who do reside in these districts participate in field labour as well as agricultural marketing through social media platforms, assisting in identifying new market opportunities and helping families access agricultural information online.

Notable climatic and environmental changes are exacerbating women's workload in both districts, particularly when water must be transported manually (given women are primarily responsible for household water management) or when crop failures require additional coping strategies. In Devashtich, communities vocalised how increasingly irregular precipitation and reduced availability of irrigation water are negatively affecting orchard productivity, potatoes crops and soil moisture retention. And, in Qabodiyon, inefficient irrigation infrastructure, rising soil salinity in some areas, and increasing summer temperatures all contribute to reduced crop yields.

Agricultural decisions are still primarily controlled by men, including cultivation methods, purchase of machinery, and large-scale sales. Income is earned by both men and women, but control over large amounts is generally in the hands of men, while women handle daily household expenditures. In both districts, a joint consultation model exists between spouses, but final decisions on large investments are made by whoever holds formal land documentation. Despite recent land reforms and presidential grants that now formally recognise women's land rights (whereby women's names are now mandatorily included on farm land-use certificates), customary practices still strongly favour sons, who typically inherit land. This has direct implications on women's access to financial services and credit, which remains limited due to lack of collateral, high interest rates, and the concept of "permission from the husband or father" as an unwritten rule. State grants and international programmes provide some financial support to women in the AFOLU sector, but this is considered insufficient for purchasing modern technologies or offering long-term sustainable financing solutions. It is therefore crucial that development

projects, such as this, explore inclusive, accessible and sustainable financial mechanisms (small grants, loans, No-Till Adoption Accelerators) for women and youth that could be offered by formal financial institutions operating in both districts (e.g. MFIs such as Imon International, Arvand, Amonatbank, Eskhata Bank).

Beyond the household domain, women's participation in formal decision-making bodies – such as Water User Associations and local land committees – remains limited. Social norms, limited confidence, workload barriers, and a lack of targeted invitations to meetings reduce women's representation in planning processes related to irrigation scheduling, pasture management, and land allocation. These same issues hinder women's ability to access and benefit from agricultural extension services and technical training on concepts relating to climate-resilient and sustainable land use practices. Lessons can be drawn from previous projects in Devashtich, where female stakeholders highlighted the benefits of setting quotas (e.g. 30% female attendance of trainings) and ensuring women's direct access to agricultural equipment. Programme support should also consider how best to engage with, empower and support existing informal women-led bodies, like self-help/savings groups and small cooperatives.

Overarching and consistent sentiments from a range of female stakeholders engaged during this process reflected the importance of establishing quotas for women's participation in capacity building activities, fostering direct access to decision-making platforms, ensuring flexible timing and suitable locations for trainings and meetings, transparent documentation processes, the establishment of a confidential and gender-sensitive complaint system, and the appointment of trusted female liaisons to serve as intermediaries across all programme processes.

3.2.3 Uzbekistan

Across the Besharik and Yangikurgan districts, the gender dynamics of agriculture and land use are increasingly shaped by male outmigration and climate stressors, coupled with positive influences from recent progressive efforts by national government and financial institutions.

In both districts, women shoulder most practical field labour, livestock management, and household subsistence activities (typically managing about half a "sotikh" (50 square meters) of land where they plant potatoes, tomatoes, and cucumbers etc.) – and in Besharik, approximately 30% of farms are managed by women. Women also act as a connecting link within their communities. They participate in small local meetings and are involved in informing others about village events and activities. Men tend to administrative, strategic, and machinery-related tasks. However, as with the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, outmigration of men in both districts has amplified women's responsibilities and expanded their roles to include management of larger-scale agricultural activities.

Several environmental and climatic challenges in these districts are also impacting local livelihoods – with direct workload implications on women. These include drought, water scarcity (from transboundary water sources, required for irrigation in certain locations) and decreased snowfall. Secondary crops are also drying up, groundwater levels decrease during extended drought periods, and high velocity, abnormal winds damage orchards and home courtyards managed by women.

Women's involvement in post-harvest labour, such as sorting, packing and marketing support, also adds significant value to family enterprises and cooperatives but this work remains largely informal and is often daily-waged based. While household finances are typically pooled and openly discussed between spouses, loan eligibility is often tied to i) formal employment status (which predominantly sits with male family members) and ii) the ability to access to land-based collateral. Thus, while formal gendered barriers to land access are minimal in law, practical barriers persist in tenure decisions and cadastral processing. Land is often accessed through auctions or family ownership, with significant influence still held by senior men in many decision-making contexts.

State policy is focused on the active participation of women in political and economic life, and women themselves have become much more proactive. Through government and bank-led initiatives – such as Decree No. 5852, preferential or interest-free loans3 for women, and dedicated Women's Affairs staffing within local banks – greater opportunities are being facilitated for women's entrepreneurship and education. This has led to women entering technical fields within the AFOLU sector, and the establishment of women-led enterprises in agricultural value chains. In 2025, more than 714 women expressed a desire to engage in entrepreneurship in Yangikuran, and of those, more than 500 started their business activities by obtaining bank loans (including loans that have supported women's procurement of greenhouses, cattle breeding, and other agricultural initiatives). For example,

[2] a system that provides grants for children from families in need to pursue their education

[3] for example, educational loans are provided interest-free for women, while they carry an 18% interest rate for men. Under the "Hamroh" program, women can receive loans of up to 100 million UZS without a guarantor.

a woman currently manages Agro Pilla4, and successful female farming entrepreneurs are advancing women's economic agency, acting as mentors, and creating employment for female peers.

Youth are also being mobilized to sustain family enterprises through online marketing, digital sales, and logistics. However, to overcome the challenge of significant youth migration, there is a need to formalize youth participation in the AFOLU sector by leveraging their interest and skills. This requires scalable training pathways in business development, digital literacy, and financial management, plus clear access routes to credit and markets.

3.2.4 Concluding reflections and common themes

In summary, the stakeholder consultations highlighted how widespread male outmigration has significantly increased women's responsibilities for farm operations and household food security in many districts of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. This has resulted in women performing both traditionally male and female roles. Despite this, socio-cultural norms persist in many areas, where women still lack authority, formal labour recognition, land rights, and access to the technical skills and technology to perform their duties effectively and with fair remuneration and recognition. These challenges are being exacerbated by climate change impacts, ranging from drought and excessively high temperatures to water scarcity and decreased snowfall, and abnormally high winds and sand-storms– all of which affect local land use productivity and broader natural resource management.
The proposed programme was therefore received positively by women and youth groups, given its potential to provide more sustainable, inclusive and resilient livelihood opportunities – subject to the provision of sufficient, appropriate and targeted support that caters to their specific needs, circumstances and interests.

3.3 Recommendations

The findings presented above offer valuable insights into the overarching social context and gender dynamics within which the programme will ultimately operate. The potential measures (mapped against gender challenges/gaps identified) that follow, therefore, consider both the analysis presented in Chapter 2, the stakeholder feedback described above in 3.2 and expert input from local sociologists based in each country. These will be reflected, as appropriate, in the Gender & Inclusion Action Plan (Chapter 0) by translating them into tangible actions that directly link to programme activities.

[4] the largest agricultural cluster in Namangan

Table 7: Gender gaps and recommended measures

Gender gap or barrier to inclusion	Potential measures to address gaps and barriers	Action Plan #
Women **lack access to sufficient agricultural extension support** and **technical knowledge** on **climate resilient and sustainable practices**. In instances where such support is offered, it is often unsuitable for women (due to mobility, time or societal constraints).	• Gender-sensitive consultation and training processes, including separate women-only spaces and trusted local intermediaries. • Technical capacity development support to female farmers to bridge the knowledge gap between women and men – offered at times and locations that are suitable for women (i.e. compatible with the timing of their domestic responsibilities, with minimal travel requirements). • Improved access to irrigation technologies, quality seeds, and agricultural inputs for women and youth.	ID #1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24
Women are **underrepresented in decision-making bodies** relating to land use planning and natural resource management – typically due to deep-rooted patriarchal norms, lack of confidence and/or workload demands. Women also have **limited access to land ownership, machinery, and larger plots**, with men typically controlling decisions related to land use and benefiting from patriarchal inheritance norms.	• Awareness-raising among male community members to promote inclusive decision-making. • Capacity development support for women to empower and encourage them to participate in land and water management discussions • Community-wide engagement on the relevance of national laws on equal rights and opportunities for men and women within the context of the AFOLU sector, discussing, for example, topics such as equitable land tenure, inheritance and asset ownership legislature, and gender-sensitive land use planning processes.	ID #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 21, 22
Women's **role in land-use value chains is largely informa**l and field-based, with the majority of post-harvest, marketing and sales decisions taken by male family members.	• Strengthen women and youth-led cooperatives and producer groups (replicating/scaling up the numerous successful examples in each country) for better risk management and market access.	ID #6, 7, 8, 9, 14,15,16, 17, 18
Women have **lower access to suitable finance** than men, due to a lack of collateral, limited awareness of available financial instruments, high interest rates, or ineligibility due to the informal nature of their work. Where state grants and international programmes provide support, often this is insufficient for purchasing modern technologies.	• Expand successful financial schemes already offered through certain government and banks and facilitate access to affordable and appropriate financial mechanisms such as small grants, No-Till Adoption Accelerators, or savings groups. • Provide financial literacy training to female farmers, and women- and youth- led enterprises. • Provide training to banking institutions on how best to engage with, and support, women and youth customers. • Encourage banks and financial institutions to identify any gender differences in access to financial products and services and support them in taking steps to address factors that create barriers for specific groups of women (rural women, women farmers, wives of labor migrants, etc.)	ID #16, 17, 23, 25
Lack of trust in external activities – and potential gendered challenges that transpire as a result of these – some preferring not to participate at all.	• Ensure non-discriminatory hiring and programme practices, establish quotas for women and youth representation in committees and programme structures. • In keeping with the programme's commitment to adopting a gender-responsive and survivor-centered GRM, a trusted female representative (for example, from the local Mahalla) will act as an intermediary to support female complainants in with submitting cases.	ID #19, 20, 26
Youth migration is generally high, limiting local labour availability. There is a need to incentivise and offer greater opportunities in local land use practice value chains to retain and upskill youth.	• Youth engagement must include targeted programme orientation, demonstrations, and inclusive opportunities to participate through upskilling and exposure. This includes utilising their unique skills (such as agricultural marketing through social media platforms, logistics management and accessing online agricultural and climate information).	ID #18, 20

Source: Own elaboration