

Kyrgyz Republic: Women and Community Pasture Management



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Advancing women's rights to land and natural resources

**Kyrgyz Republic: Women and Community
Pasture Management**

Elisa Scalise, Attorney and Gender Specialist,
Resource Equity

Asyl Undeland, Social Development
Specialist, Independent.

August 2016



I. Executive Summary	1
II. Background	2
a. Country context	2
b. Gender differences	2
c. Land	2
d. Administration	3
e. Project	3
III. Methodology	3
IV. Legal and Customary Framework	4
a. Legal framework for pastures	4
b. Women's rights in law	6
c. Women's rights to and roles in pastures in custom	6
V. Intervention	8
a. Issues that the intervention seeks to address	8
b. Gender-related learning from effort to implement the pasture reforms	8
c. Project objectives and scope	8
d. Gender in the intervention	9
VI. Gender Assessment	12
a. Law and policy	12
b. Design and capacity to deliver	12
c. Design and target beneficiaries	12
d. Targets for women's participation	13
e. Flexibility in implementation	14
VII. Recommendations	14
a. Integrate women's rights programming into project design	14
b. Identify and address capacity needs, interest levels, and attitude obstacles in staff on a continual basis	14
c. Adopt targets as well as complementary activities so that they are fully supported and understood and more likely to have the intended effect	14
d. Work to change the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of men and women	15

I. Executive Summary

This case study identifies good practices and lessons learned from a project which sought to ensure that women actively participated in management of pasture resources at the local level in Naryn and Issyk-Kul *oblasts*¹ in Kyrgyzstan. The Livestock and Market Development Program (LMDP) began its first phase in 2013 and is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project seeks to improve productivity and accessibility of pastures, improve the health of livestock, and develop market partnerships along various value chains. It builds on past projects funded by IFAD and World Bank, which aimed to reform pasture management in Kyrgyzstan where women's participation was reportedly low.

The main findings from the assessment of this project include the following:

1. By recognizing that all residents of a community are members of a Pasture Users' Union (PUU), the law is positive for women, because women's ability to use and manage the pastures is not based on their marital status, their ancestry, or where they were born.
2. The LMDP design includes detailed elements specifying how the project will mainstream gender in every aspect of its implementation, including management, programming, and monitoring and evaluation. It assigns specific responsibility for gender to one core staff member. However, there is a gap between the activities envisioned in the design and the capacity of the implementers to specifically address the identified needs.
3. After a design adjustment, women's interests are now prioritized in investments and grants that the project provides in support of Community Pasture Management Plans. The incentives are supplemented with other approaches to ensure that women's interests are represented – including outreach and mobilization, support for women's capacity development, and quotas for women in decision-making roles. These supplementary activities have become critical to ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are incorporated into the Community Pasture Management Plans.
4. Imposing quotas for participation of women in the management committee has seen mixed results. On the positive side, the targets may be the main link between the gender policy and project implementation; they are a key performance metric for the project and have motivated implementing staff to pay attention to women in some way. In practice, whether women were meaningfully included depended on other factors, such as the commitment, knowledge, and skill of the field staff person and the understanding that women and men have of the value of women's participation.

The project illustrates that even where laws and program design are favorable to women, ensuring that women's interests in pasture management are in fact addressed requires time and resources dedicated to shifting behavior and attitudes of men and women.

1 Provincial government.

II. Background

a. Country context

The Kyrgyz Republic, a former Soviet republic, is a small land-locked country with a land area of about 200,000 sq. km. in the heart of Central Asia, bordering Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest, and China to the southeast. The Kyrgyz people were historically nomads, and most of the country's territory is mountainous, with almost 90% of land located higher than 1,500 meters above sea level.² Only half of the country's land area is habitable and accessible to people.

The population of the Kyrgyz Republic is about 5.9 million with two thirds living in rural areas.³ Poverty is still high, with about a third of the country (31%) living below the national poverty line in 2014.⁴ Of the total number of employed people in Kyrgyzstan, only 25% are employed in the formal sector, while 76% of the economically active population is self-employed, including farmers and migrant workers.⁵ The Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2015 was 0.655 – which was in the middle human development category – positioning the country at 120 out of 187 countries and territories.⁶

Agriculture contributed 15.9% to the GDP in 2015,⁷ but plays a crucial role as a source of employment, income, and food security for rural people. More than half of the agricultural output comes from the livestock sector, which supplies meat and dairy for local consumption and for export.

b. Gender differences

Kyrgyzstan's Gender Inequality Index (GII) value was 0.348 in 2013, ranking it 64 out of 149 countries. In 2013 in Kyrgyzstan, 23.3% of parliamentary seats were held by women, and 94.5% of adult women had reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 96.8% of their male counterparts.⁸ In general, statutory law provides a foundation for equal rights and protections for women and men and for women's rights to land and property.

Women in Kyrgyzstan experience limited access to productive assets and economic opportunities as compared with men. Women's independent economic activity decreased almost two times or even more in certain regions (to 30.6% in Naryn oblast) in the two decades following the country's independence

in 1991.⁹ Women are highly represented in the informal labor market and in certain service and trade sectors, which are high risk and lack social guarantees. They spend three times more time on housework than men (17.4 and 5.7 hours per week, respectively).¹⁰ This number is higher in rural areas where women perform an additional two hours of housework.¹¹ In 2012, 27% of households nationwide were headed by women.¹²

c. Land

Agricultural land makes up 55.2% of the land mass, which is comprised of about 7% arable land and 43% rangeland or pastures.¹³ Of the country's total rangeland, 43% is classified as summer pasture, 30% as spring-autumn pasture, and 25% as winter pasture.¹⁴ Traditionally, the Kyrgyz people, especially in the central and eastern parts of the country, have been engaged in transhumant livestock grazing, migrating with herds following the natural grass vegetation cycle, moving from villages in the lowlands to spring pastures in April and May, then to high altitude summer pastures in June, and slowly back to the villages after harvesting cereals in September.¹⁵

The majority of households in Kyrgyzstan have a small number of livestock, which they use for their own consumption. Livestock is extremely important for ceremonial traditions and for household status in the community; it is also insurance for rural families, used in times of urgent financial need. Thus, almost every rural household has livestock, varying from five to twenty heads of sheep and from two to five heads of cattle, especially dairy cows.

Most households use community shepherds for grazing animals, arranged by the local authorities and paid a fee per head of stock. The shepherds graze livestock on a daily basis during the winter, early spring, and fall, and they take livestock to remote pastures during the summer. There are families who graze livestock themselves. Usually these are households that have a higher than average number of livestock and for whom livestock is the main source of income. These households usually graze their own animals combined with the animals of neighboring households in their village. In winter-spring and fall, they graze livestock themselves around the villages on a rotational basis (*kezuu*). For the three to four months of the summer grazing season, these households make their way to the summer pastures, living in temporary housing as they move among grazing areas.

2 Kyrgyzstan Travel Map. Bishkek: Rarity Firm, Ltd.

3 World Bank Group. 2015. Open Data Repository, Kyrgyzstan. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=KG&view=chart>.

4 Ibid.

5 National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2013. "Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic." <http://www.stat.kg/en/publications/sbornik-zhenshiny-i-muzhchiny-kyrgyzskoj-respubliki/>

6 United Nations Development Program. 2015. "Work for human development: Briefing countries on the 2015 Human Development Report: Kyrgyzstan" http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KGZ.pdf (last accessed August 1, 2016).

7 See note 3 above.

8 See note 5 above.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (NSC), Ministry of Health [Kyrgyz Republic], and ICF International. 2013. Kyrgyz Republic Demographic and Health Survey 2012. Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, and Calverton, Maryland, USA: NSC, MOH, and ICF International.

13 See note 3 above.

14 See International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2012. Kyrgyz Republic Livestock and Market Development Program Design Completion Report, Vol. 1, August 2012. On file with author.

15 Ibid.

d. Administration

In Kyrgyzstan state administration is decentralized to two levels, *oblasts* and *raions*.¹⁶ Towns and rural village clusters (*aiyl aimak*) are managed by their executive bodies (*aiyl okmotu*). The regional level consists of seven *oblasts*, divided into 40 *raions* and the capital city, Bishkek. There are 25 towns and cities, home to 35% of the total population, and 1,800 villages grouped into 472 *aiyl aimaks*.¹⁷ Each *aiyl aimak* is made of a cluster of villages, the number of which can vary from two to 20 depending on the size of the population and location. *Aiyl aimaks* have elected councils (*aiyl kenesh*).

e. Project

The subject of this case study is the first phase of the Livestock and Market Development Program (LMDP), which began in July 2013 and was funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The first phase of the LMDP was undertaken in the northern *oblasts* (provinces) of Naryn and Issyk-Kul and was funded in the amount of approximately US\$10 million in grants and US\$10 million in loans. The second phase, LMDP II, is an expansion of the project to the three southern *oblasts*: Osh, Batken, and Jalalabad. It began in August 2014 and is funded in the amount of US\$ 38 million of which IFAD finances US\$ 31 million.

III. Methodology

The key question being answered by this case study is: in the context of creating pasture user groups to manage common pastureland, what steps were taken to strengthen women's land rights in the process and were they successful or not? The case study helps to understand the nature of the collective rights to and authority over pastures and how they played out in practice for women and men. The case study looks at what role the legal and institutional framework played in the intervention, and what circumstances created the opportunity for gender to be incorporated into the design and implementation of the intervention. It also seeks to understand the perception of the value of women's participation in pasture resource use and management, obstacles that might exist to women's participation, and how those obstacles might be addressed.

This case was selected because it covers a project where pastureland reforms have shifted the tenure system back to collective management, and also because there was a strong commitment to do so in a way that also improved women's involvement in pasture management. The case study is based on a desk review of literature as well as a field-based assessment. The desk review covered project design documents and supporting materials, the project baseline report, other literature which provided information on the Kyrgyz context, and pasture resources. The desk review also included analysis of pertinent laws and legal documents.

A field-mission was conducted for two weeks in October 2015 in Bishkek, Naryn, and Issyk-Kul. The field mission consisted of key informant interviews with staff from the pasture department, LMDP project staff, staff from the Agency for Community Investment and Development (ARIS), the local implementing agency, as well as with pasture experts, women's rights experts, and staff from other organizations that work on issues related to pastures, land, and women in Kyrgyzstan. Key informant interviews were also held with the chairperson of Jayit Committees¹⁸ in Semizbel (Kochkor district, Naryn *oblast*), Chon Dobo (Jumgal district, Naryn *oblast*), Cholpon (Kochkor district, Naryn *oblast*), Membetov (Ton district, Issyk-Kol *oblast*), Barskoun (Jeti-Oguz district, Issyk-Kol *oblast*), and Saray-Bulak (Tyup district, Issyk-Kol *oblast*). Focus group discussions were held with five Jayit Committees and pasture users in the above named areas, as well as three village health committees. The case study relied heavily on the LMDP project's implementation consultant who provided information, insight, and review, and is also a co-author. Findings of the case study were presented to stakeholders in April 2016. Female chairpersons of the Jayit Committees, members of village health committees, woman livestock farmers and entrepreneurs, and community facilitators attended the workshop and discussed findings and issues of women's participation in the work of the pasture management bodies. The case study reflects their feedback and recommendations.

¹⁶ County administration.

¹⁷ National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Rural Municipality Area, 2007.

¹⁸ Pasture Users' Committee. *Jayit* is a Kyrgyz word related to pastures.

The number of livestock drastically decreased during the political and economic transition period of 1991-2000, immediately following independence. During this phase, all state owned animals were distributed to farm workers as property shares during the farm privatization process; the population of sheep and goats dropped from 9.9 million in 1990 to 3.5 million in 1998, and the cattle population declined from 1.2 million to 830,000 in the same period. Starting in 2000, the livestock count began to steadily increase and by 2013 it reached a reported 1.4 million cattle, 5.6 million sheep and goats, 0.4 million horses. (The actual numbers may be higher as livestock owners can sometimes under-report).

IV. Legal and Customary Framework

a. Legal framework for pastures

i. Constitution

The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan recognizes private, municipal, state, and other forms of property.¹⁹ It also provides the right for local communities, which are financed by local as well as national budgets, to self-govern and independently resolve matters of local significance.²⁰ The Constitution provides that land and resources are the property of the Kyrgyz Republic, and land may be in private ownership, except for pastures, which may not be held privately.²¹

ii. Land Code

The Land Code regulates land relationships in the Kyrgyz Republic, including its ownership and use. Agricultural land, sometimes referred to as *ugodia*, is defined as land used for production, in particular, arable land,²² land occupied with perennial plants, hayfields, and pastures.²³ The Land Code also provides for state, communal, and private ownership of land.²⁴

Under the Land Code, all pastures fall within the category of state-owned land,²⁵ but under the 2009 Law on Pastures, responsibility and authority for their management and use is decentralized to the local level.

iii. Law on Pastures

Pastures in Kyrgyzstan are governed by the Land Code and the Law on Pastures. There is a significant area of pastures within the State Forestry Fund, which is not regulated by the Law on Pastures, but rather is regulated by the Forestry Code and managed by the state forestry enterprises (*leskhoz*es). These pastures are not covered by the Pasture Law and are not included in the scope of this study.

Pastures were traditionally used by community groups and were an important element of cultural identity. During the Soviet era, when all livestock was nationalized, pastures were managed as a part of the state and collective farms. Livestock numbers in Kyrgyzstan dropped significantly immediately after the post-independence restructuring of collective farms but have been steadily growing since, reaching 1.5 million cattle and 5.6 million sheep and goats in 2013.

Today the state owns all pastureland, and state ownership of pastureland is protected by the Constitution.

¹⁹ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2010, art. 4 (hereinafter "Constitution").

²⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 110.

²¹ *Ibid.*, art. 12(5).

²² Grassy arable land.

²³ Land Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, No. 45 of June 2, 1999, art. 1(25) (hereinafter "Land Code").

²⁴ *Ibid.*, art. 4(1).

²⁵ Land Code, 4(2); Law No. 30 "On Pastures," 2009, amended by Law No. 254 amending Law No. 30 "On pastures," 2011; Law No. 91 amending Law No. 30 "On Pastures," 2011, art. 3 (hereinafter "Law on Pastures").

A new Pasture Law was introduced in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2009, and its major objective was to establish the foundation for a fair, effective, and sustainable pasture management system with several fundamental changes:

- Pasture management authority was devolved to the lowest tier of the government, *aiyl okmotu*, and subsequently to users themselves, organized into Pasture Users' Unions (PUU) and registered as territorial self-government bodies.
- The lease-based system was replaced by a use-right-based system to allow for further livestock mobility, protect pastures from overgrazing, and ensure better and more sustainable use practices.
- Use management of pastures changed from area-based approaches to an approach based on animal head count (area allocated and fees based on head count) so that all pastures would be treated as one whole ecosystem, thus encouraging mobility of livestock and protecting against overuse.
- Fees for pasture use are established each year and by law are to be largely used for pasture improvement and investments.

The effect of the Pasture Law has been to devolve pasture management and authority to the rural populations themselves. Under the Pasture Law, the *aiyl okmotu* can delegate its authority for pasture management to the Pasture Users' Union.²⁶

The Pasture Users' Union is defined and legally registered as a Territorial Body of Public Self Governance (TBPSG). The TBPSG is legally defined as a self-governing body made up of residents of the municipal territory whose purpose is to address issues of local importance.²⁷ According to the Law on Local Self Government, all residents of the municipality are automatically members of the TBPSGs.²⁸ When read together with the Law on Pastures, this means that all residents of a rural municipality are also members of the Pasture Users' Union for that area.²⁹ So far, about 454 PUUs (out of a possible 472) have been voluntarily formed in *aiyl aimaks* with significant livestock and pasture areas. Those *aiyl aimaks* which did not form PUUs either have no pasture land or have a very limited number of livestock.

Under the Pasture Law, the PUU represents the interests of the livestock owners and other pasture users with respect to pasture use and improvement.³⁰ Its representative executive body is the Jayit Committee (JC).³¹

The JC has authority to develop the Community Pasture Management Plan (CPMP) and the Annual Pasture Use Plan which are approved by the PUU Assembly and then by the *aiyl kenesh*. It is also responsible for implementing these plans,³² monitoring pasture conditions, issuing pasture use tickets,

fixing fees and collecting payment for pasture use, resolving pasture-related disputes, and managing pasture revenue.³³ Fees for tickets are calculated based on the Community Pasture Management Plan's budget and then divided by the number of livestock units.³⁴

iv. Pasture management derived from but not required by the Pasture Law

The Pasture Law does not define procedures for election of the JC; however, it does state that the JC is formed from elected pasture users and also includes the head of *aiyl okmotu* and members of the *aiyl kenesh*. In the absence of legislated procedures, the Pasture Department and Agency for Community Investment and Development (ARIS)³⁵ have developed and promoted guiding procedures for formation and operation of JCs, and a Model Charter for the PUU.

The Model Charter (MC) recommends that each village within the *aiyl aimak* form Pasture Users' Groups (PUG) of the following four types:

1. PUG of large livestock holders;
2. PUG of small livestock holders;
3. PUG of users of pastures for other than grazing purposes; and
4. PUG of shepherds.

Then the MC recommends that an assembly of each PUU be formed and that it should be composed of 60 delegates from different pasture users' groups. Thus, each PUG should elect representatives to form the JC. When the Model Charter was developed it was expected that woman-headed households and poor households, which usually have no or very few animals, would form their own PUG (either of secondary users or small livestock holders). In the six years since the guiding procedures for formation of the JC were issued, they have not been followed to their fullest extent, largely because they are believed to be too complex.³⁶ The expectation that women and the poor would form other PUGs and thereby be included in the JC did not materialize.

Although not required by law, in practice JCs often have different subcommittees that are led by members of the JC with specialized expertise.

Currently, PUUs are funded by: pasture grazing user fees, fees for other types of pasture use (e.g., touristic facilities, mobile telecommunication stations, small mining, hay making, collection

26 Law on Pastures, art. 4(2).

27 Law No. 101 of 15 July 2011 on Local Self-Government

28 Ibid.

29 Law on Pastures, art. 2.

30 Ibid., art. 5(1).

31 Ibid., art. 6.

32 Ibid., art. 6.

33 Ibid., art. 6(5).

34 The Law on Pastures states that the pasture fee cannot be less than the local land tax. (See Law on Pastures, art. 10). In practice, livestock holders pay the pasture fee annually to the JC when obtaining their use rights. In some areas, these fees are paid to shepherds jointly with the grazing fee who then transfer the pasture fee amount (minus their remuneration) to the JCs. JCs pay the land tax to the local budget for pasture area under the *aiyl aimaks*, other organizational taxes.

35 These activities were done as part of the World Bank-funded AISP project mentioned below, and implemented by the Agency for Community Investment and Development (ARIS), the implementing agency for the AISP project and also for the LMDP and LMDP-II projects.

36 Interviews with LMDP technical lead.

of herbs and plants for commercial purposes), funds provided by the *aiyl okmotu* (in some areas), and private donations. Community Pasture Management Plans (CPMP) have provisions for the budget of the PUU and how funds will be spent. Most JCs display this information on notice boards in administrative offices. Funds usually go to repairs of pasture infrastructure and the salaries of the chairperson and the accountant.

b. Women's rights in law

i. Constitution

The Kyrgyz Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex;³⁷ it provides that everyone is equal before the law and that men and women are accorded equal opportunities and freedoms.³⁸ The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic incorporates into its legal system international treaties that the Kyrgyz Republic is party to.³⁹ Kyrgyzstan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW"), which puts an affirmative obligation on state parties to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure, among other things, the same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment, and disposition of property.⁴⁰

The Kyrgyz National Strategy for Gender Equality by 2020 and National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for 2012-2014 were adopted in June 2012.⁴¹ The law "On State Guarantees for Ensuring Gender Equality" (2003) prohibits explicit and implicit gender discrimination⁴² and does not allow norms of common law, tradition, and culture which discriminate against gender, though it is not clear on what the legal consequences of such violations are.⁴³ It guarantees equal rights to ownership of property,⁴⁴ equal use rights to land, and equal protection of rights to land for men and women.⁴⁵

ii. Family Code

The Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic governs family relations. It provides that the family is the basic social unit in Kyrgyzstan, that only registered marriages are recognized, and that family relations are regulated in accordance with principle of equality of the spouses.⁴⁶ Under the Family Code, a marriage can end in two ways: (a) by the death of one spouse, or (b) by petition for termination (divorce) of one spouse. In each case the end of the marriage must be registered.⁴⁷

The Family Code provides that all property acquired by the spouses during their marriage is joint property⁴⁸ and is managed with the consent of both spouses.⁴⁹ Any property that belonged to a spouse before the marriage and gifts and inheritance received by one spouse during the marriage is considered the personal property of that spouse.⁵⁰ At divorce, the joint property of the spouses is divided equally between them, unless otherwise stated in a marital agreement.⁵¹

iii. Inheritance

Kyrgyz formal law governing succession does not distinguish between male and female heirs.⁵² Spouses and children are ranked first in the order of heirs in intestate succession.⁵³ The laws governing inheritance provide also that a spouse's right to inheritance under intestate succession does not affect the surviving spouse's other property rights that are connected with marrying the deceased,⁵⁴ which when read alongside the Family Code's provisions on marital property (provided above) seem to suggest that the surviving spouse has the right of survivorship for all joint property of the marriage. The Family Code and the inheritance laws apply to private land. Pastures, which are categorized as state land, are the responsibility of the pasture users' union. Women's and men's rights to pastures are based on being a resident in a Territorially Based Self-Governing Unit (a municipality) TBFSG and thereby a member of a pasture users' union. In practice, women's use of pastures and their role in pasture management are governed by custom.

c. Women's rights to and roles in pastures in custom

Traditionally, women's rights to pastures are secured through their male relatives – fathers, brothers, husbands, or, in the husband's absence, his male family members. Under customary rules, men are the head of the household; therefore, property rights, including rights to livestock and pasture land-use rights, are attributed to men. Women enjoy access to pastureland insofar as they are a member of a pasture-using household, and the household is a member of an associated clan living in the particular pasture-using area.⁵⁵ Historically, there were rare cases where married women would have rights to use their father's pastures, and usually only if the family owned a lot of livestock and herded the animals themselves.

Livestock-raising is traditionally considered a male activity; however, women play an important role in animal husbandry and

37 Constitution, art. 16(2)

38 Ibid., art. 16(3), (4).

39 Ibid., art. 6(3).

40 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, art. 16(h).

41 Government of Kyrgyzstan, Government Resolution No. 443.

42 Law of Kyrgyz Republic, On State Guarantees for Ensuring Gender Equality, art. 6.

43 Ibid., art. 8.

44 Ibid., art. 11.

45 Ibid., art. 14.

46 Family Code of Kyrgyz Republic of 30 August 2003 (No. 201), art. 1.

47 Ibid., art. 16.

48 Ibid., art. 34.

49 Ibid., art. 35(1).

50 Ibid., art. 36.

51 Ibid., arts. 38, 39.

52 Civil Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, 1996, amended in 2000, art. 1142.

53 Ibid., art. 1142.

54 Ibid., art. 1150.

55 Undeland, A. 2008. Women and Pastures in the Kyrgyz Republic on a Case Study of Chong Alai Valley. Presented at Governing Shared Resources: Connecting Local Experience to Global Challenges, 12th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons, Cheltenham, England, July 14-18, 2008. http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00004069/01/Undeland_231401.pdf.

care. Women are responsible for raising young animals, milking, processing, and preparation of dairy products for household consumption, and also for sale. Women are also responsible for marketing dairy products. Sometimes when men are busy with other activities, they are also responsible for animal health and breeding.⁵⁶

Women work as shepherds, and some female shepherds are famous in certain regions of the country, but this is not common, and shepherds are usually men. During the seasonal grazing periods, shepherds and livestock owners with their spouses and young children travel to the more distant pastures. During these seasons, women are responsible for maintaining the seasonal home (yurt), caring, feeding, educating, and clothing the children, fetching water, caring for and ensuring the health and sanitation of the animals, milking cows, cooking, and making dairy products. They also make products from the hides and wool. This is often done with limited or no electricity. Milk and dairy products, which are produced in the seasonal pastures by women, cannot be sold due to the remoteness of the pastures from markets. Because the milk cannot be refrigerated, it is usually processed into butter, dry cheese, and yogurt.

Woman-headed households, and households where men are absent, rely on male relatives or on relatives of their husbands to gain access to pastures for their livestock. Otherwise, if they apply for pasture use rights from the PUU, they generally receive pasture areas far from water or roads and/or pastures of poor quality.

Women whose households do not engage in seasonal travel to pastures, but who have livestock requiring grazing, pay others (either professional shepherds or livestock-grazing families) for the service, or, if they have sons who graze seasonally, they will send their animals with their sons. Women, who pay for pasture services, including widows, can be disadvantaged in this process because their negotiating position with the men is weak; according to respondents, female livestock owners are more likely to lose a higher proportion of grazed animals to death or ill health than their male counterparts.

Marriage customs are patrilocal, and both dowry and bride-price, known as *kalym*, are commonly practiced in rural Kyrgyzstan. According to custom, the groom gives the bride's family a gift, usually livestock, at the time of marriage, thus adding to the wealth of the bride's family. The woman to be married does not have any control over these bride-price assets. Women can sometimes bring family livestock into the marriage as a part of the dowry. When they do, this livestock is seen as a household asset and is merged with the livestock that the husband brought to the marriage. Polygamous and *de facto* marriages are practiced in Kyrgyzstan, though there is little data on how prevalent each is. In both cases, the relationships are not protected by formal laws.

Divorce is not common, but when it does take place, technically women who have livestock can gain access to pastures as a separate household (and pay someone to graze their animals for them). However, in practice, upon divorce women return to their parents' homes, sometimes taking only their dowry and children with them.

i. Women and pasture governance

Women traditionally do not participate in decision making about allocation of pasture resources, and in general their interests are not taken into account in pasture management and governance.⁵⁷ Men and women both tend to perceive pastureland management as a male task, one that is physically demanding and more related to infrastructure development than to the care of grazing households and upkeep of livestock.⁵⁸ There are a few women who participate in and lead pasture committees (see below), but they are the exception rather than the norm, and are more likely in areas where pastures are abundant or grazing is of less economic importance.

Because men are responsible for overseeing grazing animals, their interests tend to focus on infrastructure maintenance, such as repairing roads and bridges, and budgets for pasture management that have been allocated to the pastures committees tend to focus on these types of investments. At the same time, household income and food is largely dependent on the safety, health, and quality of the livestock grazed on pastures, and these are all responsibilities of women. Women's needs when it comes to pastures slightly differ from those of men, as women are also responsible for the care of the grazing household. Women report that summer pastures lack a reliable supply of electricity and communication, clean drinking water, certain foodstuffs, household goods such as soap and candles, child care support, health care, and veterinary and medical services. The lack of these goods and services and the degradation of pasture resources because of poor governance disproportionately burdens women and has a negative impact on the livelihoods of the grazing households.

⁵⁶ See International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2012. Kyrgyz Republic Livestock and Market Development Program Design Completion Report, Vol. 1, August 2012. On file with author.

⁵⁷ Rural Development Fund. 2013. Empowering of Kyrgyz Women Pastoralist: Technical Summary Report, Bishkek. On file with author.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

V. Intervention

a. Issues that the intervention seeks to address

Most households in the project target area depend on pasture and rangeland resources for their financial well-being.⁵⁹ The majority of households are headed by men (80-86%), and 92% of the woman-headed households are headed by widows.⁶⁰ Labor migration levels are the lowest in the country, and the majority of the adult population is literate.⁶¹ The majority of households in the project area have irrigated arable land and homestead gardens (85%) averaging between 1.4 (Naryn) and 2.5 (Issyk-Kul) hectares in size,⁶² though the poorer households have less irrigated land than wealthier households.⁶³

Almost all households in the target areas have livestock, mostly cattle, sheep, and goats, but also horses.⁶⁴ The main livestock products are milk, fermented milk product (*airan*), and meat.⁶⁵ In general, dairy products are used for household consumption rather than sale.⁶⁶ Sheep are mostly used for traditional social ceremonies, while cattle are raised mainly for sale.⁶⁷ Livestock productivity is low due to the high cost of fodder and the poor condition of the pastures. On average, and assuming equal distribution over all animals, the total feed (dry matter) available annually in Kyrgyzstan per dairy cow is about 2.3 tons. By comparison, the average feed intake of a dairy cow in Ireland, which is seen as the ideal, is 4.6-4.9 tons per year.

The 2009 Pasture Law's implementation was supported by a number of donors. Since 2009 there has been a significant reduction in conflicts between users, an increase in the collection of pasture fees, and improvements in the quality of the grazing areas.

However, certain problems persist. About 49% of all pasture lands in 2012 were still degraded with the most severe degradation (70%) in the winter or near-settlement pastures (Table 1).⁶⁸ In addition to the problem of poor nutrition, poor breeding and the lack of effective veterinary services lower livestock productivity.

59 Rural Development Fund, Livestock and Market Development Project - Baseline Survey Report, at 37. On file with author.

60 Ibid., 13.

61 Ibid., 13-14.

62 Ibid., 18.

63 Ibid., 19.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 31.

66 Ibid., 33.

67 Ibid., 34.

68 Pasture Department of the Ministry for Agriculture and Amelioration, Kyrgyz Republic, Annual Report, 2012.

Table 1. Pasture degradation rates.

Pasture type	Pasture area (1,000 ha)	%	Degraded area (ha)	Degraded area (%)
Summer	3,951	43	1,432	36
Spring-autumn	2,756	30	1,378	50
Winter	2,440	27	1,718	70
Total	9,147	100	4,528	49

Source: Pasture Department Annual Report for 2012

b. Gender-related learning from effort to implement the pasture reforms

IFAD's evaluation of the Agricultural Investment Support Project (AISP), which ran from 2007 to 2013 and which sought to implement the 2009 Pasture Law, found that women's participation in pasture management remained low. According to the end-of-project survey of pasture users' unions, two out of fifteen JC members on average were female; thus, women did not significantly participate in the JC decision-making processes.⁶⁹ Those women who were on the JCs were often hired as accountants, not in a decision-making position.

The AISP also found that women continued to lack information about community pastures (including location, quality, infrastructure), on how access to these pastures was managed, and on pasture fees. They also lacked information on the pasture reforms and the activities of newly formed JCs,⁷⁰ and very few women meaningfully participated in pasture management. Project implementers believed that women's lack of information and participation in pasture management had an impact their livelihood options, because their interests were less likely to be considered in pasture management plans, which determined how pastures were used, maintained, and improved. For example, one of the key challenges for women was to market produced milk because the dairy factories were located far from livestock villages.

c. Project objectives and scope

IFAD designed and began implementation of the Livestock and Market Development Project (LMDP) in 2014 in Naryn and Issyk-Kul *oblasts*.⁷¹ The LMDP development objective is to increase livestock productivity, to be reflected in improved and equitable returns to livestock farmers. There are three expected project outcomes:

Outcome 1: More productive and accessible pasture areas and increased supplementary feed available to community livestock.

69 International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2016. Independent Office of Evaluation, Kyrgyz Republic Agricultural Investment and Service Project, Project Performance Assessment, March 2016, Report No. 4020KG. <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/1e289727-c563-43a6-88d1-7bd843de8f2b>.

70 Ibid.

71 LDMP Phase I total budget is USD 28 million.

Components:

Community-Based Pasture Management

1. Supporting further elaboration of the policy and legal framework for community-based pasture management;
2. Strengthening the capacity of pasture management institutions at the national and local levels, starting from the social mobilization of the PUUs, facilitating formation of the JCs, and capacity building of the PUU members on various legal, organizational, and technical matters; and
3. Support to the PUUs and JCs in development and implementation of the Community Pasture Management Plan, including an investment grant program at the local level.

Outcome 2: Healthier livestock with lower levels of mortality

Components:

Livestock Health and Production Services

Outcome 3: Market partnerships in the milk value chain providing incentives for productivity increases.

Components:

Market/Value Chain Initiatives that support cooperation between dairy producers' groups and small-scale processing enterprises, which are mostly run by women.

The LDMP targeted the following groups: (1) vulnerable households among small producers of livestock products; (2) woman-headed households and female livestock farmers; (3) other households of livestock product producers; and (4) private veterinarians.

Two of these target populations are relevant to this case study, vulnerable households and woman livestock farmers and woman-headed households. Vulnerable households have small flocks, usually up to ten sheep, one to two cows, or a horse, and are experiencing economic difficulties. They usually graze their livestock on nearby village pastures and keep their animals in their homestead. These households are often unable to compete with other livestock owners for grazing space and unable to pay herders for their services. They may have less than three hectares of arable land, have no machines for farming, and have difficulty earning enough for their large families. Small livestock producer households produce mainly for their own needs; if they have a small food surplus, they may sell it at the local market though they cannot rely on that income.

d. Gender in the intervention

i. Institutional policies

IFAD has a gender and women's empowerment policy, adopted in 2012 (IFAD, 2012(3)) and a Framework for Mainstreaming and Operationalizing Gender. In addition, IFAD's project management and contractual approach has built-in flexibility. Rather

than including specific project activities in the contract with the recipient government, activities are guided by a Project Implementation Manual which is purposefully flexible to allow for mid-course adjustments and other responsive mechanisms.

The project, with support from IFAD, produced a gender strategy at the end of 2014 and an Action Plan for Operationalizing Gender and Knowledge Management Strategy in 2015.

ii. Project design

In response to the evaluation of earlier projects, in addition to specific targeting of woman-headed households, the LDMP project design anticipated several other entry points for women to participate actively in management of pasture resources at the community level. These included greater participation in the Jayit Committee and active engagement as PUU members in elaboration and implementation of the Community Pasture Use Management Plan, including in defining priorities for project investments. Women also participated as members of village health committees (VHS), a separately organized, voluntary body (that pre-existed pasture reforms), which has a permanent seat on the JC's veterinary subcommittee.

In addition, one output specifically targeted women: women's groups who sustainably process milk products for market. The project indicator for this output was stated thus: "10 women's processing groups operating at end of project." The aim of this initiative was to develop and test approaches for supporting the establishment of milk collection and cooling centers and support women's groups in setting up small-scale milk processing facilities focused primarily on high-quality traditional products. Successful approaches would be scaled up later in the project.

The design document dedicated a section to poverty and gender, and also suggested specific measures to identify target populations, including woman-headed households. In addition, the design process incorporated a special working paper covering poverty and gender.⁷² This document included specific steps for how gender would be mainstreamed in management, programming, monitoring, and evaluation. These are summarized in the following table.

⁷² Kyrgyz Republic: Livestock and Market Development Programme, Design Completion Report. Working Paper 7: Poverty Targeting and Gender.

Table 2. Mainstreaming recommendations in Working Paper targeting poverty and gender.

Design Element: Management

Accountable staff

- Project director has overall responsibility for gender mainstreaming; monitoring and evaluation (M&E), gender, and knowledge manager coordinates and manages all gender activities; all other staff including field and operational staff will be responsible.

Human resources

- Gender is a cross-cutting aspect in the terms of reference (TOR) for all staff associated with the project; all recruitment notices will indicate equal opportunity employment; recruitment procedures will include gender concerns and questions; at least one third of professional staff should be women.

Targeted activities

- Activities targeted for gender concern include: program implementation, program M&E, policy advice and dialogue, internal and external meetings, training and workshops, staff recruitment, human resource policies, and budget allocations.

Decision-making, review, and training

- Gender balance in all committees, subcommittees, and decision-making forums.
- Gender issues raised in project review meetings.
- Project reports will reflect gender issues and ensure all information is gender-disaggregated.
- Gender equality information is systematically prepared and presented at meetings.
- Monitoring to measure impact of gender-related training.

Field implementation

- Field service staff selection will consider gender sensitivity of applicants.
- Budget for training of staff on gender.
- Implementing partners will develop a gender and inclusion strategy, using IFAD Gender policy, which will include specific targets for women and men in activities, participation of women in decision-making bodies, gender sensitization training for staff, technical training for women in non-traditional areas such as livestock care, and monitoring of project's impact on gender relations and on women's capacity as outcomes.

Design Element: Programming

Animal health component

- Special effort to ensure women's active involvement.
- Capacity development of all members, including women.
- Capacity development events at a time and place that women can attend.
- Targeting women for awareness who have the bulk of responsibility for animal care.

Animal health internship program

- At least 30% candidates must be women.

Community pasture management and investment

- Staff actively guide Jayit Committees.
- Inclusion of women a priority in annual selection of Jayit Committee members; women to have at least 30% of seats.
- Full representation of women in general assembly.
- Community Pasture Management Plans will be put to a vote of all.
- Pasture and feeding investments (performance-based grants).
- Grant allocation decisions will consider inclusion of women.
- Woman-headed households will receive additional capacity-building to develop plans for micro-project funding.
- Women's groups will be included in the selection committee.

Community seed fund

- *De facto* woman-headed households given priority membership.

Value chain (dairy processing) micro-project

- At least 25% of funds allocated to projects initiated by women.
- Women will be given most responsibility of dairy processing groups.
- Capacity-building for women to develop micro-project proposals.
- Identification of woman-headed households with good business skills for milk collection and cooling points.

Design Element: Monitoring and Evaluation

Participatory M&E at field level will:

- Assess performance against targets.
- Participation and decision-making at different levels.
- Produce sex-disaggregated data.
- Track project benefits to target groups.
- Special studies.
- Assess project impact on women and changes in households.
- Publish bi-annual newsletter on good practices and human interest, promoting messages of gender justice, and disseminated to all stakeholders.

After the project was underway, project staff, including the technical lead at IFAD, noted that some of the gender mainstreaming recommendations (shown in Table 2 above) were not being achieved. To understand and address the reasons for this, in early 2015 IFAD led a gender-oriented meeting with project staff, out of which an Action Plan for Operationalizing Gender and Knowledge Management was developed.

This Action Plan outlined key issues that the project was facing regarding meeting gender-based targets, including:

- Women's participation in attending meetings of the JCs, and
- Women's participation in training as veterinary specialists, and receiving (or applying for) scholarships for studying veterinary medicine.

It also stated that women are not interested in issues of pasture management and veterinary services.

The Action Plan states that ARIS would make special attempts to encourage greater participation of women in meetings that describe project objectives and that greater effort would be made to communicate with women. It was also decided that ARIS and project staff should continue to address gender inclusion using various measures, including:

- Conducting an analysis of low participation by women in pasture committees through focus groups;
- Increasing participation of women in introductory meetings and round tables at the village, *aiyl aimak*, *raion*, and *oblast* levels, through increased outreach to women and by linking with female councils (small groups of female activists led by an employee of the *aiyl okmotu* on gender issues);
- Raising awareness of gender issues with the pasture users' unions and JCs;
- Conducting focus groups to enable women to identify their own priorities for pastures; and
- Revising project communication materials to contain information targeting women.

A deeper gender assessment addressing some of the questions raised in the strategy and Action Plan is scheduled for 2016. The results from these efforts will be considered in the mid-term review before a decision to change targets is made.

iii. Additional design features added after implementation

The IFAD approach to project planning allows for ongoing responsiveness to challenges that arise in implementation. Some changes were made related to gender. For instance, the LMDP's investment and grant opportunities are designed to help support JC implementation of their Community Pasture Management Plan. After the project team noticed that women were not playing an increased role in the JC, there was a concern that women's interests would not be equally represented in the Community Pasture Management Plans and would therefore not be supported by these investments. To address this concern, the

team developed other mechanisms to ensure women's interests are among those that are prioritized to receive grants. The amount and frequency of investments were made on the basis of the PUU meeting a number of different criteria intended to provide incentives for certain institutional behavior and were based on PUU institutional assessments done by local ARIS staff. When the institutional assessment of the PUUs was undertaken, one measure of success was the inclusion of women on the JC. Another measure of success was how well women's interests were represented on the Community Pasture Management Plan. The investment program was designed to be paid in three tranches: the first tranche of funds was given to all PUUs, but the second and third tranches were given only to those who met all established requirements, including inclusion of women in the JCs and support of woman-generated proposals.

In addition, to help ensure that women's interests were considered in the Community Pasture Management Plan when the JC was developing its investment proposals, ARIS facilitated targeted focus groups to help define priority investments. These focus groups were: large livestock holders, small livestock holders, professional shepherds, and women. On the basis of focus group discussions, the JC developed its CPMP and suggested a plan for investments for approval by the village meeting. However, ARIS field staff were required to take steps to encourage the JCs to ensure that 25% of grants covered the interests of women.

Finally, because women's participation in the JC continued to remain low, representatives of the village health committees (VHC) were added as a permanent member of the JC as a subcommittee. VHCs were organized at the village level and are composed mostly of women volunteers, who are used to disseminate health and sanitation information to villagers largely through in-person meetings with neighbors and contacts. VHCs were one of the main ways that women communicate with each other and receive important information on health-related matters. To provide incentives for VHCs to participate in the JC to gain and then disseminate among villagers knowledge about zoonotic diseases, the LMDP provided them with small support such as publication of materials and purchase of office equipment.

iv. Gender in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The LMDP baseline report was based on interviews with both women and men, and, of all respondents, 42.4% were women. The published baseline findings related to pasture use and livestock practices were not sex-disaggregated. Sex-disaggregated data was collected but was not required by the project designers to be reported on.

Outcome surveys will be used to track outcomes during implementation by surveying a small sample of beneficiaries, and the project will undertake a mid-term review. The project planned to conduct a gender study in the first part of 2016.

VI. Gender Assessment

a. Law and policy

At the level of law and policy, the legal framework is supportive of the property rights of women in general. However, because pasturelands are owned by the state and managed communally, the legal protections that women have related to private property do not apply to pastureland. The Law on Pastures which governs pasture land in Kyrgyzstan is gender neutral and does not distinguish between or provide for the rights of women and men, but rather provides for the rights and obligations of the state and the local self-governing body. By recognizing that all residents of a community, no matter where they were born, are members of a pasture users' union, the law is positive for women; as long as a woman is a resident she will have rights to be a member of a Pasture Users Union, no matter her marital status, where she was born, or her ancestry.

The Law on Pastures is also gender neutral in its provisions related to governance. However, in practice pasture management is considered the domain of men, and since many of the reforms of the law pertain to management and governance, the Law on Pastures may inadvertently be more likely to serve men's pasture interests than women's because men are traditionally more involved in pasture management than women.

At the same time, the broader legal framework in Kyrgyzstan, including the Constitution, puts a positive obligation on the state to address gender inequality, and this covers governance as well as rights to resources. This creates a legal duty for the Livestock Market and Development Program (LMDP), which is in part supporting the state in implementing the Law on Pastures, to include interventions that seek to address women's inequality.

b. Design and capacity to deliver

The LMDP paid significant attention to gender in design, largely guided by the experience of the AISP, requirements of the IFAD Gender Policy, and, more broadly, IFAD's institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming. The design included detailed elements specifying how the project would mainstream gender in every aspect of its implementation, including management, programming, and monitoring and evaluation. It also assigned specific responsibility for gender to one core staff member (a woman). There was an M&E specialist with a gender focus in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) who oversaw consideration of gender issues in all implementation activities and conducted knowledge-sharing events. Recently ARIS recruited a gender specialist to ensure involvement of women in social mobilization activities and to support the LMDP's capacity-building and investment/grant activities. At the same time, there was a gap between the gender-related activities envisioned in the design and the capacity of these implementers to specifically address the identified needs.

This gap is not unexpected; IFAD's gender policy is relatively new and it may take time for institutional capacity to reach the levels anticipated in the policy. Likewise, the LMDP attention to gender is new for the project implementation staff and it cannot be expected that staff will know how to address the cultural and social constraints to women's participation without specific training and guidance.

c. Design and target beneficiaries

Outside of gender mainstreaming, one way that the project sought to benefit women was by including among its targets woman-headed households and women generally. As discovered in the baseline, the number of woman-headed households in Naryn and Issyk-Kul was rather low.⁷³ Thus, the woman-headed households target has less potential value than the target related to women more generally, yet in the design phase the woman-headed household group was given more attention than the larger group of "women." By not calling out women in male-headed households, the project may have missed an opportunity to integrate design elements which could serve the interests of more women. This has been addressed in the adjustments made to the LMDP-II and reflected in the LMDP by shifting the target to women engaged in livestock-based livelihoods as target beneficiaries.

The project also sought to target women through the value chain activity and the seed bank program. Because each of those activities have only just begun, it is too early to tell how successful they will be at reaching women. Whatever the future results, it is notable that these activities, largely seen as benefiting women, make up around just 5% of the total project cost (US\$1.3 million allocated for value chain investments for women). It is likely the case that women will also gain from other investments that are not directly targeted at women (such as those related to improved animal health, fairer access to pasture resources, and pasture improvement micro-grants). However, since the LMDP had women among its targets, it could have dedicated a greater portion of its overall investment to women specifically. Women were also targeted for participation in JCs (see below for analysis on this).

After adjustment of the implementation modalities, women's interests are now prioritized in investments and grants that the project provides to JCs in support of implementing their Community Pasture Management Plans. Considering the challenges faced by the project in reaching its targets for women's participation in the JCs, this is one way to provide an incentive to JCs to meaningfully engage women in the community and ensure that their interests in pasture management are given equal attention with those of men. The investment incentive approach opens the door for women to engage JCs where they may have not before, and has the potential to change the way that JCs think about women's interests and about their potential

⁷³ Though this may not be the case for LMDP-II, which will be based in other oblasts where women-headed households may be more numerous.

to benefit both women and men. At the same time, it remains to be seen whether the JCs will engage women and consider their interests once the incentive has ended. Seen in this way, it is important to supplement the incentives with other approaches to ensuring women's interests are represented – including outreach and mobilization, support for women's capacity development, and quotas for women in decision-making roles (as the LMDP has done).

d. Targets for women's participation

There has been a learning process on the use of targets for women's participation in JCs. In the earlier AISP, which was the basis for the LMDP design, there was a decision to avoid quotas to ensure women's participation because it was assumed that they would be reached through other targeting activities. It was expected that women's participation, as well as participation from poor households, would come indirectly through formation of small livestock holders' and secondary users' groups (PUGs). The view was that women-headed and poor households, because they had fewer livestock, would make "secondary," or non-grazing, use of pastures (collection of medicinal herbs, plants, berries, and dry wood, and making hay) and thus women and the poor would be represented by their involvement in these groups. The expectation was that after involvement in these groups, women and the poor would be elected to join the JC. This expectation did not bear itself out in the AISP; only 6% of their JC members were women when the LDMP began.

To address the earlier AISP's reported shortfall with regard to women's participation in the JC, the LMDP design included a quota for 30% of the JC members to be women.

After some time had passed, project staff learned that the target of 30% was hard to reach, or, if it was reached, it did not always equate to a greater attention to women's interests. This was because in places where the target was met, it was through the addition of women who had no interest in pasture management (e.g. teachers, female members of *aiyl kenesh*) and did not play an active role in the JC or even turn up to meetings. Project staff believed that if the target was not met, it was because women were not interested in taking on additional responsibility and did not themselves believe that they had a stake in pasture management (that is, women believed that it was men's work because it was about bridge and road building, collecting pasture fees, and enforcing grazing rules). Project staff also reported that achieving the target was determined by the individual community facilitators' (ARIS employee at the local level) level of commitment to mobilizing women, and also the openness of the particular JC to meaningfully engage women rather than an obligation to meet the 30% target. It was also reported that achieving the target depended on the importance of the pasture resources to livelihoods within the community; where there were other opportunities and where pastures were less fundamental to survival, women might be more likely to be JC members. In a few cases,

engagement of women in the JC visibly affected the quality of the JC's performance.

Imposing quotas for participation of women in the JC had mixed results, and reaching the target alone did not ensure that women's interests were more likely to be addressed by the JC or that women were meaningfully participating. On the positive side, the targets may be the main link between the gender policy and the project implementation; they were a key performance metric for the project and motivated implementing staff and JCs to pay attention to women in some way. Many respondents stated that it was important to pay attention to gender because the project quotas required it, and it is likely that without these quotas, there would not have been mention of gender at all. Used in this way, targets are a blunt instrument, where reaching the number becomes the goal; but experience from the AISP suggests that without a target gender would likely not be considered at all or only in a limited way.

In practice, whether women were meaningfully included on the JC depended on other factors, as well as the target. For instance, where women were meaningfully included, it very much reflected the commitment, knowledge, and skill of the ARIS field staff persons, specifically their abilities in social mobilization and in using participatory methods to engage the community. In these instances, the key to increase women's participation was to disseminate information on benefits of pasture reforms and the benefits that the LMDP might bring to them in terms of knowledge about prevention and treatment of zoonotic diseases and addressing pasture and livestock problems which are major concerns to women. When women could clearly see how their participation related to their specific role in livestock care, they were much more likely to participate.

The targets also had unintended effects and inspired creative thinking. Largely, but not entirely, because the project was not on track to meet its targets related to women's participation, the project staff devised creative and innovative ways to better include women's interests, e.g., including the VHCs, mostly composed of female volunteers, as a subcommittee on pasture committees, developing tools for providing investment grants that require participation of women, recruitment of a gender specialist for ARIS, and recommending that implementing staff conduct an assessment of women's needs and interests.

The LMDP targets related to women's participation have been a useful instrument; however, the tactic could have benefited from earlier and deeper analysis of what would have been most effective to achieve positive outcomes for women. For instance, it is not clear that the targets were set at levels that were feasible and realistic in the project's lifetime given the very low starting level of women's participation and awareness, the social and cultural obstacles among men and women, and regional differences that would need to be overcome. Setting a too strict target without basing it on circumstances had left many project staff and JCs thinking that it was impossible to reach, causing an unintended negative effect (deliberate avoidance, resentment)

or lack of interest in women's participation in general. Earlier and deeper analysis on the reasons that women were not participating may have uncovered the reticence shown by women, and the design could have incorporated specific activities to address that reticence with something more than a quota for women.

e. Flexibility in implementation

There are other factors that had an impact on how well women benefited from the LMDP. For instance, upon reflection project implementers believe that the scope of women's participation in developing and implementing of the Community Pasture Management Plan largely depended on the commitment of the ARIS staff (local implementer) to mobilize women and, to some degree, the openness of the JC to meaningfully engage women. It also depended in part on the importance of pasture resources to livelihoods within the community; that is, where there were other opportunities for women and where pastures were less fundamental to survival, women were more likely to be JC members.

Some project activities — such as reprioritization of investment grants and introduction of village health committees into JCs — were introduced after implementation began and sought to boost women's participation. From an institutional perspective, these changes were largely possible because the project implementation plan had built-in flexibility and could adapt as things were learned along the way. The critical attention, leadership, and motivation of the IFAD technical leads on the project also helped ensure consistent attention to gender.

The addition of village health committees representatives to the JC is a new feature of the program and is likely to be helpful because VHCs have established connections to village households and have an interest in pasture management as it relates to animal health, disease prevention, and sanitation, which correspond to women's stated interests in pasture management. At the same time, VHC members are unpaid volunteers and are not compensated for the extra effort that may be required to also be involved in the JC, and this could cause some difficulties in maintaining their involvement in the long term.

VII. Recommendations

a. Integrate women's rights programming into project design

The LMDP has already recognized the social and economic basis for ensuring that women's interests are promoted in pastureland management, but the project could also directly address women's inequality. The LMDP might do this by engaging women's rights-focused NGOs that have proven experience in reaching women to address some of the knowledge, information, and participation challenges they face.

b. Identify and address capacity needs, interest levels, and attitude obstacles in staff on a continual basis

A consideration for future programming may be to budget and provide for highly targeted, context-specific capacity development of project staff on the importance of paying attention to gender, the specific constraints that women face with regard to pasture-based livelihoods, and how they can be addressed. Because improving women's participation in pasture management requires a shift in attitudes and behavior of men and women, such capacity development could focus on concrete strategies and good practices from work in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere that have seen successes in shifting knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions with respect to gender bias. Such capacity development would be best done on a consistent long-term, rather than an *ad hoc* or one-off, basis. It could be based on a qualitative gender needs assessment, and then improvements against identified gaps could be tracked as part of the M&E framework. The project team could work with Kyrgyz or international experts on reaching women in land and resource management reforms.

c. Adopt targets as well as complementary activities so that they are fully supported and understood and more likely to have the intended effect

One consideration for future use of targets and quotas for women's participation is to link them to complementary activities that help project beneficiaries and implementers to understand the benefit of women's participation, not just for women, but for all involved. For example, it was recounted by project staff that male pasture users have very little understanding of the income that women's use of pastures contributes to the household. Selling a sheep, traditionally done by men, can bring in a large sum all at once but may happen just once a year, whereas selling dairy products may bring in less income on a per-transaction basis, but the yearly income from dairy may be equivalent to selling one sheep. Many men and women did not compare these two pasture-related activities before and therefore had not been aware of how women's interests in pasture

management are also valuable to the household. In addition, producing dairy at home significantly improves the nutrition of the household members, especially of children, and many men do not understand how pasture management relates to household well-being. Along with a quota, systematic outreach and mobilization efforts focusing on a holistic picture of gender and pasture livelihoods could do much to achieve greater and more meaningful participation of women.

d. Work to change the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of men and women

One consideration for future reference would be to better understand the dynamic between gender, pasture (or other resources) livelihoods, and pasture governance early on, and link those findings to an integrated social and behavioral change communications and outreach strategy that is launched at the project's beginning and is run systematically through the project's life. This communications strategy would need to be based on what has proven effective and feasible and may need to be tailored to different "categories" of locations (e.g. areas without other livelihood options, areas with other good livelihood options, areas where there was evident lack of community support for women in pasture governance, and the like). The findings from such analyses could also inform how to structure experiential learning opportunities for social mobilization staff, whereby staff from one area would travel to other areas and learn from each other's successes and challenges. From such experiential learning, each staff could devise their own mobilization strategy for better results for women.



The Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights is an initiative of Landesa, an international non-governmental organization committed to the power of land rights as a pathway to eliminate extreme poverty, reduce conflict, and build more gender-equal and just societies. Given the centrality of women's land rights to a host of sustainable development and human rights outcomes, the Center partners with governments and global networks to champion women's land rights in high-level and strategic norms-setting fora, and by leveraging innovative solutions for stronger gender-responsive land rights on national and regional levels.



Resource Equity was founded in December 2014 as a women-run, women-first non-profit which focuses exclusively on gender issues related to land and resource rights. We work in concert with other organizations worldwide to advocate for social and policy change that will enable women to have secure rights to land, and develop the capacity of others to do this work around the world.