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GENDER AND KYRGYZ COMMUNITY PASTURE MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Kyrgyz pastureland make up the majority of land mass in the country and are an important resource for most rural people, providing good opportunities for economic growth and poverty reduction. Kyrgyz pastureland reforms devolved management of pastures to local level pasture committees. This case study looks at promising practices and lessons learned from an intervention related to those reforms, that seeking to both promote community management of pasturelands and also promote the interests of women within those communities.

A. BACKGROUND: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTEXT

Country context. The Kyrgyz Republic is a small landlocked country with a land area of about 200,000 km², located in the heart of Central Asia, bordering Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the south west, and China to the south east. Most of the country's territory is mountainous, with almost 90 percent of land located higher than 1,500 meters above sea level. Only half of the country's land area is habitable and accessible to humans.

Kyrgyzstan's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2013 was 0.628— which was in the medium human development category— positioning the country at 125 out of 187 countries and territories. The country's GDP as of 2013 was mostly composed of services (44.8%), industries (34.4%), and agriculture (20.8%). Livestock production comprises half of the total agricultural output. Of the total number of employed people in Kyrgyzstan, only 25 percent are employed in the formal sector, while 76 percent of the economically active population is self-employed, including farmers and migrant workers (IMF, 2014).

Gender Differences. Kyrgyzstan's Gender Inequality Index (GII) value was 0.348 in 2013, ranking it 64 out of 149 countries. In Kyrgyzstan, women hold 23.3 percent of parliamentary seats, and 94.5 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 96.8 percent of their male counterparts (NSC, 2013). 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 economic opportunities. Women's Independent economic activity has decreased almost two times or even more in certain regions (to 30.6 % in Naryn oblast) within the two decades since the country's independence. Women are highly represented in the informal labor market and in certain service and trade sectors, which are high risk and lack social guarantees.

Women in Kyrgyzstan spend three times more time on housework than men (17.4 and 5.7 hours, respectively). This number is higher in rural areas where women perform an additional 2 hours of housework (NSC, 2013). In 2012 women headed 27 per cent of households nation-wide (GoK, 2012).

Land. Agricultural land is comprised of about 7 percent arable land and 43 percent grassland. Traditionally, 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: from villages in the lowlands to spring pastures in April and May, then to high altitude summer pastures in June and slowly moving back to the villages after harvesting cereals in September.

The majority of households in Kyrgyzstan have a small number of livestock that they use for their own consumption. Livestock is a coping mechanism for rural families, used in times of shortage of cash, or urgent financial needs. It is extremely important for ceremonial traditions and for a household's status in a community. Thus, almost every rural household has livestock, varying from five to twenty heads of sheep, and from two to five cattle, especially dairy cows.

Most households have a small number of livestock that require grazing. These households use community shepherds, arranged by the local authorities, who are paid a fee per head of stock for the service. The shepherds graze livestock on a daily basis during the winter, spring and fall, and take livestock to remote pastures during the summer.

Other direct users of pastures are households that have a higher than average number of livestock and for whom livestock is a main source of income. These households usually graze their own animals often combined with the animals of neighboring households in their village. In winter-spring and fall they

graze livestock themselves on a rotational basis (*kezuu*). For the 3-4 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. Some of these households might also make use of shepherds either if they are absentee farmers, or wealthy and keeping livestock as an investment.

Project Description. The subject of this case study is the Livestock and Market Development Program (LMDP). The project began on 17 July 2013, and follows the Agricultural Investment Support Project (AISP), funded by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which ran from 2007-2013. LMDP is funded by IFAD in the amount of approximately US\$10 million in grants and US\$10 million in loans, and focuses on the Naryn and Issyk-Kul oblasts (provinces). 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 for US\$ 38 million of which IFAD finances US\$ 31 million. This case study focuses on the first phase of LMDP in Naryn and Issyk-Kul.¹

B. METHODOLOGY

This case study is based on desk review of literature as well as field-based assessment. The desk review covered project design documents and supporting materials, the project baseline report, other literature which provide information on the Kyrgyz context and pasture land resources there. The desk review also included analysis of pertinent laws and other legal documents.

A field-mission was conducted in October 2015 in Bishkek, Naryn, and Issyk-Kul. The field mission consisted of the open-ended key informant interviews with staff from the pasture department, LMDP project staff, staff from the local implementing agency, as well as pasture experts, women's rights expert, and staff from other organizations which have or continue to work on pastures, land, or women in Kyrgyzstan. Key informant interviews were also held with chairpersons of Jayit Committees (Pasture Committees) in Semizbel (Kochkor district, Naryn oblast), Chon Dobo (Jungal district, Naryn oblast), Cholpon (Kochkor district, Naryn oblast), Membetov (Ton district, Issyk-Kol oblast), Barskoun (Jeti-Oguz district, Issyk-Kol oblast), Saray-Bulak (Tyup district, Issyk-Kol). Two of the Jayit Committee chairpersons were women. Focus group discussions of between 8-13 people were held with male and female Jayit committee members, and male and female members of pasture users unions in the above named areas, as well as Village Health Committees in Barskoun and Saray Bulak. Four of the locations were chosen because they had a woman chairperson, which is very uncommon, because the Jayit Committee was very engaged and had expressed interest in addressing gender, the others were chosen at random.

The overarching focus of the inquiry was to place gender within the framework and interventions on pasture land reform in Kyrgyzstan. It sought to understand the nature of the collective rights and authority over pastures and how they played out in practice for women and men. What role the legal and institutional framework has 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 sought 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.

C. RECENT PASTURE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN KYRGYZSTAN

Pastures were traditionally managed by community groups and were an important element of cultural identity. During the soviet era, pastures were managed as state and collective farms. Livestock numbers in

¹ Talas and Chui were not included in the project

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. Since independence, pasture management has undergone several changes, the two most important changes occurred first in 2002 and then in 2009.

A 2002 Government Resolution allocated management rights of pastures of different quality and accessibility to three different tiers of Government: the *oblasts* (provincial level) administered remote pastures, the *raions* (district level) administered pastures located at the interim distance to these remote pastures, and the *aiyl okmotus* (local municipality) administered near-village pastures. At this time, pasture plots were leased to individual farmers and shepherds for 5-10 years through an auction process, and the lessee paid the land tax and pasture use fees to the relevant state authorities depending on the location of the pasture plot rented. This period of pasture management was characterized by fragmented management, weak state monitoring over use of pastures, parcelisation of a resource which is best managed as an ecosystem, increasing number of livestock, and growing grazing pressure on some natural pasture plots and under-use of others. The results led to inefficiencies for the state, confusion for pasture users on authority and sustainability, sub leasing of pastures which led to conflict between different pasture users, significant degradation of pasture resources, especially those that were closer to villages, and unenforced rules around use and fee payment, leaving room for rent-seeking and corruption or unfair payment practices.

A new law was introduced in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2009, which completely shifted the pasture management approach. 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 okmotus*, and subsequently to users' themselves, organized in Pasture Users' Unions (PUU). Every resident of the rural municipality is automatically a member of the PUU. This change sought to bring about more transparent and fair allocation of use rights, bringing authority and decision making closer to pasture users themselves. It also aimed at ensuring fair access for all to pasture resources.
- The lease-based system was replaced by a use-right based system to allow for further livestock mobility and to 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 (and fees based on head count) so that all pastures would be treated as one whole ecosystem, encourage mobility of livestock and protect against over-use.
- Fees for pasture use are established each year and are largely used for pasture improvement and investments.

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 percent of all pasture lands in 2012 were still degraded; the most severe degradation exists on the winter or pastures near settlements that reached up to 70% degradation in 2012. (GoK, 2012b). Other major issues with livestock productivity relate to poor breeding, problems with animal health and lack of effective veterinary services.

Table 1. Pasture Degradation Rates

Pasture type	Pasture area (thousand ha)	%	Degraded area in ha	Degraded areas in %
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

D. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

a. Legal Framework for Pastures

Constitution. The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan recognizes private, municipal, state and other forms of property (GoK, 2000). It also provides the right for local communities, which are financed by local as well as republican budgets, to self-govern, independently resolving matters of local significance (GoK, 2000). 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 (GoK, 2010).

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, land occupied with perennial plants, hayfields and pastures (GoK, 1999). The Land Code also provides for state, communal, and private ownership of land (GoK, 1999).

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

Law on Pastures. Pastures are governed by the Land Code and the Law on Pastures (GoK, 2011). 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*s). These pastures are not covered by the Pasture Law and are not included in the scope of this study.

In Kyrgyzstan state administration is decentralized to two levels, *oblasts* and *raions*. Towns and rural *aiyl aimak* are managed by the *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 percent of the total population, and 1,800 villages grouped into 472 *aiyl aimaks* (NSC, 2007). Each *aiyl aimak* is made of a cluster of villages, the number of which can vary from 2 to 20 depending on a size of population and location. *Aiyl aimaks* have elected councils (*aiyl kenesh*) and executive bodies (*aiyl okmotu*).

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 (GoK, 2011). The Pasture User 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 in addressing issues of local importance (GoK, 2011b). According to the Law on Local Self Government, all residents of the municipality are automatically members of TBPSGs (GoK, 2011b). 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 (GoK, 2011). So far, about 454 PUUs (out of a possible 472) have been voluntarily formed in *aiyl aimaks* with significant livestock and pasture areas.

Under the Pasture Law, the PUU represents the interests of the livestock owners and other pasture users with respect to pasture use and improvement; its representative executive body is the Jayit Committee (JC)(GoK, 2011).

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 (GoK, 2011). The JC is responsible for monitoring pasture conditions, issuing pasture use tickets, fixing fees and collecting payment for pasture use, resolving pasture related disputes, and managing pasture revenue (GoK, 2011). Fees for tickets are calculated based on the Community Pasture Management Plan and the financial needs required for its implementation, and then divided by number of livestock units.²

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 Development and Investments (ARIS)³ have developed and promoted guiding procedures for formation of JCs along with guidelines for institutional procedures, 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, and thus the JC would be representative of different user groups. When the Model Charter was developed it was expected that women headed households and poor households, who usually have no or very few animals, would form their own PUG. 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, according to project staff. The expectation that women and the poor would form other PUGs and thereby be included in the JC did not materialize.

Not required by law, in practice JC's often have different sub-committees that are led by members of the JC and are expected to bring the perspective of their area of expertise to the proceedings

² The Pasture Law provides that pasture fee can not be lesser than local land tax. In practice, livestock holders pay pasture fee annually to the JC when obtaining use right. In some areas these fees are paid to shepherds jointly with the grazing fee who then transfer pasture fee amount (minus his remuneration) to the JCs. JCs pay land tax to the local budget for pasture area under the *aiyl aimaks*, other organizational taxes. Before the pasture management reform, pasture lease payments were collected by state administrations (oblast and raion), and by the *aiyl okmotus*. Thus, in 2005 state budget received 7.7 million soms for pasture lease. This payment has significantly increased after 2009 and reached 10 million soms in 2010, 30 million soms in 2011, 80 million soms in 2013 and 130 million in 2014.

³ These activities were done as part of the World Bank funded AISP project mentioned below, and implemented by the Agency for Community Development and Investments (ARIS) the implementing agency for the AISP project and are also for the LMDP and LMDP-II projects.

Currently, PUUs are funded by pasture grazing user fees; payment for other types of pasture use (touristic facilities, mobile telecommunication stations, small mining, hay making, collection of herbs and plants for commercial purposes, etc); in some areas funds provided by the aiyl okmotu; 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 undertake investments, such as repairs of pasture infrastructure, and pay the salaries of the Chairperson and the accountant.

b. Women's Rights in Law

Constitution The Kyrgyz Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (GoK, 2010). it provides that everyone is equal before the law and that men and women are accorded equal opportunities and freedoms (GoK, 2010). The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic incorporates into its legal system international treaties that the Kyrgyz Republic is party to (GoK, 2010). Kyrgyzstan has ratified CEDAW (10 Feb 1997), 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 (CEDAW).

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 (GoK, 2012). The law "On State Guarantees for Ensuring Gender Equality" (2003) prohibits explicit and implicit gender discrimination (GoK, 2003) and does not support norms of common law, tradition and culture which discriminate against gender (GoK, 2003). It guarantees equal rights to ownership of property (GoK, 2003), provides for equal use rights to land where rights are granted in this way, and provides equal protection of rights to land for men and women (GoK, 2003).

Family Code The Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic governs family relations. It provides that the family is the basic social unit in Kyrgyzstan, only registered marriages are recognized, and family relations are regulated in accordance with principles of equality of the spouses' (GoK, 2003). 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 (GoK, 2003).

The Family Code provides that all property acquired by the spouses during their marriage is considered joint property (GoK, 2003). And joint property is managed with the consent of both spouses (GoK, 2003). Any property that belonged to a spouse before the marriage or gifts or inheritance received by one spouse during the marriage is considered personal property of the spouse (GoK, 2003). At divorce, joint property of the spouses is divided equally among them, unless otherwise stated in a marital agreement (GoK, 2003).

Inheritance. Kyrgyz formal law governing succession permits both sons and daughters the right to inherit (GoK, 2003).

The Family Code and the Inheritance law apply to private land, and do not apply to pastures which are categorized as state land, with their responsibility and management devolved to the Pasture Users Union. Instead, women's and men's rights to pastures are based on being resident in a TBFSG and thereby member of a pasture users union. In practice, women's use of pastures and role in pastures management are governed by customs.

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 husband's male family members in his absence. 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 pasture land insofar as they are a member of a pasture using household, and the household is a member of an associated clan who lives in the particular pasture-using area (Undeland, 2008). In traditional times, 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 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 (IFAD, 2012).

Women can be shepherds, and some women 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 wives 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, and cannot be refrigerated and thus are usually processed into butter, dry cheese and yogurt.

Women headed households, or 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 might get pasture areas far from water, roads, and/or 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 they may lose a higher proportion of animals to death or ill-health than their male counterparts.

Marriage customs are patrilocal and a bride-price, known as *kalym*, is 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. 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 formal laws do not protect the relationships.

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.

Women and pasture governance. Women are traditionally excluded from decision-making about allocation of pasture resources, and in general their interests are not taken into account in pasture management and governance (RDF, 2013). Today, though women in at least some parts of Kyrgyzstan

are celebrated for being “strong,” 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 (RDF, 2013). 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 grazing is of less economic importance.

Because men are responsible for overseeing grazing animals, their interests tend to focus on infrastructure 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 differ from men, as women are also responsible for the care of the grazing household, and report that summer pastures lack reliable supply of electricity and communication, clean drinking water, certain foodstuffs, other 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 an impact on the livelihoods of the grazing households.

E. INTERVENTION

Pre-Project Intervention

According to the project baseline, most households in the project target area depend on pasture and rangeland resources for their financial wellbeing (IFAD, 2013b). The majority of households are headed by men (80-86%) and 92% of the women headed households are headed by widows (IFAD, 2013b). Labor migration levels are the lowest in the country, and the majority of the adult population is literate (IFAD, 2013b). 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 (IFAD, 2013b), though the poorer households have less irrigated land than wealthier households (IFAD, 2013b).

Almost all households in the target areas have livestock, mostly cattle and sheep and goats, but also horses (IFAD, 2013b). The main livestock products are milk, *airan*, and meat (IFAD, 2013b). In general, dairy products are used for household consumption rather than sale (IFAD, 2013b); sheep are mostly used for traditional social ceremonies, while cattle are raised mainly for sale (IFAD, 2013b). Livestock productivity is low due to poor nutrition caused by a lack of fodder because of its high cost 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 is 4.6-4.9 tons per year.

Evaluation of the AISP, the first project that 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 User Unions, two out of fifteen JC members on average were female, thus women did not significantly participate in the JC decision-making processes (AISP, 2015). And those women who were on the JCs were often given the role of accountant, not a decision-making position.

The AISP project 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 (AISP, 2015), and very few women meaningfully participated in pasture management. Project implementers believed that women’s lack of information and participation in pasture management could have an impact their livelihood options, because their interests would be less likely to be considered in pasture management plans, which determine how pastures will be used, maintained and improved. For example,

one of the key challenges for women is to market produced milk, because the dairy factories are located far from livestock villages.

Project Objectives and Scope.

IFAD designed and began implementation of the Livestock and Market Development Project (LMDP) in 2014 in Naryn and Issyk-Kul provinces.⁴ 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;

Components: Community-Based Pasture Management

- a. Supporting further elaboration of the policy and legal framework for community based pasture management;
- b. 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, organization, and technical matters;
- c. 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, which include establishment of cooperation between dairy producers' groups and processing enterprises. It is expected to develop and support dairy value chains and small scale processing with producers' groups, which are mostly women.

LMDP targets the following groups: (1) vulnerable households, first of all, among small producers of livestock products; (2) women headed households and women; (3) other households - livestock product producers; and (4) private veterinarians (PV).

Two of these target populations are relevant to this case study, vulnerable households and women and women-headed households. Vulnerable households are households experiencing economic difficulties. These households have small flocks, usually up to 10 sheep or 1-2 cows or, a horse. They usually graze their livestock on near 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 or unwilling to pay herders for their services. They may have less than 3 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.

F. GENDER IN LMDP PROJECT

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, IFADs project management and contractual approach has built in flexibility. Rather than including specific project activities in the

⁴ LMDP Phase I total budget is USD28Million

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.

In response to the evaluation of earlier projects, in addition to specific targeting of women 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, active engagement as PUU members in elaboration and implementation of the Community Pasture Use Management Plan, including in defining priorities for project investments, and 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 sub-committee.

In addition, one output specifically targets women: Women’s groups sustainably process milk products for market. The indicator is: “10 women’s processing groups operating at end of the project.” The aim of this initiative is to develop and test approaches for supporting establishment of milk collection and cooling centers, and support to women’s groups to set up small-scale milk processing facilities focused primarily on high quality traditional products. Successful approaches will be scaled up later within the project.

The design document dedicates a section to poverty and gender, and also suggests specific measures to identify target populations, including women headed households. In addition, the design process incorporated a special working paper covering poverty and gender (LMDP, 2013). This document includes specific steps for how gender will be mainstreamed in management, programming, monitoring and evaluation. These are summarized in the table below.

Box 2 Mainstreaming recommendations

Design Element	Mainstreaming recommendations in Working Paper targeting poverty and gender
Management	<p>Accountable staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project director has overall responsibility for gender mainstreaming; M&E, Gender, and Knowledge Manager coordinates and manages all gender activities; all other staff including field and operational staff will be responsible <p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender is a cross cutting aspect in the 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. <p>Targeted activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, budget allocations <p>Decision-making, review and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender balance in all committees, sub-committees, and decision-making forums • Gender issues raised in project review meetings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Field implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, monitoring of project's impact on gender relations and on women's capacity as outcomes.
Programming	<p>Animal health component</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 of animal care <p>Animal health internship programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% candidates must be women <p>Community Pasture Management and Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff actively guide Jayit Committees • Inclusion of women a priority in annual selection of Jayit Committee members to include women to have at least 30% of members women • Full representation of women in general assembly • Pasture Management Plans will be put to the vote of all <p>Pasture and Feeding investments (performance based grants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant allocation decisions will consider inclusion of women • Women headed households will receive additional capacity building to develop plans for micro project funding • Women groups will be included in the selection committee <p>Community Seed Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De facto women headed households given priority membership <p>Value chain (dairy processing) micro-project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 women headed household with good business skills for milk collection and cooling points
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Participatory M&E at field level will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess performance against targets • Participation and decision-making at different levels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product sex disaggregated data • Track project benefits to target groups <p>Special studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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After the project was underway, project staff, including the technical lead at IFAD noted that some of gender mainstreaming recommendations (shown in Box 2 above) were not being achieved. To understand and address the reasons for this, in early 2015 IFAD lead 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 which 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*, *rayon* and *oblast* level, through increased outreach to women and by linking with women councils (small groups of women activists led by an employee of the *aiyl okmotu* on gender issues).
- Raising awareness of gender issues with the Pasture User Unions and JC
- Conducting focus groups to enable women to identify their own priorities for pastures
- 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 would be made.

Additional design features added after implementation began related to gender. The IFAD approach to project planning allows for ongoing responsiveness to challenges that arise in implementation. Some changes that 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 (see Outcome 1(c), Section E, above). 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 thereby 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 are made on the basis of the PUU meeting a number of different criteria, intended to provide incentives for certain institutional behavior, and are based on PUU institutional assessments done by local ARIS staff. When the institutional assessment of the PUUs is undertaken, one measure of success is the inclusion of women on the JC. Another measure of success is how well women’s interests are represented on the Community

Pasture Management Plan. The investment program is designed to be paid in three tranches; the first tranche of funds is given to all PUUs, but the second and third tranches are given only to those who meet all established requirements, including inclusion of women in the JCs and support of women generated proposals.

In addition, to help ensure that women's interests are considered in the Community Pasture Management Plan when the JC is developing its investment proposals, ARIS facilitates targeted focus groups to help define priority investments. These focus groups are: large livestock holders, small livestock holders, professional shepherds, and women. On the basis of these focus group discussions, the JC develops its CPMP and suggests plan for investments that is approved by the village meeting. However, ARIS field staff is required to take steps to encourage JC to ensure that 25% of grants cover the interests of women.

Finally, because women's participation in the JC continues to remain low, representatives of the Village Health Committees (VHC) have been added as a permanent member of the JC as a sub-committee. VHCs are 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 are one of the main ways that women communicate with each other and receive important information on health related matters. To provide incentives for the VHC to participate in the JC to gain and then disseminate among villagers knowledge on zoonotic diseases, the LMDP project provides them with small support in terms of publication of materials, and purchase of office equipment.

Gender in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). The baseline report was based on interviews with both women and men, and of all respondents, 42.4% were women. It is not clear from the baseline report whether the female respondents were made up only of female heads of households or also included women in male-headed households. The published baseline findings related to pasture use and livestock practices were not sex-disaggregated. Sex-disaggregated data was collected but it was not always report 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 plans to conduct a Gender Study in the first part of 2016.

G. GENDER ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

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 pasture land. 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 blood line.

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

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 LMDP, which is in part supporting the state in implementing the Law on Pastures, to include interventions that seek to address women's inequality. The LMDP has already recognized the social and economic basis for ensuring that women's interests are promoted in pastureland management, but it could also take on the legal duty to address inequality of women. It might do this by engaging women's rights focused NGOs who have proven experience in reaching women, to address some of the knowledge, information, and participation challenges that it has faced.

Design and capacity to deliver. The LMDP project paid significant attention to gender in design, largely guided by the experience of the AISP project, requirements of the IFAD Gender Policy, and more broadly, IFAD's institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming. The 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 also assigns specific responsibility for gender to one core staff member (who is a woman). There is an M&E specialist with a gender focus in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) who oversees consideration of gender issues in all implementation activities, and conducts knowledge-sharing events. Recently ARIS has recruited a Gender Specialist to ensure involvement of women in social mobilization activities and to support LMDP's capacity building and investment/grant activities. At the same time, there is 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.

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 cultural shift, such capacity development could focus on concrete strategies and good practices from work in Kyrgyzstan or elsewhere that have seen successes in shifting knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions and 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 in the M&E framework. The project team could work with Kyrgyz or international experts on reaching women in land and resource management reforms.

Design and target beneficiaries. Outside of gender mainstreaming, one way that the project sought to benefit women was by including among its targets, women-headed households and women. As discovered in the baseline, the number of women-headed households in Naryn and Issyk-Kul is rather low.⁵ Thus, the women-headed households target has less potential value than the target related to women more generally, yet in the design phase this group was given more attention than women in male-headed households (*de facto* or *de jure*). By not calling out women in male-headed households, the project may have missed an opportunity to integrate design elements that 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.

⁵ 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

The project also sought to target women through the value chain activity and also through 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 benefitting women, make up around just 5 percent 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 indirectly 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 LMDP has women among its targets, it could have dedicated a greater portion of its overall investment to women specifically.

Women are also targeted for participation in JCs (see below for analysis on this).

After a design adjustment, 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 their potential 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).

Targets for women's participation. There has been a learning process on use of targets for women's participation in JCs. In the earlier AISP project, which was the basis for the LMDP design, there was a conscious effort to avoid quotas to ensure women's participation. Instead, 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 had fewer livestock, and that women and the poor in general make "secondary" or non-grazing, use of pastures (collection of medicinal herbs, plants, berries, 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 project; only 6 percent of their JC members were women when the LMDP project began.

To address the earlier AISP project'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 equate with a greater attention to women's interests. This is because in places where the target was met, it was through the addition of women who had no interest in pasture management (i.e. teachers, female members of *aiyl kenesh*) and did not play an active role in the JC or did not turn up to meetings. Project staff believe that if the target was not met it was because women are not interested in taking on additional responsibility and do not themselves believe that they have a stake in pasture management (that is, women believe that it is men's work because it is about bridge and road building, collecting pasture fees, and enforcing grazing rules). Project staff also report 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

also depended on the importance of the pasture resource to livelihoods within the community; where there are other opportunities for and where pastures are less fundamental to survival, women may be more likely to be JC members. In a few cases engagement of women in JC visibly affected quality of JC performance.

Imposing quotas for participation of women in JC has seen mixed results, and reaching the target alone does not ensure that women's interests are more likely to be addressed by the JC or that women are meaningfully participating. On the positive side, the targets may be the main link between the gender policy and the project implementation; they are a key performance metric for the project, and have 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 may not be 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 project 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 depends on other factors, as well as the target. For instance, where women are meaningfully included, it very much reflects the commitment, knowledge and skill of the ARIS field staff person, specifically in 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 LDMP might bring to them in terms of knowledge on prevention and treatment of zoonotic diseases, and addressing pasture and livestock problems which are of major concerns to women. According to respondents, where women could clearly see the benefits of their participation 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. For example, including the VHCs, mostly composed of women volunteers, as a sub-committee on pasture committees, developing tools for providing investment grants that require participation women, recruitment of Gender specialist for ARIS, and, recommending that implementing staff conduct an assessment of women's needs and interests.

The LDMP targets related to women's participation have been a useful instrument, however, the tactic could have benefitted from earlier and deeper analysis of what would be 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.

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 men 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. According to

project staff, many men and women did not had not compared 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.

Flexibility in implementation. There are other factors that have an impact on how well women benefit 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 depends on the commitment of the ARIS' staff (local implementer) to mobilizing women, and to some degree the openness of the JC to meaningfully engage women. It may also depend in part on the importance of the pasture resource to livelihoods within the community; that is, where there are other opportunities for and where pastures are less fundamental to survival, women may be more likely to be JC members.

Some project activities were introduced after implementation began and sought to address the impact of these other factors which influence women's participation – such as the way that the investment grants are prioritized, and the introduction of the village health committees into the JC. 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 but is likely to be helpful because they work with a pre-existing organized group that have established connections to village households. The Village Health Committees have an interest in pasture management as it relates to animal health, disease prevention and sanitation and these are often women's stated interests in pasture management. At the same time, the Health Committee 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.

Changing knowledge, attitudes and practice. 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 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 analysis 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. Form such experiential learning each staff could devise their own mobilization strategy for better results for women.

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