

Empower Women Benefit for All

Gender Livelihood and Socio Economic Study

Kyrgyzstan

Baseline Report



Empower Women
Benefit for All



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List of acronyms

EWA	Empowerment of Women – Benefit for All
CAAW	Central Asian Alliance for Water and Sanitation (NGO)
CDWUU	Community Based Drinking Water Users Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KAWS	Kyrgyz Alliance for Water and Sanitation (NGO)
STA	Social Technologies Agency (NGO)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
UDDT	Urine Diverting Dry Toilet
VIP	Ventilated Improved Pit Latrine
WECF	Women in Europe for a Common Future

1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives of this Study

This participatory study of the livelihood situation in Kyrgyzstan is part of the project 'Empower Women – Benefit for All' (EWA). EWA is a four year programme that targets six countries (Afghanistan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Tajikistan, and Uganda), one hundred communities, and at least 50,000 women and men. The EWA programme is based on the political and economic empowerment of women. EWA aims to increase women's participation in the formal economy, which would in turn lead to higher incomes as well as increase women's financial independence within the target communities. What is more, EWA seeks to ensure that women's access to basic sustainable livelihoods is met. Basic infrastructure such as energy, water and sanitation are required to make women's empowerment possible.

EWA also has a political component. Kyrgyzstan, along with the other target countries of the project, all face significant gaps within their legal framework and practices in regards to gender equality. This gap is even more extreme within rural communities. Traditional gender roles also contribute to women having less time for independent financial pursuits; women tend to lack ownership and control over productive assets and inputs, lack professional skills, lack of access to finance and lack of decision-making power. The combination of increasing women's economic and political empowerment is intended to decrease gender inequality and produce long-term poverty reduction with the target communities.

This study has several purposes – it will serve as a baseline analysis for the EWA project, as well as raising awareness regarding the situations in the target communities. The specific objectives of this participatory livelihood analysis are:

1. To establish the baseline situation for the project area.
2. To verify the intervention strategies of the project for the target communities.
3. To raise awareness among the beneficiaries about their livelihood and gender situation, and about their needs and the role of the project to meet their needs.

The focus of this report is on the socio-economic situation of the rural communities in Kyrgyzstan.

1.2 Situation in Rural Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous country. Mountains characterize Kyrgyz landscape and are essential as the economic base and living conditions of population, especially in rural areas.

Up to date the population of Kyrgyzstan is about 6 Million people. The urban population amounts to 34.1% of the whole population, the majority of them lives in Bishkek, the rest part of the population are rural community and breeders-nomads. Such distribution is historically determined by the fact that the Kyrgyz were indigenously vagrant tribes, migrating from one territory to another. They have been historically engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding, that is why Kyrgyzstan is rather a large agrarian country than an industrial one with predomination of rural areas and mountains.

Kyrgyzstan's two halves – called North and South, but in reality the Northeast and Southwest – are physically split by the snow-capped peaks of the Fergana spur of the Tien Shan Mountains. Travelling between the two is difficult. There are many similarities especially in rural areas but also socio-economic differences between the regions.

The rural living conditions of Kyrgyzstan are generally poor. For instance, lack of heating, lighting, fuel and safe sanitation, low drinking water quality, and malnutrition are all problems that are commonly encountered in rural communities. Consequently villagers are confronted to health issues that are closely related to their limited access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities and poor hygiene practices.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union 72% of villagers were supplied with water services, the situation drastically deteriorated as collective and state farms were dissolved. Many waterworks became impossible to operate due to lack of funds for operation and maintenance. As a result, tap water consumption in rural areas

significantly decreased. Drinking water supply in villages relies mostly on artesian underground sources (which account for 80% of total water consumption for drinking and domestic needs). More than 40% of the centralized water supply systems in the country deteriorated completely and should be replaced. More than a half of small towns and regional centres in the country do not have centralized sanitation systems or treatment plants; centralized sanitation is non-existent in rural areas.

Kyrgyzstan is a poor country with a significant agricultural sector. The main products grown are cotton, tobacco, wool and meat. Of those products, tobacco and cotton are the only ones that are exported. Furthermore, industrial products are also exported, including gold, mercury, uranium, natural gas and electricity. The economy is largely dependent on gold exports and remittances from migrant workers that are mainly located in the Russian Federation.

The current GDP per capita is 2,400 USD. The Kyrgyz economy has been detrimentally impacted by the global financial crisis and accompanying return of labour migrants from Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

1.3 Situation of the Women

Despite of the existing Law on gender equality, ratified key international documents aimed at protection of women's rights, including CEDAW and MDG, as well as implementation of number of state programs, the situation of women continues to be difficult. In 2007 a decree was signed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic 'On a National plan for achieving gender equality in the Kyrgyz Republic from 2007-2010'.

Unemployment level is higher for women compared to that of men by 20%, the gap between average salary of men and women is increasing (the difference is 36.4%). In Kyrgyzstan, maternal and infant mortality indicators are among the highest ones in the pan-European Region (maternal mortality rate during the period from 2000 to 2010 has raised from 45.5 to 63.5 cases per 100 thousand alive born infants). Every second pregnant woman suffers from anemia, while more than 80% of maternal mortality cases are reported in rural area. Although there are various problems and setbacks concerning gender equality in Kyrgyzstan, there has been progress towards says goal. For instance, it is making significant strides towards fulfilling its commitments under the Beijing Platform of Action, one of the most significant international documents for the advancement of gender equality.

According to the OECD, violence against women is increasing, in spite of legal protection for women. 'Violence against women is widespread', and 'psychological pressure, cultural traditions and the behaviour of authorities responsible for applying the legislation discourage women from filing complaints' for domestic violence. Furthermore, each year, three to five thousand women apply to crisis centres because of family violence. Marriage coercion or bride kidnapping also take place, despite criminal liability. There are also cases of marriages within the family, parentally arranged marriages and early marriages are also widespread. According to a United Nations report, approximately eleven % of girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen are married.

Furthermore, while Kyrgyz law protects women's financial independence and access to land ownership, this is realised to a limited degree. Furthermore, although women are legally able to access bank loans and obtain micro credit, they tend to be denied because they are unable to 'offer sufficient guarantees'. Although the Kyrgyz Republic has a generally high unemployment rate, the unemployment rate amongst women is higher than amongst men (16.2 and 13.6 % respectively). Women also tend to be employed in low-paying sectors, such as education, health care, light industry, and small business while men tend to predominately maintain leadership positions. Many households are headed by women due to the mass labour migration of men to work in Kazakhstan or Russia. Women also have carry a double labour burden of carrying out income generation or agricultural work combined with domestic work, cooking, cleaning, caring for children and elderly relatives, as well as providing fuel. Traditional views of women as subservient to men and as home-makers, serve as barriers to women's education, employment, opportunities and full decision making powers in the family and community. On top of this, feminisation of poverty is a significant problem in the country.

1.4 Target Group and Project Villages

The target group of the EWA project in Kyrgyzstan consists of women in rural areas in the North (Issyk Kul and Chui oblast) and the South (Osh oblast) of Kyrgyzstan. In the South, the target group includes victims of the conflict in the South from 2010.

The targeted villages in this project are:

Chui oblast: Don Aryk, Kalygyl, Krasnaya Rechka, Novopokrovka, Nurmember, Romanovka, Pervomaiskoe, Internationalnoe, Shopokov, and Kant.

Issyk Kul oblast: Ak Olon and Bokonbaev

Osh oblast: Ylay-Talaa, Nayman, Alish Bashi, Birlik, Kerme Too, Chek Abad, Jarkyshak, Aravan, Say and International

About the target villages in Osh oblast

Population in these villages is engaged mainly in agriculture in summer and cattle breeding in winter. Different nationalities live there. Low standard of living is observed in all these villages, the population does not know adequate agricultural and livestock technologies. In addition, they have a low developed infrastructure, problems with drinking and irrigation water, like typically in Naiman and Ylai Talaa, there is no access to drinking water, people rely instead on irrigation water from irrigation channels which is not safe and causes infectious diseases among children.

These communities experience low income-generating opportunities due to small land-supply, poor quality agricultural inputs, disturbed market-supply chains and limited market access. There are also difficulties with financial resources in the villages: at the beginning of field works, many villagers cannot find funds for purchasing necessary materials, seeds, fertilizers and fuel. They cannot get loans in big crediting agencies and institutions because they require a guarantee. These socioeconomic challenges are causing tension in the communities, in particular where competition over scarce resources is taking place or where market power is concentrated with a small group or monopolised.

Moreover, they are border villages with neglected infrastructure. There is a big migration flow because of the absence of income generating activities in these villages. As a result, fieldworks, animal care, children upbringing, all household chores fall on the shoulders of women.

Many communities are under the influence of radicalised Islam which decreases not only living standards, knowledge, but also the status of women in the family and society.

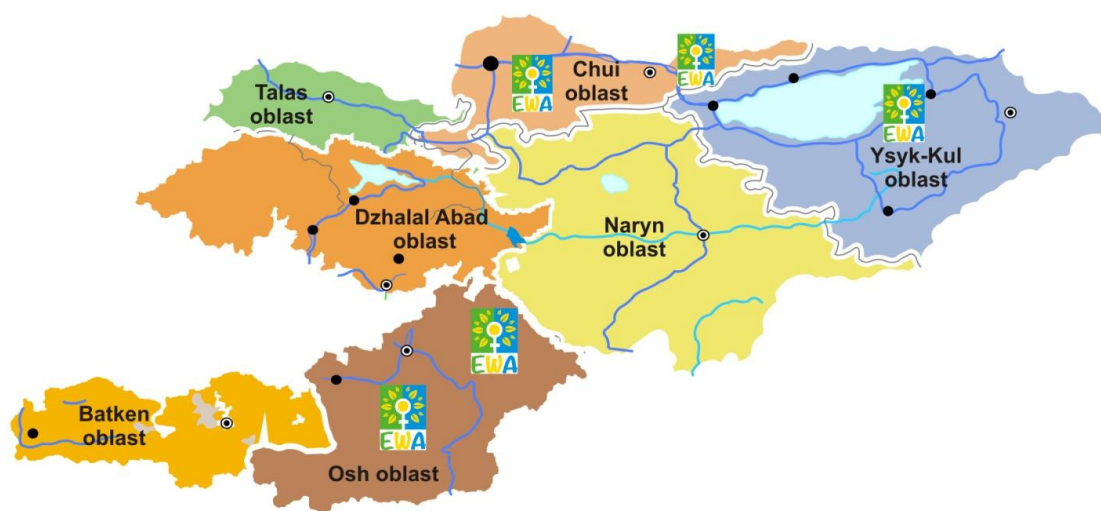


Figure 1: Map of Kyrgyzstan with the targeted project areas

2. Methodology

This research consists of qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was obtained via questionnaires. Qualitative data was obtained via a combination of community level focus group discussions as well as individual, semi-structured, informal interviews.

WECF developed the methodology for qualitative and quantitative livelihood analysis and the local partners ALGA, CAAW and MehrShavkat carried out the survey and FGD according to the WECF guidance.

Table 1: Overview of the methods and samples

Partner	ALGA	CAAW	MehrShavkat	Total
Quantitative Data				
Questionnaire	93 respondents from the following villages: Chui oblast: Don Aryk, Krasnaya Rechka, Novopokrovka, Pervomaiskoe, Romanovka and Shopokov Issyk Kul oblast: Bokonbaevo	65 respondents were interviewed in Nayman (Nookat rayon) and YilayTala (Karakulja rayon), all Osh oblast	24 respondents in the village Jarkyshak and Say, Osh oblast	182 respondents (65% women) Age between 18-83, in average 42
Qualitative Data				
FGD on gender and livelihood	3 FGD in Ak Olon, Sokuluk and Nurmambet villages		3 FGD in Birlik, Gulbahor, and Chek-Abaad	215 participants (more than 65% were women)
FGD on agriculture	1 FGD in Kalygyl village		3 FGD in Birlik, Gulbahor, and Chek-Abaad	
FGD on WASH	1 FGD in Internationalnoe village	2 FGD in Ylai-Tala and Nayman villages		



Baseline Survey in Aravan, Osh

2.1 Questionnaire

The quantitative research consisted of surveys that were carried out in 11 villages (Bokonbaevo, Don Aryk, Novopokroka, Pervomaiskoe Village, Krasnaya Rechka, Romanovka, Shopokov, Say, YilayTala, Jaryshak, Nayman). The respondents were randomly selected and sometimes chosen also from villages nearby, at least 24 respondents in each village were asked to fill in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained 36 questions: 12 about the socio economic situation, 7 about food security, 6 about water, 4 about sanitation, 3 about hygiene and 4 questions on energy (energy was not assessed in this study as the focus was chosen to lie on the other issues).

2.2. Focus Group Discussions

A focus group is a small group led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. Focus groups are structured around a set of predetermined questions. A focus group discussion (FGD) aims to be more than a question-answer interaction and more meaningful quantitative data. The idea is that group members discuss the topic among themselves, with guidance from the facilitator in an open and frank atmosphere. The group contained between 6- 12 people and included both men and women of different age groups. It is the role of the facilitator to make sure that all group members can give their views and that no one is left out. The purpose is to obtain in-depth information which complements the quantitative data of the questionnaire.

Different FGD were conducted by the partners with the following topics: gender and livelihood, agriculture, and WASH.

There were different samples of people participating in the questionnaire and the FGD. In table 1 there is an overview which partner carried out how many FGD in which villages.

The local partners used the predetermined questions and used their own methods to run the FGD. ALGA's FGD were conducted in separated and joint groups: some questions were discussed apart, but results of discussion were presented in joint groups. This gave participants a sense of neutrality, which was important in sharing and discussions. CAAW guided the participants through a series of practical interactive exercises on gender stereotypes within the FGD to explore gender concepts and cross check their understanding of the concepts of sex, gender, gender equity, gender equality, gender relations and gender roles through games and quizzes.



Women in Issyk Kul taking part in the FGD

3. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted in Kyrgyzstan by ALGA, CAAW, MehrShavkat and WECF. The findings are divided into the categories: gender, income generation, agriculture, and which factors villagers perceive as indicators of improved livelihood.

3.1 Population Characteristics

Some demographic data from the questionnaire (population sample 182) are summarised in the table below:

Table 2: Demographics in the villages

	Size of the household	Number of Girls	Number of boys	Age oldest child	Age youngest child	Age of participant
Average	5.0	1.7	1.9	18.1	9.6	41.6
Minimum	1	0	1	1	1	18
Maximum	9	4	6	41*	30*	83

* These figures do not match with common understanding what a child is

The table above contains the average, minimum, and maximum information regarding household size, the sex of children, age ranges of children, and ages of participants. The age ranges of children are between one and forty-one.

Six individuals are divorced, 147 are married, six are separated, five are single, and fourteen are widowed. All of the separated individuals are female. Two of the single individuals are female, and four are male. Of the fourteen individuals who have a deceased spouse, two are male and twelve are female. The marital status of four individuals (one male, three females) is unavailable.

The breakdown of family sizes (including one or both living spouses and children) is visible in the table below:

Table 3: family size

Family size	Quantity of families
1	7
2	10
3	15
4	41
5	42
6	41
7	14
8	9
9	3
Total: 182	Average: 5

The average family size is five. The most common family size is five family members, and the least common is nine members.

Out of the 182 respondents, the degree of education reached is available for 177 of them, most of them have reached secondary education. 38% and 10% responded that they have a higher and university education, respectively. Only 11% have primary or less education or have given no reply.

Thus, the interviewed population has various demographic backgrounds that contribute to a diverse population of individuals.

3.2 Gender and decision making

3.2.1 Gender and decision making at household level

Quantitative data demonstrate that husbands tend to be the decision makers regarding agricultural decisions like crop production, who sells products, and also who works outside the home. On purchase of food and medical care, the women are deciding majorly in the households. The findings regarding gender and decision making are summarized in the table below.

Table 5: Gender and decision making

Decision Maker	Who takes the decision about crop production in agricultural field	If you have a surplus, who sells the products	Who decides on purchases of food for the household	Who decides on purchases of furniture and tools within the house	Who decides on the education of the children	Who takes the decision in your family on medical care	Who decides on participation in public activities	Who decides on taking work outside the house
Both	24%	16%	30%	48%	45%	27%	27%	26%
Father in Law				1%				
Husband	59%	55%	27%	26%	24%	22%	41%	60%
Parents	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	6%	1%	2%
Wife	12%	26%	40%	22%	29%	45%	31%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Both husbands and wives make decisions regarding the purchase of furniture for the household in 48% of cases, and both make decisions regarding the education of children in 45%. However, no single category contains both partners as decision makers as a majority.

Underlined by the FGD is that the men tend to make decisions regarding labour division, decisions how to use available resources, decisions related what to grow in the fields, and what cattle to breed; they answered that women tend to make decisions regarding managing the home. Women answered that they make decisions related to family well-being. It was said that “in almost all families, men are decision makers. Women do not have any freedom, they even have to ask permission to go to somewhere, to buy something.”

When asked what men and women would like to see differently regarding decision making, men tend to respond by saying “Nothing, every family should decide by themselves how to live and what rules to have in the family.” Another male respondent explained that women are “wasteful, [and]... should be more economical.” Some participants said that men and women should better complement each other to improve the welfare of their families and the community.

Women state that they have high responsibilities, and would like to get more help from their husbands. A female respondent explains that, “it would be great if men could change their attitude towards women and their role in the family towards a more supportive behaviour to women.” The women request from men to take more responsibilities and to have permanent work with stable salaries. The women also want to have control over the household budget because they are responsible for household care.

3.2.2 Gender and decision making at community level

Men tend to have responsible positions within the communities. For example, only 14% of local deputies are women. It means that problems related to women's spheres are not taken into account. This was underlined by women in Chui oblast who stated that women's problems are neglected within local politics as men dominate in their position of power. Moreover, social projects, such as kindergartens also increase pressure on women, as they are responsible for caring for children, maintaining the home, as well as participating in income generating activities, including agriculture.

Furthermore, in Chui oblast, a female villager explains that realization of ownership rights ought to be implemented more thoroughly. She explains that "everything depends on family traditions and community cultures. Ownership is legalized just for men, women also have their plots of lands as family members, but official[ly] everything [is] registered [in] the name of men - even boys or teenagers."

Although opinions regarding gender and decision making vary a bit within the participating villages, men tend to be less aware of the problems women are facing; at the same time, women desire to obtain more assistance within the household, as well as obtaining a general improvement of their positions within the home and in terms of obtaining work and utilising their legal rights.

3.3 Agriculture

The quantitative results show that the overwhelming majority of households fund agricultural activities via personal savings, it means that families prefer to save money to fund own agriculture neither than take credits or loans, this is the case for both North and South. Two third of the respondents also fund agricultural activities via bank loans and another two third from remittances from family living abroad (usually it is labour migrants). In the South of Kyrgyzstan, remittances from family living abroad are used by almost all respondents.

Table 5: Sources of funding for agricultural activities

Oblast	Village	Bank	Family living abroad	Friends	Other	Personal funds/savings	Subsidies from NGOs
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	50%	13%		13%	50%	
Chui	Don Aryk	82%				86%	
Chui	Novopokroka	13%	6%		19%	94%	
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	22%		6%		89%	
Chui	Shopokov	40%			20%	40%	
Osh	Say		54%			100%	
Osh	YilayTala		96%			100%	
Osh	Jarkyshak		42%	38%		92%	33%
Osh	Nayman	8%	8%			83%	

Coming out from the FGD: the most promising crops to grow in the Issyk Kul oblast, have been identified as wheat, barley, clovers, and apricots. In Kalgyl (Chui oblast), some of the most promising agricultural products are: wheat, barley, strawberries, potatoes, corn, clovers, beet, vegetables, milk, meat and eggs. In Chui oblast, villagers explain that if farmers were able to carry out the circle of growing, harvesting, processing and marketing of prepared products, then this could be a promising form of income generation. Furthermore, processing milk, cattle breeding (for meat, as well as usage of furs), and other processing, such as sale of processed eggs, vegetables, and fruits have been identified as potential income generating activities by villagers.

In the South: In the villages Gulbahor, Chek-Abad and Birlik, it was acknowledged that farmers cooperate with one another within the realm of agriculture in order to enhance revenue. They participate in joint sales, exchange information with each other, and knowledge sharing. Villagers here sell products together, exchange agricultural products, give a loan to others, pass on technique, and participate in knowledge sharing.

Significant hindrances for income generation from agricultural activities are lacking resources. The number of mentioned barriers is found in the table.

Table 6: Barriers in agriculture mentioned in the FGD

Oblast	Issyk Kul	Chui		Osh	
Village/Rayon	Ak Olon	Sokuluk	Kalygyl	Chek-Abad	Birlik
Barriers					
Poor quality seeds		x	x	x	x
High cost of fertilizers	x		x	x	x
Lack of irrigation water	x	x	x	x	x
Lack of machinery/technology	x	x	x	x	x
Gasoline		x	x	x	
High cost of seeds	x		x	x	
Low purchasing prices	x		x		
Lack of drinking water for cattle	x	x			
Lack of financial resources		x	x		
Lack of pastures	x		x		
Absence of methods to improve cattle breeding (for example, no artificial insemination services).	x		x		
Absence of veterinary services	x		x		
Difficulties in marketing	x	x			
Disease of cattle			x		
High price for hired labour			x		
High price for shepherd services			x		
High price of feed/hay			x		
Lack harvest storage/transportation			x		
Lack of cooperation amongst farmers			x		
Dependence on climate for growth	x				
Lack of standardized techniques/norms		x			
Poor fodder	x				
Poor quality roads				x	
Poor quality soil/soil degradation	x				
Blackouts				x	
Lack of assistance from government					x

For example, in Issyk Kul oblast, the climate is dry, and there are problems with provision of irrigation water. Natural water sources are limited. Shortages of irrigation water have severe consequences for farmers in all villages. The result is that soil degradation increases, conflicts amongst farmers increase due to competition for water. Furthermore, this contributes to low harvest, which in turn leads poverty, and food crises. In some of the villages, soil is sandy, and not favourable to agriculture.

In all villages lack of irrigation water and lack of machinery and agricultural technology are cited. Farmers lack access to equipment, storage facilities, and fertiliser. Because farmers lack storage and processing facilities, they have to sell their products to resellers, and at a price that is favourable for resellers because the alternative (losing the harvest) is even worse. This is for example the case for the apricot harvest in Issyk Kul. Resellers purchase products because villagers lack transportation to sell their products directly to end users. There is also a low quantity of competition amongst resellers or companies that purchase farmers' harvests and agricultural products. Furthermore, there are fixed low market prices that prevent farmers from gaining sufficient revenue. Because roads tend to be in poor condition, farmers also lack the resources to bring their products to be sold directly (Chui region).

It was mentioned that more credits should be available to the villagers, preferably at a 7% interest rate.

Another problem mentioned in Chui is the lack of cooperation between wealthy and poor farmers. This is because the wealthy are perceived as poor and lazy by the poor farmers, and the poor farmers do not want to be dependent on the wealthy villagers/farmers.

What is more, there is a general lack of knowledge. In Kalygyl (Chui oblast), several areas where this is lacking includes: knowledge about plant protection products and lack of advice regarding agriculture and credit issues. Furthermore, villagers identified the following points as items about which they lack sufficient knowledge:

1. Information on agriculture specifics in Chui oblast (best cultures for the region, types of cultures, etc).
2. Information on agricultural materials.
3. Forecast for prices for agricultural harvest.
4. Prices for agricultural inputs (seeds, fuel, fertilizers, etc.)
5. Information about companies that sell chemicals, fertilizers, seeds (agricultural shops that are certified and guarantee quality).
6. Information about processing technologies.
7. Information on cattle breeding and veterinary services.
8. Provision of agricultural consultations and training.
9. Information about resellers involved in marketing of agricultural products

In Ak Olon (Issyk Kul oblast), there is a lack of knowledge regarding methods of improving cattle breeding, such as artificial insemination services.

Aside from villagers lacking sufficient knowledge about various methods, it was discussed in the FGD in Osh oblast that they also feel a lack of support from the state. Villagers participating in agricultural activities feel that their needs are neglected by the government on both local and national levels. Villagers are also unaware of various subsidies for which they could qualify.

3.4 Income generation

Households in the participating villages have multiple forms of income generation, ranging from agricultural activities to participating in tourism. This is because one income from any given activity is insufficient to maintain a basic living standard. The table below shows that more than 50% of the households have more than one income, some even four incomes.

Table 8: Number of sources of income in a family

Oblast	Village	1 source of income	2 sources of income	3 sources of income	4 sources of income
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	13%	63%	12%	12%
Chui	Don Aryk	14%	33%	38%	14%
Chui	Novopokrovka	29%	29%	33%	10%
Chui	Pervomaiskoe	100%			
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	33%	48%	19%	
Chui	Romanovka	100%			
Chui	Shopokov	71%	29%		
Chui	Say	39%	33%	22%	6%
Osh	YilayTala	36%	46%	18%	
Osh	Jarkyshak	4%	54%	25%	17%
Osh	Nayman	56%	44%		

The majority of all villagers have between one and two salaries, with minimal differences between North and South of Kyrgyzstan. However, more households in the North have four salaries.

As a result of difficulties of obtaining work and poor salaries, many individuals seek work outside of the districts where they live. Overall, 20% of respondents have family members working outside of the district.

The most common forms of income generating activities in descending order are: animal breeding, a salary, crop production and pension. One family from YlaiTala participates in hunting and one participant also from YlaiTala works as a lender. One family from Nayman participates in masonry as a form of income generation. All other forms of income generation include more than one household. Some residents from all villages have employment from which they receive a salary. Tourism and trade take place only in the North.

Villagers also have various sources of funding for their income generating activities, here excluding agricultural activities (was discussed in the agricultural chapter). In the North, income generating activities are largely funded via personal savings and remittances. In the South, the main source of funding tends to come from personal funds and savings.

In both the North and South, a significant portion of villagers have access to credit via micro-finance institutions. In the North, a large portion of respondents also have access to bank loans. In the South, access to bank loans is less common, but subsidies from NGOs are more frequently accessible.

28 respondents say that credits are not available for them. Some reasons for this are that villagers reside too far away from a loan source, they fear being unable to repay the loan, two families cite problems with documentation; the loan policy is also noted as a problem, alongside high interest rates, and insufficient income. 63% of participants do not have any credit at the moment. The remaining 37 % that do have credit, have interest rates that vary from zero % to 50%. The most common interest rate is 7%, and second most common is 24 %. Families take a microcredit for various reasons, including: businesses, purchasing clothing, building a home, purchasing livestock, purchasing agricultural inputs, equipment, health, education, and purchasing coal for the winter.

Main challenges of income generation were mentioned during the FGD: Unemployment amongst youth is a significant problem in the South of Kyrgyzstan. As a result, young people leave to neighbouring states, but do not earn a sufficient income in order to help their families. Another result is that many turn to alcohol or thievery. Frequently, rural girls are forced into early marriage, are kidnapped, or may be sold into slavery. These problems are in part a consequence of poverty.

In the Issyk Kul oblast, it was emphasized that participation in various kinds of income generating activities is insufficient and that it is crucial to improve the quality of labour security and working conditions. Also, many labour migrants suffer from a violation of their rights.

What is more, the quantity of social welfare is minimal. Women underlined that creation of a kindergarten in the village would create more opportunities for them; this is because currently, women have a double burden with home and public (or salary) work, but the level of income is very low.

In Kalygyl (Chui oblast), there is a higher rate of employment of women in comparison to men because men tend to go abroad for seasonal work. However, women tend to earn less than men.

3.5 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

3.5.1 Access to Water

Villagers have access to various sources of water for their households. These are summarized in the table below.

Table 8: Replies to the question: "Which water source do you use in your household?"

Oblast	Village	Centralised piped water	Public Street Tap	Bore Hole	Dug well	River or irrigation water	Water delivered by truck	Other
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	75%	25%					
Chui	Don Aryk	19%	76%				5%	
Chui	Novopokroka	100%		30%	15%	5%		
Chui	Pervomaiskoe	100%						
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	85%	5%	20%				
Chui	Romanovka			100%				
Chui	Shopokov	65%		35%				
Osh	Say		79%			42%		
Osh	YilayTala	4%	96%			4%		
Osh	Jarkyshak	17%	54%			33%		
Osh	Nayman	16%	79%			68%		5%

Please note: there can be more than one answer per respondent so that the sum can be more than 100%

In the North of Kyrgyzstan, a significant portion of villagers have centralised piped water. In the South of Kyrgyzstan, public street taps, irrigation water, and centralised piped water are the most common sources of water.

Quantitative data also demonstrates that a minority of households have twenty four hour a day access to running water in their homes (33% of households). The table summarizes villagers' access to water.

When water is available, pressure is sometimes low. One family in Say, not included, explains that even though they should have water at home, they do not get enough due to low water pressure.

Table 9: Replies to the question: “How reliable is the water supply in your house?”

Oblast	Village	24 hours/day	Two times per day more than five hours	Two times per day up to five hours	One time a day, less than two hours	No water at home	Do not know
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	75%				25%	
Chui	Don Aryk	25%				60%	15%
Chui	Novopokroka	100%					
Chui	Pervomaiskoe	100%					
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	44%		39%			17%
Chui	Romanovka					100%	
Chui	Shopokov	71%	6%	6%		18%	
Osh	Say			75%	25%		
Osh	YilayTala			100%			
Osh	Jarkyshak			100%			
Osh	Nayman					63%	38%

Throughout the country, the time spent for fetching water varies significantly. In the North, many villagers do not need to fetch water as they have it in the home; in the South, most villagers spend less than fifteen minutes fetching water.

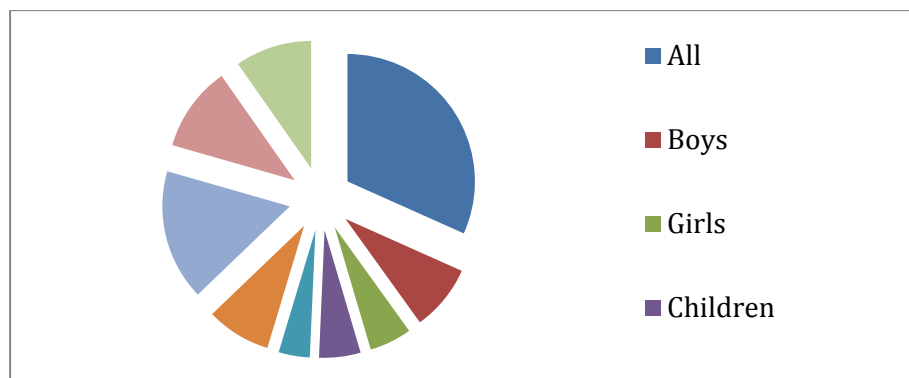
Yilay Talaa (Osh oblast) has the largest quantity of households with access to water 15 minutes to one hour away from their homes.



Fetching water at the stand pipe is the task of all family members

Who is fetching water in the families, it is not typically one person but they have a variety of individuals go to fetch water, as seen in the graph.

Figure 2: Replies to the question: “Who fetches the water in your family?”



What came out of the FGD is that often water is unavailable to villagers when electricity is cut off as water pumps are powered by electricity. During winter months, water standing pipes sometimes freeze and water leaks. This results in even more shortages. Because of all of these problems, villagers have to seek water from neighbouring villages or collect water from aryks (irrigation channels). Small, dirty ponds tend to form around standing pipes due to leaking. In the Ak Olon village in particular, a water pipe has broken, leaving three villages without access to water at the collection station.

Water shortages are also rooted in man-made problems. In the Chui oblast, villagers explain that corruption is a hindrance to obtaining water. Water distribution is corrupt because a particular individual responsible to doing so gives water to friends and family. Aside from this, the local CDWUU is ineffective. Furthermore, water is utilised ineffectively by farmers and competition for water all contribute to general shortages in water supply, in particular for irrigation.



Yurt with hand wash facility

3.5.2 Water Quality

A problem for villagers in the South and in the North is inadequate water quality; in many cases villagers are not aware of whether their water is tested. But many are sceptical about their quality as there is a lack of operation and maintenance of the distribution systems.

In both North and South, the situation is similar, water quality is either not tested or villagers are not aware of whether it is tested. In total, in 45% of villagers are not aware of whether their water quality is tested. In 11% of cases, water quality is controlled at least once per year, and it is not controlled in 34%.

The quantitative research showed that only 28% of the respondents are fully satisfied with their water quality, see Table 10. In the North the situation is better as the majority of villagers are either fully satisfied or satisfied with their water while desiring improvements, only Don Aryk is an exception. In the South of Kyrgyzstan, villagers' opinions are more divers, ranging from fully satisfied to fully unsatisfied.

Table 10: Replies to the question: "To what extend are you satisfied with the quality of the water?"

Oblast	Village	Fully satisfied	Satisfied but improvements should be made	Not satisfied	Fully unsatisfied	Do not know
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	25%	75%			
Chui	Don Aryk		5%	11%	84%	
Chui	Novopokroka	33%	29%			38%
Chui	Pervomaiskoe	100%				
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	30%	55%	10%		5%
Chui	Romanovka		100%			
Chui	Shopokov	53%	47%			
Osh	Say	22%	28%	11%		39%
Osh	YilayTala	56%	40%	4%		
Osh	Jarkyshak	14%	43%	33%	10%	
Osh	Nayman	6%	56%	22%	17%	

The FGD revealed that villagers from the Chui oblast and Osh oblast have access to poor quality drinking water. For instance, some residents in the Chui oblast found red and yellow worms in drinking water. The poor water quality is explained by extremely old pipes that are utilised for water distribution, which also contain various parasites. In Kalygyl (Issyk Kul oblast), pipes have not been maintained since Soviet times. While sanitary tests are performed on said water at water collection stations, this only takes place one time per year, which is insufficient to accurately and consistently analyse water quality.

In the Nookat rayon (Osh oblast), villagers identified lack of clean drinking water as a significant problem. According to the villagers, the company responsible for providing the villagers with drinking water is failing to do so. Because of the problems with drinking water, women and girls walk two kilometres to gather safe water from the local river.

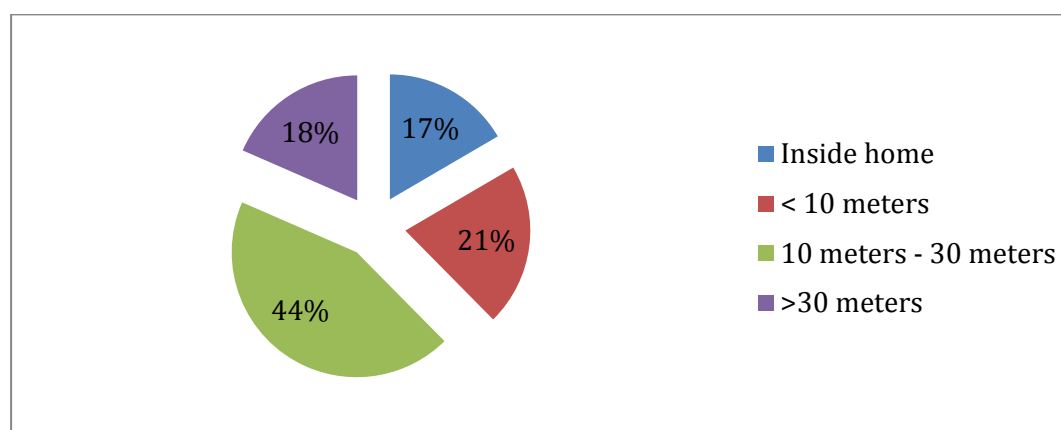
3.5.3 Sanitation

In the villages, the majority of the villagers use pit latrines (79%). The quantitative data is summarised in Table 11. The pit latrines or ventilated improved pit latrines (VIP) are usually constructed outside while the flush toilets are mostly indoor. In the Southern villages, no respondent is equipped with a flush toilet but in the Northern villages there are a few households with flush toilets. One household in Bokonbaeva is equipped with a urine diverting dry toilet (UDDT).

Table 11: Replies to the question: "What type of toilet have you got at home?"

Oblast	Village	Flush toilet with septic tank	Flush toilet with sewerage	Flush toilet without sewerage	Pit Latrine	UDDT	VIP
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	25%			63%	13%	
Chui	Don Aryk				86%		14%
Chui	Novopokroka	15%	5%		70%		10%
Chui	Pervomaiskoe				100%		
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka				90%		10%
Chui	Romanovka				100%		
Chui	Shopokov	12%	29%		53%		6%
Osh	Say				95%		5%
Osh	YlaiTala				100%		
Osh	Jarkyshak			29%	71%		
Osh	Nayman				61%		39%

Figure 3: Replies to the question: "How far is your toilet from your house?"



The majority of all households have a latrine that is between ten and thirty meters from their homes. Only 5% of participants have toilets inside the home; these 5% are the same homes that also have flush toilets. 25 % of households have toilets that are more than thirty meters from their homes. Results are similar in both the North and South of the country.

Table 13: Replies to the question: "Are you satisfied with your toilet at home?"

Oblast	Village	Fully Satisfied	Satisfied with comments	Not Satisfied	Fully unsatisfied	Do not know
Issyk Kul	Bokonbaevo	38%		50%	13%	
Chui	Don Aryk	5%	14%	76%	5%	
Chui	Novopokroka	20%	10%	35%	25%	10%
Chui	Pervomaiskoe		100%			
Chui	Krasnaya Rechka	40%	25%	20%	15%	
Chui	Romanovka		100%			
Chui	Shopokov	76%	6%	6%	12%	
Osh	Say	11%	17%	67%		6%
Osh	YlaiTalaa	27%	73%			
Osh	Jarkyshak	4%	58%	33%	4%	
Osh	Nayman		11%	42%	47%	

22% of villagers are fully satisfied with their toilets, and 29 % are satisfied but have aspects they would like to improve. In both the North and the South, households in each village were satisfied, but had points they would like to improve with regards to their toilets. 73% of villagers said that they would take out a micro credit loan with a small interest rate in order to construct an Ecosan or UDDT¹ to improve their sanitation condition.

During the FGD it was mentioned that those who have pit latrines lack ventilation, light, and hand washing facilities. Pit latrines are utilised until they are filled, at which point they are covered with sand, and constructed a new in another location. The indoor flush toilets had been usually constructed during the Soviet time; the canalization system has been deteriorated so that wastewater is discharged uncontrolled in the village. Both systems are not well appreciated as they lack adequate hygiene and public health protection. In some villages, participants of the FGD also complained about unhygienic school sanitation facilities.



Girl in front of an Ecosan toilet

¹ An ecosan or a UDDT is a modern dry toilet, more info see here: <http://www.wecf.eu/download/2013/June/HOMECOMFORTstudy.pdf>

3.5.4 Hygiene

The majority of villagers in both the North and South of Kyrgyzstan do not have a permanent hand washing facility. More specifically, a total of 82 % of villagers do not have said facility. Of those that do have (18%), there are times when it is not available. 57 % of the respondents lack a shower or banya. 25% do have a banya, similar figures for the North and the South. 9% have a shower mostly located in the North. A small group of villagers in the South do have showers; those that do are all located in Yilay Talaa. 10% have both.

Hygiene problems for girls and women

Sanitation is of particular concern for women and girls during menstruation. Some girls and women use sanitary pads during menstruation, but the majority tends to utilise leftover fabric from sewing shops due to the high costs of the pads. Some girls say that they have problems in purchasing sanitary pads either as they cannot buy them in the villages or they are unaffordable for them due to low family income.

During a FGD, women explain that there is insufficient knowledge regarding menstruation, and reproductive health for girls. Women also explain that none of the toilets in the village offer sufficient privacy during menstruation.

Schools lack proper toilets for girls during menstruation. Local authorities do not care of the inadequate school sanitation situation.

In the FGD, the villagers in Osh oblast are well aware of the importance of hand washing after using the toilet and prior to cooking. They know that intestinal diseases may spread due to unsanitary conditions. But villagers lack indoor hand washing facilities and have to wash hands in the street. These same villagers also explain that they would like to have a water heater in the home to utilise clean, warm water in the house.

In some villages trash collection systems are lacking which is considered as big sanitary problem. Villagers dig trash pits at the end of kitchen gardens or utilise pit latrines for garbage.



Girls in a rural school

4. Conclusions

The results demonstrate that villages in Northern and Southern Kyrgyzstan have both similarities and differences in needs and problematic areas. General similarities are found with regards to the problems they are facing with gender equality and agriculture. At the same time, income generating activities vary between Northern and Southern villages. Furthermore, villagers in the North have better WASH conditions than those in the South.

Qualitative data reveal that opinions regarding gender and decision making vary in the villages. Men tend to be less aware of women's desire to improve their situations and to receive assistance from their husbands and within the community. Another significant point is that problems concerning women tend to be neglected within local politics as men tend to dominate positions of power. Quantitative data reveals that women do tend to be decision makers regarding the purchase of food, both husbands and wives make decisions regarding the purchase of furniture, and both make decisions regarding the education of children. But at the same time it was revealed that in many families women expected to have silent role for family care. For example in many families, especially in the South, women are responsible for manual and routine work in fields (usually the most difficult hand weeding), but all income from agriculture is concentrated in men's hands.

Findings regarding agriculture demonstrate that there are significant problems serving as barriers to income generation within this field of employment. In most villages, lack of irrigation water, machinery, agricultural technology, equipment, storage facilities, fertilizer and lack of knowledge are cited as the most significant problems. Because farmers lack storage facilities, they have to sell their products to resellers, and at a price that is favourable for resellers because the alternative (losing the harvest) would cause the farmer to lose more money. Villagers lack transportation, which prevents them from selling products directly to end users. Farmers also desire to obtain new skills, methodologies, and technologies in order to improve their agricultural techniques.

There is difference between women's involvement in agriculture in the North and South of the country. Thus, in the North of the country women are more responsible for kitchen gardens or fruit gardens nearby homes as men care for agricultural fields, in the South women are responsible for almost all field work. It can be explained by the fact that in the North plots of land given to families are big (up to 5 hectares per family) and in the South plots of land are small (up to 1 hectare), consequently majority of agricultural work are made by women's hands.

In all villages, animal breeding, crop production, monthly employment and pension are the most common forms of income generation. Some residents from all villages have employment from which they receive a salary. Tourism and trade take place only in the Northern villages. In the North, income generating activities are largely funded via personal savings and remittances. In the South, the main source of funding tends to come from personal funds and savings. Mainly personal funds and savings are collected in families, whose member in labour migration. The major destinations for labour migrants Kyrgyzstan are Russia, Kazakhstan and Bishkek. As well as searching for better income, younger women also migrate for educational reasons and to escape from traditions such as early marriage. But all migrants support their families financially and in families use this money for agricultural or income generating purposes.

In both the North and South, a significant portion of villagers have access to credit via micro-finance institutions. However, interest rates are often very high and thus unaffordable. In the North, a large portion of respondents also have credit to bank loans. In the South, access to subsidies from NGOs is more common.

The last major topic covered in this analysis is WASH. In the North of Kyrgyzstan, a significant portion of villagers have centralised piped water. In the South of Kyrgyzstan, public street taps, irrigation water, and centralised piped water are the most common sources of water. Centralised piped water is more commonly available in the North than in the South. However, even if centralised water is available, qualitative data demonstrates that this does not mean that water quality is appropriate for drinking, or that water pressure is significant enough to bring piped water into the home. This problem tends to be more prevalent in Southern villages than Northern ones. But rural women are much affected by lack of adequate WASH facilities hindering them from being engaged in other activities such as education and income generation.

The baseline research helped WECF partner organizations to find out urgent problems faced by rural women, discuss with them alternative solutions and women's needs in capacity building. Thus every partner organization developed individual activity plans to respond rural women's interests and widen opportunities to empower women in villages.

The following focus components have therefore selected to work on in Kyrgyzstan in the frame of the EWA programme:

On local level:

- Leadership training for women: rural women are trained on leadership in order to build capacity to fill in more responsible roles in the family and community
- Gender trainings for community members in order to raise awareness about gender inequalities and find solutions
- Agricultural support: capacity building on agricultural techniques, e.g. fruit processing, conservation, organise women farmer groups to support each other
- Income generation: supporting set up business plans, link to formal business for women
- Access to finance: micro credits for women at low interest rate and saving groups set up
- Training for food security and fruit conservation with simple technologies, e.g. solar drying, use of organic fertiliser instead of chemical fertiliser
- Improving WASH conditions: introduction of water and sanitation safety planning and mobilising youth and communities
- Capacity building for setting up women led community based drinking water users union (CDWUU)

On regional level:

- Leadership training for women NGOs, local authorities

On national level:

- Developing policy recommendations for improved WASH in rural areas
- Raising awareness and develop solutions to overcome gender inequalities
- Women professional expert group and women parliamentarian group set up



Exchange of experiences in the field

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