



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# NATIONAL GENDER PROFILE OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS - **TAJIKISTAN**

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT SERIES



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

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# National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods - Tajikistan

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Ankara, 2016

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## Preface

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This National Gender Profile for Tajikistan was written by Elisabeth Duban under the guidance of Dono Abdurazakova, Gender and Social Protection Specialist, and Giorgi Kvinikadze, Statistician, of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU). Sophia Kasymova, sociologist and gender expert, provided valuable support and information.

The report was prepared under the “Strengthening national capacities for production and analysis of sex-disaggregated data through the implementation of the FAO Gender and Agriculture Framework (GASF)” project, funded by the FAO / Turkey Partnership Programme (FTTP). The overall objectives of the project were to assist beneficiary countries in developing gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data sets on the agricultural and rural sector, to assess the current status of the rural population – both women and men – and to ensure evidence-based and informed policy-making processes.

Within the scope of this project, expert meetings and a workshop organized jointly by FAO and the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan were conducted in Dushanbe in 2015. The meetings included discussions on existing indicators and data sources that could be used to generate gender statistics, as well as critical data gaps relevant to gender and agriculture.

Special thanks are extended to participants of a validation workshop held in Dushanbe on 17-18 November 2015 who provided feedback on an earlier draft of the report. The recommendations made by the group of experts, both data producers and data users, were addressed as comprehensively as possible in the final draft.



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## Currency equivalents

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As of 1 April 2016

Currency Unit:		Somoni (TJS)
TJS 1.00	=	\$0.1271
\$1.00	=	TJS 7.87

## Acronyms

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AMFOT	Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FHH	female-headed household
FTTP	FAO / Turkey Partnership Programme
GASF	Gender and Agricultural Statistics Framework
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province
GBV	gender-based violence
MHH	male-headed household
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
PUA	pasture users association
REU	FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
RIKT	regional information advisory center
RRS	Regions of Republican Subordination
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TLSS	Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey
WUA	water users association



# I. Introduction

The Republic of Tajikistan (Tajikistan) is a mountainous country with a land area of 142 600 square kilometres and a population of 8.4 million people, almost three-quarters of whom live in rural areas (about 6.1 million people).<sup>1</sup> The large rural population is highly dependent on agriculture, as a form of employment and also for subsistence. Because only about 10 percent of the country's territory is suitable for cultivation, agricultural land, especially irrigated land, is a critical resource. As is typical in agrarian countries, Tajikistan was one of the poorest of the Soviet republics and today it has the lowest income among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was highly specialized in growing cotton, which precluded the development of other forms of agriculture, including food crops. After independence, Tajikistan suffered severe declines in agriculture, but reforms and restructuring have enabled the country to transition to a market economy with viable agricultural production. However, Tajikistan is also a food-deficit country that imports more than half of its consumption requirements.<sup>2</sup>

Fluctuations in global prices and a poorly developed transport infrastructure linking markets within the country mean that low-income and rural populations are particularly at risk of food insecurity.

The government of Tajikistan recognizes that food security and developing the agricultural sector are critical for strengthening the country's economy, as reflected in national strategies on poverty reduction and livelihoods improvement. National programmes pay particular attention to issues affecting the rural population, not only poverty but also access to key resources such as education, healthcare and entrepreneurship opportunities. The rural population, and agricultural labour, have become increasingly feminized in recent years, yet rural women have limited access to critical resources, agricultural inputs and opportunities.

The government also addresses the intersecting nature of gender equality and national development and takes a dual approach to improving the status of women. Gender concerns are mainstreamed into national socio-economic development strategies, with an understanding that women represent important untapped potential in Tajikistan. In parallel, the government has developed a specific national framework for the promotion of women, consisting of strategies and programmes dedicated to the most critical areas of gender disparity.

In the context of agriculture and rural livelihoods, there are several areas in which the goals of national development policy and state programmes aimed at women are harmonized. There are, however, also significant gaps where gender disparities are not adequately reflected in plans to improve rural livelihoods. One of the reasons for these gaps is a lack of clear data to aid in identifying barriers to gender equality more precisely, so that they can be reflected in state policy.

## A. Gender statistics in Tajikistan

Gender statistics are unique among data collections because they reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life. The term "gender statistics" refers to data with several important characteristics: (1) they are collected and presented disaggregated by sex; (2) the data reflect particular gender issues; (3) the data are based on concepts and definitions that reflect the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives; and (4) data collection tools and methods are used that take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may introduce gender bias.<sup>3</sup> Gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are the foundation of inclusive policy-making on rural development and agriculture because this type of data reveal critical disparities that would otherwise be overlooked.

When it declared independence in 1991, Tajikistan inherited the Soviet system of national statistics production that included data about men and women, but did not use a particularly gender-sensitive approach to data collection. Since independence, however, the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan<sup>4</sup> (the country's national statistics office - the NSO) has taken significant steps to build its internal capacity and develop its database of gender statistics. The NSO was already including gender indicators in

1 Agency on Statistics under President of the Republic of Tajikistan (TajStat). 2015f. Tajikistan in Figures. Dushanbe. p.9, p.25.

2 For example, in the 2012-2013 marketing year, food imports accounted for 58 percent of the country's domestic cereal requirements and 81 percent of overall food consumption. (Feed the Future FEEDBACK. 2014. Feed the Future Tajikistan Zone of Influence Baseline Report. Rockville, MD, Westat. p. 5.)

3 FAO. 2014a. E-learning course: Gender in Food and Nutrition Security and Policy and Legislation. Gender Statistics for Informing Policy and Legislation.

4 Note that in citations in this report, the Agency on Statistics Under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan is referred to by its abbreviation "TajStat".

some of its statistical reports and survey questionnaires, but in 1998 the agency conducted the first specialized household survey designed to gain information about the relative status of women and men. The publication of a statistical digest on the survey results was followed by the first Women and Men in the Republic of Tajikistan statistical compilation in 2002, based on census data from 2000. In addition to reporting on indicators under the Millennium Development Goals (including Goal 3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women), the NSO has disseminated the sex-disaggregated results of a range of household and labour surveys. The agency has published statistical digests on gender indicators in farming on two occasions (in 2007 and 2015) and these compile sex-disaggregated data from 2004 to the present.

In 2013, the NSO adopted a Program on the Development of Gender Statistics in Tajikistan for 2014-2015 that, among other priorities, gives particular attention to the capacity building of national and local specialists; improving the production, quality, and dissemination of gender statistics; developing district-level databases of gender indicators; and enhancing a dialogue with data users about their requirements for gender-sensitive information. However, the NSO has limited capacity to produce gender statistics for all indicators that would be relevant for the country. For instance, it does not have a dedicated gender unit but nominates a specialist statistician to coordinate on gender statistics with the various internal divisions. While training has been held for national office staff, statisticians in regional branches of the NSO have not benefitted to the same extent from training programmes on gender statistics. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics for 2012-2016 recognizes the need to improve awareness of gender-sensitive indicators and to increase the expertise of staff engaged in the development and production of gender statistics.<sup>5</sup> Several line ministries and state agencies also have independent statistical units that maintain administrative records and produce data that could be relevant to gender, agriculture and rural livelihoods, including, for example, the State Committee on Land Management and Geodesy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Such institutions, however, require further support to increase their overall capacity to collect and analyse data and dedicated training would also assist their statisticians to apply gender analysis to any sex-disaggregated data they collect.

The NSO is also a member of an inter-ministerial gender network<sup>6</sup> that has agreed to the following functions and actions: developing and monitoring gender indicators; delivering gender sensitivity training to staff; implementing relevant laws and monitoring state programmes on the advancement of women and gender equality; and formulating and implementing public sector programmes. Despite the existence of this national framework for gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of gender-sensitive data in policy-making has not become a standard practice across line ministries. In addition, statistics produced by other agencies or ministries, including any gender statistics, are often not made available to potential data users and are also poorly disseminated among government offices, including the NSO.

Existing statistics relevant to gender differences in rural life and in agriculture are not comprehensive and provide only a glimpse of some of the issues facing women and men (in health, education or employment). Data disaggregated by sex exist for a number of key indicators, but there is very limited further disaggregation, including by rural and urban locations. Thus, important gender disparities, and information about particularly disadvantaged groups of women and men, are often obscured. Demand for agriculture statistics among data users is especially high and the quality of the current data is perceived as very low.<sup>7</sup> During a validation workshop<sup>8</sup> held in Dushanbe to discuss a draft version of this report, gender experts called for the development of more specific indicators concerning the intersections of gender, agriculture and rural livelihoods, as well as specialized research methodologies, such as value chain analysis, that would provide clearer information about the roles of women and men and their differing opportunities to accessing key resources. Value chain analysis is particularly needed to improve the understanding of where women and men are most active in various forms of agricultural production, including crop production and animal husbandry, and also the extent to which they benefit from the processing, marketing and sale of such products.

<sup>5</sup> TajStat. 2011. National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. Multiyear integrated statistics program for 2012-2016. Dushanbe. p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> In 2008, the government entered into a tripartite agreement with the Committee for Women's and Family Affairs and UN Women to establish a network for gender mainstreaming across seven ministries and agencies. In addition to the State Statistics Agency, the government bodies involved are: The Ministry of Agriculture; the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources; the Agency for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography; and the National Association of Dekhan Farms (The Coalition of Public Associations "From de Jure Equality to de Facto Equality". 2009. The State Program "Basic Directions of State Policy to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001-2010": Progress Evaluation Based on Public Monitoring Results. Dushanbe. p. 9).

<sup>7</sup> In 2011, the NSO conducted a survey and focus groups with data users (TajStat, 2011, p. 44).

<sup>8</sup> See the following section, "Scope and methodology of the gender profile", for more information about the expert workshop.

## B. Scope and methodology of the gender profile

This national gender profile has been developed under a regional project to improve the production and analysis of sex-disaggregated data relevant to gender and agriculture. Therefore, the main task of this report is to compile quantitative data in order to shed light on gender disparities in rural settings and the status of rural women across a number of dimensions, with a focus on inequalities in agricultural employment. This report does not cover the breadth of issues that impact the lives of rural women, but it focuses on the topics that are most relevant to the FAO mandate. For example, the profile only provides limited information on important topics such as rural women's access to perinatal care or the lack of rural services for women who have experienced domestic violence.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, this national gender profile is a collection of data and information from diverse sources, with the aim of providing policy-makers, gender activists and researchers with a clearer picture of the types and degree of gender inequalities in rural Tajikistan.

The starting point for this profile was a review of the core set of 18 gender indicators pertaining to agriculture and rural areas that was developed by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to standardize data collection and comparison in the region.<sup>10</sup> Initial analysis revealed that in Tajikistan there are partial data for almost half of the indicators, and no data for ten of the indicators, making it difficult to use the core set as a template for this gender profile. Partial data refers to data that are either not disaggregated by sex, or are disaggregated only by sex of the household head, or not cross-tabulated (for example, by both sex and another variable). In drafting this report, therefore, the most recent and relevant official data sources were given priority, and the data were analysed as thoroughly as possible to shed light on the main gender inequalities in agriculture and concerning rural livelihoods.

Due to a lack of official statistics, qualitative studies and data collected by international development organizations and NGOs, through small-scale surveys, were also consulted. However, most of the data are not directly comparable because of variations in methodology, sample size, and the date and location of survey distribution. When information is combined in this gender profile, it is for the purposes of drawing general conclusions. Data sources are also discussed in more detail in the following section.

The methodology adopted for this research project also included a validation workshop, conducted in Dushanbe on 17-18 November 2015, during which experts commented on a draft version of the present report. The group of reviewers consisted of both data producers and data user stakeholders, such as statisticians from the NSO, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Committee on Women and Family Affairs, agriculture experts, gender experts from the civil society sector, and representatives of international development organizations and financial institutions that support projects dedicated to rural women. In addition to providing recommendations on the scope of the national gender profile, the participants offered a number of specific suggestions and insights. The information has been incorporated into the final version of the national gender profile.

## C. Overview of data sources

Producing gender statistics relevant to agriculture and rural livelihoods in Tajikistan is complicated by the fact that existing data sets are generally limited to data disaggregated by sex, by sex of the household head or by urban and rural location, but all three factors are seldom cross-tabulated. During the above-mentioned validation workshop, experts noted several other data sources that could potentially be used to generate gender statistics relevant to agriculture. However, such data sources may contain inaccuracies, have not been fully analysed, or are not made accessible to the public by the agency that produces them.

Household surveys, conducted regularly by the NSO in cooperation with international organizations, proved to be the most useful data sources for developing a picture of rural life in Tajikistan. Such surveys generally include data disaggregated by sex (or in some cases, sex of the head of household only) and also by rural and urban location. While data about female- and male-headed households can be considered proxy information to describe the circumstances of rural women and men, they are not as definitive as data collected about women or men as individuals (for example, women and men farmers and business owners).

<sup>9</sup> More comprehensive gender assessments for Tajikistan, such as those conducted by the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank, are useful resources.

<sup>10</sup> The Core Set of Gender Indicators in Agriculture can be accessed from the FAO website: <http://www.fao.org/europe/resources/e> [English] and <http://www.fao.org/europe/resources/ru/> [Russian].

There are two important, dedicated forms of data collection on agriculture: a special publication that includes indicators on dekhan farm production and the country's first agricultural census. The agricultural census, conducted in 2013, collected information about the sex of both managers of enterprises that produce agricultural products and heads of households, but to date, the data have not yet been analysed or published.<sup>11</sup>

In theory, official records could be used to generate data about women and men as landowners and farmers, but the data collection system requires improvement. The NSO notes that because the number and size of registered land plots changes frequently, "it is necessary to update the farm register every two years," and in order to be more comprehensive, the register should include, "farms and other auxiliary enterprises, forest enterprises, mezhhozes (associated farms), research institutes, auxiliary farms in the ministries, departments and other land users,"<sup>12</sup> which are presumably not registered at present. It is worth noting that the agriculture census assigned unique codes to 15 types of farming enterprises so more detailed data could become available in the future. The data sources that were consulted for this gender profile, as well as other potential sources, are listed below along with a brief summary of their limitations.

Table 1. Data Sources

Data source	Description
Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey (2007) <sup>13</sup>	Poverty data, characteristics of the rural population, and agricultural assets disaggregated by female- and male-headed households, rural / urban location.
Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012)	Data about characteristics of the rural population, maternal health, women's empowerment, disaggregated by sex and rural / urban location.
Gender Indicators in the Production Activities of Dekhan Farming for 2009-2014 (2015)	Data compiled by the State Committee on Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan.
Women and Men of the Republic of Tajikistan (2014)	Data compiled by the NSO every two years from existing databases, with a focus on MDG targets and social sectors (health, education, employment).
Agriculture Census of the Republic of Tajikistan	Census conducted in 2013, but data not yet analysed.
Single window system	A unified state register of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs (including farmers). Registration data is shared between the NSO, tax authorities and the social insurance fund.
State Committee on Land Management and Geodesy of the Republic of Tajikistan	Manages a cadastral system - a state registration of individual certificates for the right to use farmland.
Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources Management	Hypothetically, data about agricultural water resources (especially for dekhan farms) could be collected. <sup>14</sup>
Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan (AMFOT) records	Data on microcredit and loan recipients is disaggregated by sex, but not by rural / urban location or purpose of the loan (for example, farming).

<sup>11</sup> Information about the agricultural census is available from the TajStat website in the Tajik, Russian and English languages: <http://www.stat.tj/>.

<sup>12</sup> TajStat, 2011, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Note that data from the 2009 Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey are available through the World Bank, but that the data have not been processed or published by TajStat.

<sup>14</sup> The NSO notes that the inventory of water resources (a water cadastre) is largely incomplete and inaccurate due to various problems including a lack of qualified specialists, the large number of dekhan farms, outdated equipment and lack of software. Ibid. p. 39.

## II. Country overview

Tajikistan has four administrative divisions: Dushanbe (the capital), two provinces (Sughd and Khatlon), one autonomous region (Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province- GBAO) and the Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS). The country has 18 cities and towns, 57 villages and 370 rural administrations<sup>15</sup> (the jamoat is the third level of self-governance and an administrative division that consists of several villages or settlements).

Map. Administrative Divisions of Tajikistan



Source: United Nations Geospatial Information Section (available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/kyrgyzsta.pdf>)

In order to more fully assess the gender differences in the sectors of agriculture and rural development, it is useful to consider how Tajikistan fares generally in terms of gender equality and human development. The Gender Inequality Index (GII), a measure used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), indicates that Tajikistan experiences a loss of potential human development equivalent to 36 percent due to disparities between female and male achievements, empowerment and economic status (calculated as a GI value of 0.357 where zero indicates full equality and a value of 1.00 represents the highest level of inequalities).<sup>16</sup> The GI is based on indicators in reproductive health, literacy, political representation and labour market participation, but

it does not take into account other important dimensions such as the tendency for women to work in informal and unpaid labour, including agricultural work. The most recent GI values indicate that Tajikistan fares more poorly in some dimensions (notably maternal health) than the average for the European and Central Asian region combined, as well as for Kyrgyzstan and Turkey specifically (the two other countries included in this FAO / Turkey partnership project). In contrast, the average secondary education levels for both women and men are considerably higher than those found in the region as a whole, and the female labour force participation rate, while lower than that for males, is more positive than in the European and Central Asian region on average and for Kyrgyzstan and Turkey in particular (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Gender Inequality Index Values for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey (2014)

	2014 GI Value	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100 000 live births)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15-19)	Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)	Population with some secondary education (% ages 25 and over)		Labour force participation rate (% ages 15 and over)	
					F	M	F	M
Kyrgyzstan	0.353	75	29.3	23.3	94.5	96.8	56.0	79.5
Tajikistan	0.357	44	42.8	15.2	95.1	91.2	58.9	77.1
Turkey	0.359	20	30.9	14.4	39.0	60.0	29.4	70.8
Europe and Central Asia	0.300	28	30.8	19.0	70.8	80.6	45.6	70.0

Source: UNDP, 2015, Statistical Annex, Table 5: Gender Inequality Index. pp. 224-227.

15 TajStat. 2015f, p. 18.

16 UNDP. 2015. Human Development Report 2015, Work for Human Development. Statistical Annex, table 5: Gender Inequality Index. New York. p. 225.

The UNDP Human Development Report for 2015 is devoted to the theme of how work can enhance human development, and it notes that there are critical connections between education levels and employment in agriculture (globally, workers who lack technical skills are pushed into agricultural work).<sup>17</sup> UNDP also points out that while agriculture has declined in importance within economies around the world, the importance of agriculture to individual workers in terms of employment opportunities remains high. In all regions, the female share of the agricultural labour force has remained static or increased over the last 20 years due to a range of factors, including male migration to seek better employment.<sup>18</sup> In relation to Tajikistan, addressing gender imbalances in paid and unpaid work and women's exposure to vulnerable employment in agriculture are critical for sustainable development.

## A. Historical context

A detailed overview of Tajikistan's recent history is beyond the scope of this national gender profile, but a brief review of events that have had especially deep impacts on the country's rural population, on agriculture and on gender roles is included here.

In the early transition years, Tajikistan experienced a violent civil war which lasted for five years (1992-1997) and had devastating consequences for the country. The war resulted in terrible human and economic losses, and it has had a deep and lasting impact on social infrastructure and gender equality. Thousands of men were murdered or disappeared, almost a million people were displaced, and a large number of women were widowed. During the conflict, and continuing into the post-conflict period, women were subjected to harassment, degrading treatment and sexual violence. Tensions over control of agricultural land fuelled the civil war, and the conflict also damaged the agricultural sector, especially cotton production, which has been in decline since the mid-1990s. Destruction of property, the loss of livelihoods and lingering low level conflict forced many men to leave Tajikistan, and households headed by women were left behind. These women, who were without male relatives, the traditional breadwinners, had to take on many roles usually considered "male." Furthermore, problems which persist today, such as girls' early marriage and decreasing school enrolment rates, are partly attributed to lasting fears about girls' safety that arise from post-conflict trauma. The conflict years also contributed to a decline in social and municipal services and in overall living standards. While other former Soviet republics have also faced deteriorating infrastructure (such as water supply and sanitation systems) and the complexities of shifting to a market-oriented system (which has impacted on health and educational services) in the early transition years, Tajikistan had the additional burden of dealing with losses directly related to the war.

During the transition period, agricultural land that was once state and collective farmland was privatized and distributed to individuals. Farming was reorganized dramatically. While 1.5 percent of agricultural lands were devoted to private smallholder farming in 1996 (dekhan farming), this figure increased to 71 percent by 2014.<sup>19</sup> Vulnerable and disenfranchised groups did not benefit equally. As a study in one region noted, "members of the governing clans had helped themselves and their relatives during privatization of farm assets (equipment, inputs, cattle, and use of arable land and pastureland) and industrial assets."<sup>20</sup> Women were particularly disadvantaged by processes which, while not intended to exclude women, nevertheless had a discriminatory impact. For instance, one of the criteria for receiving land was the availability of male productive labour in the household, and "lack of manpower" was a reason for denying land applications. This practice had an exclusionary effect on female-headed households, as well as households with elderly members, without adult males or with people with disabilities, and, arguably, pushed such households further into poverty.<sup>21</sup> Women were also disadvantaged by gender blind practices, such as giving individual shares in former collective farms only to full-time members of the collective (excluding women on maternity leave and non-member workers) and to those with experience in farming and farm management; fewer women were able to meet the criteria than men.<sup>22</sup>

Against the backdrop of instability and structural changes to the economy that resulted in the collapse of many traditional labour markets, Tajikistan has become a country characterized by labour migration. The World Bank estimates that remittances account for 43 percent of the country's GDP,<sup>23</sup> making Tajikistan one of the most remittance dependant countries in the world. On average, the poorest rural and urban households finance, respectively, close to 80 percent and 50 percent of their yearly consumption through remittances.<sup>24</sup> Labour

17 Ibid. p. 64.

18 Ibid. p. 113.

19 TajStat. 2015c. Gender Indicators in Dekhan Farming. Dushanbe. p. 18. [in Russian].

20 Dudwick, N., Gomart, E., Marc, A. & Kuehst, K. 2003. When Things Fall Apart Qualitative Studies of Poverty in the Former Soviet Union. Washington, DC, World Bank. p. 63.

21 Ahmed, A. U., Vargas Hill, R., Smith, L. C., Wiesmann, D. M. & Frankenberger, T. 2007. The World's Most Deprived: Characteristics and Causes of Extreme Poverty and Hunger. Washington, DC, International Food Policy Research Institute. p. 68, p. 73.

22 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc. 2014. Tajikistan Agricultural Technology Commercialization Assessment. Washington, DC, USAID. p. 18.

23 World Bank Group. 2015. Tajikistan Partnership Program Snapshot. p. 1.

24 Danzer, A., Dietz, B. & Gatskova, K. 2013. Tajikistan Household Panel Survey: Migration, Remittances and the Labor Market. Regensburg, Institute

migration, both internally from rural areas to cities and externally (primarily to Russia and Kazakhstan), is a predominantly male phenomenon. Migration flows fluctuate with the economies of receiving countries and the season, but men consistently represent around 80 percent of labour migrants from Tajikistan. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, as of February 2016 there were 701 092 male migrants (81 percent) out of a total of 861 045 official Tajik migrants.<sup>25</sup> Male-dominated professions (in construction, for example) are the most in demand in receiving countries, but labour migration itself has also come to be perceived as “male work” in Tajikistan, and families seldom encourage women to migrate. Nevertheless, the number of female migrants has been increasing, with a significant rise after the 2008-2009 economic crisis.<sup>26</sup> Tajik women tend to migrate abroad following other family members, typically their husbands.

The impact of labour migration on men, women and their families is a nuanced and complex issue. Many men migrate “successfully” and contribute significantly to household well-being, but these men are also absent from their families and communities for long periods of time, and there is little evidence that they are able to return and (re)enter the local labour market with new skills. The economic downturn in Russia has also had an impact on the demand for migrant labour and the sectors where migrants work (mainly in construction), resulting in the return of many male migrants who tend not re-enter the agricultural sector. Labour migration can also have an informal and unregulated nature that offers little social protection to the migrant worker. Despite the difficulties that women face in the absence of their husbands (such as increased responsibilities for childcare and household management, which can include tending family farms and livestock), women are said to have a positive attitude to male migration.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, an unexpected phenomenon has arisen: men’s absence appears to have had little effect on improving women’s empowerment. Male migration has resulted in an increase in the number of female-headed households, because women who remain behind are required to take on non-traditional gender roles, including a large share of decision-making. However, there appears to be little correlation between this and increased agency in other areas of their lives, or in public life (this topic is discussed in more detail in a later section of this report). Women are also becoming de facto heads of the household when they have been abandoned by migrant husbands, and “abandoned wives” are considered to be some of the most economically and socially vulnerable women in the country.

### B. National policy context

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In the broader context of the transition to democracy and post-conflict rebuilding, Tajikistan has initiated a number of policy and structural reforms to improve the status of women. For example, the first National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women was adopted in 1998, and the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan was established in 1991. Since that time, the government has enacted legislation guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for women and men. It has also adopted successive national strategies (at present, the National Strategy for Enhancing the Role of Women sets policy until 2020) and state programmes to address specific areas of gender inequality (for example, on improving female access to education, entrepreneurship, land and leadership posts, in addition to one addressing domestic violence). National policy documents recognize that there is diversity among women in Tajikistan and that rural women occupy a disempowered position. For instance, the State Programme for the Education, Selection and Placement of Capable Women and Girls in Leadership Positions for 2007-2016 states that, “[g]ender inequality manifests itself most clearly in rural areas, and it is intensified by poor communications, lack of information, poor living conditions, rural women’s limited mobility, and other factors.” Likewise, the current national strategy for improving the role of women includes the strategic objective of ensuring that rural women have equal access to economic resources.

Of particular relevance to this national gender profile, the government and international donor community have devoted attention to improving women’s access to land and incorporating gender in agricultural reform. The Women’s Land Rights Project for 2003-2005 (implemented by UNIFEM, the government, civil society organizations and international development partners) initiated several important policy and legal changes. The State Programme to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001-2010 was amended, and a section on rural women’s access to land was introduced. In 2004, several discriminatory provisions in the Land Code were removed. The government adopted a new format for collecting data on women’s land rights, developed jointly by the State Committee on Land Management and Geodesy and the NSO. The State Land Committee has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the equal rights programme.

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for East and Southeast European Studies. p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Migrant. Ferghana.ru. “Russia: Number of New Arrivals from Central Asia Fell to 3.854 million.” 09 February 2016. (available at <http://migrant.ferghana.ru/tag/statistika>). (accessed March 2016). [in Russian].

<sup>26</sup> Kurbanov, S. 2013. Gender Shape of Labor Migration in the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe, TajStat. p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Parallel to the mechanisms mentioned above, that target areas in which women are disadvantaged, the government recognizes that gender is a cross-cutting issue that underpins sustainable economic growth. Gender is mainstreamed into structural reform programmes and strategies. For example, the Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2010-2012 included a specific section on the promotion of gender equality and addressed gender as a cross-cutting issue. Within targets related to food security and the development of the agricultural sector, programmes to enhance the capacity of women farmers (on dekhkan farms) were included, as well as more general measures to apply gender expertise to all state programmes, plans and strategies.<sup>28</sup> The National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan to 2015 identifies the promotion of gender equality as one of seven critical areas of social development, while also noting the gender issues inherent in other social sector fields, such as education, health care, social welfare and municipal services (including water supply and sanitation). One of the main barriers to equality is the significantly differential access to and control over resources, which perpetuates rural women's dependency on men. This dependency reduces women's potential "to contribute to agricultural growth and [...] makes them more vulnerable to poverty."<sup>29</sup> The Living Standards Improvement Strategy of Tajikistan for 2013-2015 reiterates priorities on strengthening gender equality, with particular attention to "supporting the development of rural women and families of labour migrants."<sup>30</sup> Of equal importance, the Programme for Reforming the Agriculture Sector of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2012-2020 aims to promote gender equity "at every step of the reform", because the "success of agriculture reform will depend to a large extent on how the potential of women is realized and their rights are exercised."<sup>31</sup> Particular attention will be given to equality in long-term land tenure, improving access to finance for farming, capacity building and mitigating the effects of climate change on particularly vulnerable groups, such as female-headed households.

Although Tajikistan has a solid legal and policy framework, gender experts within the country contend that implementation remains weak. Consequently, commitments to improving the status of women are often unrealized. In particular, rural women continue to face obstacles and limited opportunities compared with men, and to a lesser extent compared with women in urban areas<sup>32</sup>. These obstacles stem from factors such as underdeveloped infrastructure and resources in rural areas, the predominance of patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of female education, and women's lack of knowledge about their rights and how to protect them.<sup>33</sup>

## C. Demographic context

Tajikistan's population is concentrated in four regions, with only 2.6 percent of inhabitants living in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (GBAO), the largest and most mountainous region.<sup>34</sup> Although there has been steady population growth over the last decade, the distribution of the population between urban and rural areas has remained consistent: 73.5 percent of the total population lives in rural areas, with differing distributions by region as illustrated below.

Table 3. Rural Population by Region, in Figures and by Distribution (2015)

	Total rural population	Share of rural population (% of total)
Tajikistan	6 136 500	73.5
Dushanbe	--	--
Sughd	1 848 300	75.3
Khatlon	2 436 300	82.0
GBAO	185 400	86.5
RRS	1 666 500	86.7

Source: TajStat, 2015d.

In Tajikistan, urbanization is not intense. According to UN data, the average annual urban population growth rate between 2010 and 2015 was 1.7 percent, compared with an average annual rural population growth rate

28 Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. 2010. Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2010-2012. Dushanbe.

29 Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. 2007. National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan to 2015, Section 7.7.1. Dushanbe. p. 43.

30 Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. 2013. Living Standards Improvement Strategy of Tajikistan for 2013-2015, Section 4.6.1. Dushanbe. p. 61.

31 Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. 2012. Program for Reforming the Agricultural Sector for the Republic of Tajikistan for 2012-2020, Section 3, para. 24. Dushanbe. p. 94.

32 UN CEDAW. Concluding observations to the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Tajikistan. 20 October 2013. (available at [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fTJK%2fCO%2f4-5&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fTJK%2fCO%2f4-5&Lang=en)).

33 The Coalition of Public Associations "From de Jure Equality to de Facto Equality." 2012. The Second Shadow Report on the Realization of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by Public Organizations of Tajikistan. Dushanbe. p. 52.

34 TajStat. 2015d. Population of the Republic of Tajikistan on January 1, 2015. Dushanbe. [in Russian].



of 1.4 percent.<sup>35</sup> However, internal migration from rural to urban areas is taking place. The fact that a significant number of urban residents have moved to cities fairly recently helps to explain why several household surveys indicate that problems typically associated with rural areas, such as girls' lower rates of school enrolment and adolescent marriage and pregnancy, are becoming more widespread in urban areas.

For the purposes of producing gender statistics, further disaggregation of data by urban and rural location is vital. There are important differences in living standards and ways of life between rural and urban areas in Tajikistan. The United Nations Statistics Division points out that as countries become increasingly urbanized, some of the distinctions between rural and urban populations can become blurred.<sup>36</sup> It is recommended that a range of additional measures are adopted alongside the traditional rural / urban dichotomy, including, population density, percentage of the economically active population employed in agriculture, the general availability of electricity and / or piped water in living quarters, and the ease of access to medical care, schools and recreation facilities.<sup>37,38</sup> For example, when analysing gender differences in agricultural employment in Tajikistan, or even the different farming activities that women and men undertake, it would be very useful to consider peri-urban areas as a special category. Urban and peri-urban farming is common in Tajikistan, and although small in scale, such activities are important means for households to improve their livelihoods and food security. Moreover, women play a central role in urban and peri-urban farming.

While there has been a very slight decrease in the ratio of women in the urban population, in the past few years, the proportion of women among the rural population has remained steady at around 49.5 percent.<sup>39</sup> However, due to the high rate of male labour migration, many rural locations have de facto populations that predominantly comprise women, children and the elderly.

Precise data about female-headed households (FHH) in Tajikistan are lacking. Some sources suggest that as a result of men being killed and displaced during the civil war approximately 25 000 women became widows,<sup>40</sup> many of whom also became heads of FHH. Other women remarried, returned to their families or continued to live with the families of their husbands. In 2000, it was estimated that 18 percent of all households were headed by women, accounting for around 155 000 households in total.<sup>41</sup> By 2012, 21 percent of households sampled in the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) were female-headed, and FHH were more common in urban areas (28.3 percent of households in urban areas were headed by women, compared with 18.3 percent in rural areas).<sup>42</sup> According to 2010 census data, there are just over 60 200 households consisting of single mothers with children in Tajikistan (about five percent of all households). When households of mothers, their children and one other adult family member are also included, the total rises to above 60 600 households.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that these figures may be underestimated because many rural women who are de facto heading households, due to abandonment or other reasons, prefer to report that they are married in order to avoid being stigmatised.

### Box 1. Definition: Rural Population

*There is no internationally agreed-upon definition of urban and rural areas due to the fact that national characteristics vary significantly. The classification of Tajikistan's territory as "urban" or "rural" is based on the law on territorial administration of the Republic of Tajikistan. In Tajikistan, locations are designated as "cities" and "urban-type settlements" using the following criteria: number of inhabitants, predominance of agriculture or number of non-agricultural workers and their families.<sup>38</sup>*

*When carrying out the population census, the NSO uses the following classifications: large cities (a population of 100 000 or more); big cities (a population from 40 000 to 100 000); medium-sized cities and towns (from 10 000 to 40 000) and small cities and towns (settlements) (less than 10 000 people). Cities, towns and "urban-type settlements" are classified as "urban areas," and all other settlements are defined as "rural areas."*

### Box 2. Definition: Female-Headed Household

*FAO makes a distinction between two types of female-headed households: de facto FHH are those in which an adult male partner is working away from the household but remains involved through remittances and other economic and social ties; de jure FHH are those which have no male partner, and include women who are widowed, divorced or have never been married.<sup>44</sup>*

*When conducting the population census, the NSO makes a distinction between households of single mothers and children (with no other adults) and households in which a mother and children live with another registered adult (usually her parent). In the first case, this is defined as a FHH. In the second case, this might be a FHH, but is not necessarily one. Furthermore, census respondents self-report marital status (which can be legally or informally married, divorced or widowed). By definition, single mothers from the category above who are household heads cannot be included in the category of "married."*

<sup>35</sup> UN Statistics Division data for Tajikistan (available at <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=TAJIKISTAN>).

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Statistics Division website (available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/densurbmethods.htm>) (accessed November 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, definition of "urban" (available at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/Defintion\\_of%20Urban.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/Defintion_of%20Urban.pdf)).

<sup>39</sup> TajStat. 2014b. Women and Men of the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe. p. 23. [in Russian]

<sup>40</sup> Kuvatova, A. 2001. Gender Issues in Tajikistan: Consequences and Impact of the Civil War. In F. Reysoo, Ed. Hommes Armés – Femmes Aguerries, pp. 127-136. Geneva, DDC / UNESCO / IUED, 250 p. (available at [http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/genre/shared/Genre\\_docs/2888\\_Actes2001/11-kuvatova.pdf](http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/genre/shared/Genre_docs/2888_Actes2001/11-kuvatova.pdf)).

<sup>41</sup> ADB. 2000. Women and Gender Relations in Tajikistan: Country Briefing Paper. Manila. P. 14, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> The DHS had a sample of 6 675 households. TajStat, Ministry of Health & Measure DHS / ICF International. 2013. Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012. Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and Calverton, Maryland. p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> TajStat, 2014b, pp. 8-9.

<sup>44</sup> FAO. 2011. The State of Food and Agriculture, Women in Agriculture, closing the gender gap for development. Rome. p. 23.

Families living in rural households are often multigenerational. The Soviet nuclear family model did not become a norm in rural Central Asia, and a common family model in rural areas of Tajikistan is three generations living together in a single household. According to 2010 census data for the country as a whole, around 40 percent of households would be considered nuclear families, and approximately 36 percent of households consist of multigenerational families in some form, typically two or more married couples with or without children, living with other relatives (usually an adult couple, their unmarried daughters and married sons with their wives and children).<sup>45</sup> This family structure is efficient for households that rely on agriculture. In extended families, the traditional household head is a male family member, and they are the key decision-makers for the family unit, which can limit the choices and opportunities of young female members of the household, such as unmarried daughters and young daughters-in-law, as well as those of younger males. At the same time, the widespread assumption that women are members of multigenerational families can have a discriminatory effect, for example, when women receive lower wages than men based on the presumption that they are merely supplementing the larger family budget.

## D. Human development context

Although not the focus of this national profile, women's and men's human capital, particularly health and educational attainment, plays a central role in their ability to access employment opportunities and higher paid work, and is ultimately the means of escaping poverty. Tajikistan exhibits some distinct gender patterns in terms of health and education indicators, but very few of these indicators are disaggregated by rural location. While such gender disparities require consideration in relation to rural development, additional research is needed to construct a more complete picture of the wellbeing of the rural population.

### Health

Average life expectancy differs by sex and also by residence. Women in rural areas have the longest life expectancy, and the gender gap is larger for the urban population. On average, men's life expectancy in Tajikistan is almost four years less than women's. While the gender gap is in line with that observed in the European and Central Asian region as a whole, the average life expectancies of both Tajik men and women are considerably lower than those in the region. Furthermore, population projections suggest that male life expectancy at birth will further decrease in the next decades and will "fall below the average of less developed regions" by 2045 to 2050.<sup>46</sup> The relatively small gender gap in life expectancy in Tajikistan is attributed to high maternal mortality rates, but also to low levels of alcohol consumption by adult males, both factors that tend to bring the average life expectancies of women and men closer to parity. The main causes of death for men and women are similar and include diseases of the circulatory or respiratory systems, cancers and heart disease. However, men are much more likely to die from accidents, poisoning or trauma (1 260 male mortalities compared with 316 female mortalities in 2013).<sup>47</sup>

Table 4. Female and Male Life Expectancy at Birth, by Location (in years, 2013)

Rural population		Urban population	
Female	Male	Female	Male
76.2	73.1	72.7	67.5

Source: TajStat, 2014b, p. 29.

Sex-disaggregated data about life expectancy is important for identifying the causes of poor health and mortality in men and should also be considered in the context of elderly women's wellbeing. Moreover, elderly women outnumber men, which exposes them to a greater risk of poverty and social isolation in old age.

Investments in improving maternal health and birth outcomes have resulted in a decrease in the overall maternal mortality rate. Nevertheless, the maternal mortality rate for the country as a whole (44 deaths per 100 000 live births between 2010 and 2014)<sup>48</sup> falls short of MDG targets. Of particular concern are a number of factors characteristic of rural populations that contribute to maternal mortality, including limited access to medical services (and consequently a high number of home births), a lack of skilled health care personnel and equipment, and women's poor health (including anaemia).

<sup>45</sup> TajStat, 2014b, pp. 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> S. Sattar, M. Bierbaum, S. Barfiyeva, J. Flanaga, S. Lakhani & R. Swinkels. 2013. Tajikistan Gender Diagnostics Note. Report No: ACS5015. World Bank: Washington, DC, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> TajStat, 2014b, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> World Bank. Maternal Mortality Ratio. (available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT>). [accessed September 2015].

According to the 2012 DHS, women in rural areas were more likely than women in urban locations to have received no antenatal care during pregnancy, and the home birth rate is much higher (25.5 percent of rural women who had given birth in the previous five years had done so at home, compared with only 11.7 percent of urban women).<sup>49</sup> Home births are associated with poor birth outcomes due to the fact that women delivering at home are far less likely to receive postnatal care (according to one estimate, 60 percent of these women did not receive postnatal care during the first six weeks after birth<sup>50</sup>). It is of note that home births are also associated with the problem of non-registration of births. The incidence of non-registration is higher in rural areas (18.6 percent of children under five years of age were not registered at birth or have no birth certificate, compared with 17.3 percent of urban children).<sup>51</sup>

Girls' underage marriage (defined as marriage in which at least one of the spouses is under the age of 18), and the early onset of childbearing, affects women's health and educational opportunities. Interestingly, early marriage and pregnancy is only slightly more prevalent in rural locations. The DHS found that 7.5 percent of surveyed women aged 15-19 from rural areas had either given birth or were pregnant with their first child at the time of the survey, compared with 7.3 percent of young urban women.<sup>52</sup> Early and polygamous marriages are both thought to be increasing, but because these unions are not legal, and are performed through religious ceremony only, there is no official registry of either the marriage or any subsequent divorces.

An increase in sexually transmitted infections is another critical health concern that has a gender dimension. While the diagnosis rate of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is higher among women, men have a higher incidence of STIs (namely, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV). At the end of 2014, for example, out of more than 5 200 people living with HIV in Tajikistan, 66.9 percent were male and 33.1 percent were female.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that women are diagnosed with STIs more frequently than men because they use sexual and reproductive health services more often. Additionally, labour migration is associated with an increased risk of STIs (in 2014, around 10 percent of newly-diagnosed cases of HIV infection were associated with migration abroad<sup>54</sup>), and men who reside out of Tajikistan for part of the year may have reduced opportunities to access testing and other health care services. Moreover, there are specific differences in how the HIV epidemic manifests itself among men and women. Men living with HIV are generally older than women (45.1 percent of the male HIV-positive population is between the ages of 30 and 39, compared with 41.1 percent of women with HIV who are aged between 19 and 29). Men are almost equally likely to become infected either through sexual contact (45.8 percent of cases) or injecting drug use (40.7 percent of cases), while the most common transmission route for women is sexual contact (80 percent of cases).<sup>55</sup> The proportion of women in new HIV positive cases increased by 9.5 percent between 2010 and 2014.<sup>56</sup>

There are no data that can indicate differences in STI rates, or HIV in particular, by location, but rural areas have several characteristics that present risk factors for transmission. Rural areas experience high levels of male outmigration, and wives of labour migrants are considered to be particularly at risk for STI transmission. Sexual and reproductive health services, especially those oriented to young people, are very limited in rural areas. Conservative attitudes and taboos around discussing sexual health also appear to make it difficult for young people to seek advice about STI transmission, and for young women in particular to negotiate safe sex with a partner. Rural women are less likely than urban women to believe that women are justified in refusing to have sexual intercourse if they know their husband has had sex with other women, or to ask their husband to use a condom if they know he has an STI (56.1 percent of surveyed rural women, compared to 61.4 percent of urban women).<sup>57</sup> In addition, only 18.6 percent of rural women agree that children (ages 12-14) should be taught in school about condom use to avoid AIDS, whereas 28.6 percent of urban women have positive attitudes toward educating children about AIDS prevention.<sup>58</sup>

### Education

Addressing gender disparities in education is another priority issue for Tajikistan. In primary education, the number of girls enrolled in school begins to decline at around grade 6, and this trend accelerates up to the end of compulsory education (grade 9, which corresponds to around age 15). Girls also have more irregular school attendance and miss more days of school per week than boys. The extent to which girls from rural areas

49 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 116.

50 United Nations Office in Tajikistan. 2010. Millennium Development Goals, Tajikistan Progress Report. Dushanbe. p. 77.

51 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 25.

52 Ibid. p. 67.

53 Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan & the National Center for Prevention and Control of AIDS. 2015. Country Report on Progress in Preventing the HIV Epidemic. Tajikistan. UNAIDS. p. 9. [in Russian].

54 Ibid. p. 12.

55 Ibid. p. 11, p. 13.

56 Ibid. p. 11.

57 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 179.

58 Ibid. p. 180.

are at risk of dropping out of school is not entirely clear. Official data are not disaggregated by residence, but qualitative studies indicate that, "... more girls are out of school than boys ... and this holds across all regions, wealth quintiles and in urban and rural areas."<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Education data for the 2013-2014 academic year show clear regional variations in school enrolment. Although girls accounted for 44 percent of students enrolled in Grade 11 (the final year of general secondary education) in the country as a whole, female enrolment was as low as 36 percent in RRS and 38 percent in Dushanbe, and as high as 49 percent in Sughd province.<sup>60</sup> Closer examination of several rural districts in RRS demonstrates that girls' enrolment in grades 10-11 dropped to as low as 18 percent in some districts and never reached more than 30 percent in any of the rural districts.<sup>61</sup>

Some of the reasons for the decline in girls' education (both due to girls not being enrolled and being absent from school) include: coming from a rural and low income family, namely poverty (and specifically an inability to pay for school clothes and supplies); the distance between rural areas and local schools; poor transportation and concerns over girls' safety when travelling to school; withdrawing girls for housework and agricultural labour; and early marriage. Gender experts contend, however, that one of the key, and often overlooked factors in whether girls complete their education, is the extent to which families value investment in female education. The traditional and patriarchal view that a daughter will ultimately join, and be supported by, her husband and his family has a significant influence over whether a household will encourage and save for girls' education beyond the basic level. Gender roles are also a factor, as girls are more likely to be required to leave school to take on domestic chores and unpaid agricultural labour. Boys also miss school due to work, but to a lesser extent, and they are more likely to be engaged in paid labour. The prevalence of these gender stereotypes helps to explain why dropout rates for girls are also high in urban areas, where infrastructure factors play a much lesser role. Other factors might include the migration of families from rural to urban centres, bringing more conservative values with them, or the fact that NGOs and local authorities have taken specific measures to encourage rural girls to pursue education.

Gender disparities continue at the level of tertiary education (in both technical and vocational education and training and in higher education). When girls continue with their education past the compulsory level, they are most likely to enter a college of secondary vocational education. During the 2013-2014 academic year, female students accounted for only 18 percent of all students enrolled in primary vocational education, and 29 percent of students in higher education (university), but 64 percent of students in secondary vocational education.<sup>62</sup> Young women from rural areas face particular difficulties accessing tertiary education due to the location of colleges and universities in urban centres, an insufficient number of dormitories for female students, and cultural values which make it difficult for a woman to travel far from home and live without her family while studying. For almost two decades, a Presidential quota system has provided special measures to encourage girls from remote areas to enrol in higher education (since 2006, boys have also been able to apply to the programme). The number of students receiving higher education through the grants programme has increased from 970 in 2007 to just over 1 200 in 2013, and slightly more than half of the students assisted by the quota are female.<sup>63</sup>

While seen as a good practice, the Presidential quota has not addressed the gendered patterns observed in academic subjects. The large majority of female students enrol in secondary vocational institutions and study either health or education (these subjects accounted for 89 percent of female students in the 2013-2014 academic year). In contrast, men represented almost 100 percent of students in technical subjects, including agriculture, in secondary vocational institutions.<sup>64</sup> (Agricultural education and training is discussed in more detail in a later section of this report). Similar patterns are also observable in universities. Additionally, the quota system does not alleviate other barriers to female education, such as inadequate residence facilities for female students and the pressure to marry rather than continue with higher education or pursue a career. Because of the poor quality of rural primary education, young women who are admitted under the quota system often find that they are unprepared for higher education and drop out of their studies.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, gender experts point out that women who complete their higher education rarely return to their home villages due to a lack of job opportunities in their specialities.<sup>66</sup>

It is worth noting that the educational system in Tajikistan also includes non-compulsory preschool education. The absence of preschool facilities, whether public or privately-run kindergartens, nurseries or day-care centres, is an acute problem for rural communities. According to national estimates, only 6.5 percent of children aged 1-6 attend a preschool of the type listed above (or 80 442 children in 2013). When disaggregated by location, only 18

59 UNICEF. 2013. Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Tajikistan Country Study. Dushanbe. p. 11.

60 Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan. 2014. Statistical Collection of Education Sphere of the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe. pp. 43-45. [in Russian].

61 The Coalition of Public Associations "From de Jure Equality to de Facto Equality", 2012, p. 34 (Data from 2010).

62 TajStat, 2014b, p. 73, p. 76, p. 80.

63 Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2014, p. 287.

64 TajStat, 2014b, p. 79.

65 Silova, I. & Abdushukurova, T. 2009. Global norms and local politics: uses and abuses of education gender quotas in Tajikistan. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 7(3): 357-376.

66 The Coalition of Public Associations "From de Jure Equality to de Facto Equality", 2012, p. 20.

percent of the children enrolled in preschool education came from rural areas (around 14 000 children).<sup>67</sup> Official data indicate a gender imbalance in preschool enrolment in favour of boys, but the reasons that households cite for not sending children to preschool do not show any particular gender bias. For example, most survey respondents cite a lack of available facilities, followed by a preference for keeping children at home.<sup>68</sup> Existing preschool centres are not easily accessible to families that do not live close to towns and cities. The centres that operate on a fee basis may be unaffordable for some households, and other households may not prioritize childcare payments within the family budget. The absence of preschool educational facilities has important implications for child development and their future success in education. It is also a primary factor in preventing women from working outside of the home, especially rural women who already have considerably more household chores than urban women, in addition to responsibilities for childcare.

### Gender-based violence

State efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV), especially domestic violence, represent one of the most positive steps towards improving gender equality in Tajikistan. The adoption of a law and national policy on domestic (the State Program for the Prevention of Domestic Violence for 2014-2023) have raised awareness of the serious nature of GBV and created a framework for greater state action. However, GBV remains widespread and has a profound impact on the lives of many women. Improving data collection on GBV is one of the tasks assigned to the NSO under its programme on the development of gender statistics, but official data about the prevalence of GBV remains insufficient.

The most comprehensive data about domestic violence was obtained in the 2012 DHS, which sampled more than 4 400 ever-married women aged 15-49. Of note, the survey demonstrates that there is virtually no variation between the experiences of rural and urban women concerning physical violence, sexual violence or violence during pregnancy. Of all surveyed women, around a quarter (26 percent of urban women and 24 percent of rural women) reported that they had experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from a husband or partner.<sup>69</sup> Some types of controlling behavior by husbands (for example, jealousy if his wife speaks to other men, insisting on knowing where his wife is at all times, and not permitting his wife to visit female friends) were also reported fairly frequently, but there is little difference in the patterns of rural and urban areas.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, less than one fifth of women (both rural and urban) reported that they took steps to end domestic violence when they experienced it. Most women (62 percent of rural women and 60 percent of urban women) did not seek help or inform anyone about the violence.<sup>71</sup> While rural communities are often said to have more conservative attitudes, it appears that there is a certain level of societal acceptance of domestic violence as "normal" across the country as a whole. Just over half of urban women and 63 percent of rural women agreed with at least one reason included in the DHS survey as justification for a husband using physical violence against his wife, with a high percentage of rural women agreeing that violence is justified if she "goes out without telling him" (53 percent); "neglects the children" (47 percent); or "argues with him" (43 percent).<sup>72</sup> Women from all backgrounds experience social pressure to remain silent and tolerate abuse.

A critical difference between rural and urban women, however, is their ability to access services. Assistance to survivors of GBV is provided by both state and civil society-run facilities. The Committee on Women and Family Affairs operates two specialized centers in Dushanbe for women and girls who are victims of violence and a system of 89 regional information advisory centers (RIKTs) located in district centres. NGOs throughout the country operate 18 women's centres that provide counselling in times of crisis, including in cases of domestic violence. Temporary shelter facilities fall short of meeting internal recommendations on the number of spaces for the population,<sup>73</sup> and are limited to urban areas, with only three shelters for the entire country (two based in Dushanbe and one in Khujand). Some additional short-term accommodation is provided through victim support rooms under a United Nations Population Fund project to enhance the capacity of reproductive health centres to address domestic violence. Existing services are insufficient for meeting the complex needs of survivors of violence. Funding for services is very low (and often provided by international donors), human resources are limited (for example, there are very few social workers), and coordination across institutions is ineffective. Furthermore, services do not reach most rural areas.

<sup>67</sup> Data from the 2012-2013 academic year. (TajStat, 2014b, p. 65.)

<sup>68</sup> UNICEF, 2013, p. 33.

<sup>69</sup> TajStat et al., 2013, p. 205.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 201.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 212.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 224.

<sup>73</sup> For example, the Council of Europe recommends the following core minimum standards for services: one place in a shelter per 10 000 in the population (this may include a "family place" for women with children); at least one specialist violence against women shelter in every region / province; one rape crisis centre per 200 000 women; and one sexual assault centre for every 400 000 women. (Kelly, L. & Dubois, L. 2008. Combating Violence Against Women: Minimum Standards for Support Services. Strasbourg, Council of Europe. p. 38.)

## Access to justice

Access to justice refers to the ability to access fair and effective legal remedies for human rights violations. Access to justice is an important topic in its own right and one that is best addressed through dedicated analysis. The topic is included here because rural women have been identified as being particularly in need of legal protections, but they are also a group who are often unaware of, or unable to assert, their rights. Research in Tajikistan indicates that citizens generally have a poor understanding of their rights and rarely approach the legal system for resolving disputes.<sup>74</sup> Rural women are especially disadvantaged by a low level of legal literacy, and are often prevented from protecting their rights in several specific contexts concerning domestic violence, marital property rights, land disputes and labour rights. A survey of 1 300 women and girls (90 percent of whom resided in rural areas), conducted under a pilot project in four districts of the Rasht Valley, found that the respondents had a very limited understanding of their legal protections.<sup>75</sup> For example, 52 percent of respondents held the opinion that men have more rights than women (due to their status as heads of household), and 87 percent were unaware that women are entitled to any employment benefits.

As noted above, early marriage and polygamous marriage are not legally recognized in Tajikistan and, therefore, they do not confer property rights to either spouse. The impact of a non-registered marriage is arguably greater for women who are financially dependent on their husbands. If the marriage is dissolved or the husband dies, typically the woman receives no property from the marriage. Even in cases of legal marriage or divorce, women's rights to marital property are often violated because moveable property is customarily registered in the husband's name only or in the name of the father-in-law. Women themselves are frequently unaware of their rights to property or how to protect them. According to the above-mentioned survey of rural women, 38 percent of respondents thought that the husband alone has rights to own and use joint marital property, and 98 percent were unaware of how joint property is divided between the spouses during divorce processes.<sup>76</sup>

Recognition of women's land rights is another important aspect of access to justice. Out of the women involved in the above-mentioned survey, 48 percent had the opinion that the husband, as the household head, holds the rights to use land; 44 percent were unfamiliar with the concept of dekhani farming, stating that their husband deals with such matters; and 78 percent were unable to describe the types of taxes that land users must pay.<sup>77</sup> Women's lack of access to information and the institutions that resolve land disputes is illustrated by the fact that nearly a third of people who apply to regional information advisory centers (80 percent of applicants) are women seeking assistance relating to the Land Code, followed by the Family Code.<sup>78</sup> Records from the RIKTs show that the most common issues in applications concerning land rights are: establishing a dekhani farm; obtaining land certificates; resolving land disputes; and determining individual holdings / land plots.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to a lack of awareness of their rights, rural women are particularly disadvantaged by gender-neutral barriers to justice, for example, the concentration of practising attorneys in urban centres, mainly in Dushanbe. Rural women are physically and financially constrained from accessing professional legal services. Furthermore, social pressure also plays a role in limiting rural women's access to justice because they are, "prevented from seeking access to their rights by constraints placed on them by family members and the community."<sup>80</sup>

74 See for example, Eurasia Foundation & Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2011. *Equal Before the Law? A Study of How Citizens Experience Access to Justice in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*. Washington, DC.

75 ADB. 2014b. Report on survey conducted among women and girls of Rasht region and District Task Force rapid needs assessment.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Tagaeva, S. 2012. *Regional Information Advisory Centers in Khatlon and RRP*. Report of the UN Women expert on gender issues. Dushanbe. p. 16. [in Russian].

79 Ibid. p. 17.

80 Eurasia Foundation & Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2011, p. 13.

### III. Profile of rural households, infrastructure and gender impacts

Information about Tajik households has most recently been collected in two household surveys. Gender-relevant conclusions can be drawn from a review of data concerning MHH and FHH (some of which are also disaggregated by urban and rural residence). The data provide information about housing conditions, household goods, access to safe drinking water, sanitation services and sources of energy, from which a picture of the lives of the rural population can be constructed.

#### A. Housing conditions

In rural areas, housing consists primarily of self-built, single-family houses. Most of the rural population lives in houses made of local materials – stone or adobe brick – while Soviet-era brick and cement buildings are common in urban areas. Traditional adobe construction methods can result in more energy efficient buildings than the materials used in urban housing, provided that proper insulation, plastering and foundations are used. However, due to financial constraints and a lack of knowledge about energy efficiency, many rural houses do not provide good quality or safe accommodation for the residents, and are often not in conformity with building regulations.<sup>81</sup> A large proportion of Tajikistan's housing stock is in a poor condition and in need of renovation, which leaves the population vulnerable to the country's harsh winters, the risk of earthquakes, floods and mud slides, and overcrowding. After expenses for basic necessities, most remittance income sent back to Tajikistan is used for home repairs. The housing "boom" in rural Tajikistan has been associated with corrupt practices by local officials, specifically the illegal sale of agricultural land, including valuable irrigated land, for the construction of residences. This problem has received attention at the highest levels: the Tajik president has called on the relevant ministries and law enforcement to exercise greater control over land distribution processes.<sup>82</sup>

According to the 2012 DHS, almost 40 percent of rural houses had earth or sand flooring, and 89 percent used shingle roofing.<sup>83</sup> A small sample study carried out with 1 043 households in the Sughd and Khatlon regions found that most rural houses (84 percent) have single glazed windows in wooden frames, and only 15 percent of rural households use energy efficient plastic and double-glazed windows.<sup>84</sup> A household survey conducted in Khatlon province found only minor differences in housing construction materials between households of female adults and households with both male and female adults. Most significantly, houses with female adults only were more likely than mixed adult households to have mud roofs and less likely to have tin roofs.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, mixed male and female households have more rooms on average than female adult only households (most likely reflecting larger household size).<sup>86</sup>

#### B. Energy sources

Access to electricity through the national grid is nearly universal in Tajikistan, covering 99 percent of rural and urban households. However, rural areas account for as little as 10 percent of electricity consumption for the country as a whole, and it is estimated that a million people in rural areas experience an irregular electricity supply during the winter.<sup>87</sup> Due to frequent and seasonal energy shortages, most households rely on purchased or locally-sourced fuel. While the use of personal generators has increased (in large part due to remittance income), it is uncommon for families to rely on a household generator. The choice of fuel depends on the season and use (whether for cooking, heating the house or heating water). When available, most rural households use electricity for cooking, followed by propane or natural gas (42 percent and 17 percent of rural households, respectively). Moreover, more than a third of rural households (41 percent) burn solid fuels for cooking (most commonly wood, followed by animal dung briquettes, remains from agricultural crops – such as cotton stalks – and straw).<sup>88</sup>

81 UNECE. 2011. Country Profiles on the Housing Sector: Tajikistan. Geneva. p. 26.

82 See for example, Avesta.tj. "E. Rahmon: State officials involved in the illegal sale of land." 30 November 2012. (available at <http://www.avesta.tj/government/15432-e-rahmon-v-nezakonnoy-prodazhe-zemli-zameshany-goschinovniki.html>). [in Russian].

83 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 17.

84 Habitat for Humanity Tajikistan. 2014. Needs Assessment/Baseline Survey Report (for ADB Access to Green Finance Project). Dushanbe. p. 8.

85 Feed the Future FEEDBACK, 2014, p. 26.

86 Ibid., p. 25.

87 Bravi, A. & Slay, B. 2011. Household Energy Access and Affordability in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS. pp. 4-5.

88 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 18.

Use of alternative sources of energy also differs by sex of the household head. Although it is far from the norm, rural FHH are slightly more likely to obtain gas through a gas pipeline into the dwelling, but are also less likely than MHH to use a generator or to have central heating in the home (see Table 5 below).

Table 5. Energy Sources for Female- and Male-Headed Households in Rural and Urban Locations (2007)

Description	FHH		MHH	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
% of households with an electricity meter	93.8	97.7	95.5	99.3
% of households with a gas pipeline	10.0	57.6	7.2	51.5
% of households using a generator	0.6	1.2	1.8	1.4
% of households with central heating	0.4	20.7	0.7	19.3

Source: TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, pp. 109-115.

A household survey in Khatlon province found that households with only female adults rely more on electricity as their main (cooking) and secondary fuel sources, and they were also less likely to own a private generator than households with male and female adults.<sup>89</sup> Recent national household data, although not disaggregated by sex of the household head, indicates that rural populations rely on a greater diversity of cooking fuels than urban households. Just under half of rural households rely on electricity for cooking (42.3 percent), followed by wood (29.2 percent), gas (16.8 percent)<sup>90</sup>, animal dung (7.4 percent), and finally agricultural crops, straw and shrubs.<sup>91</sup> While all rural households depend on a combination of fuels, households with only female adults may have more limited access to some sources (those that have to be purchased or which are time-consuming to collect or prepare, including kerosene, charcoal, firewood and animal dung briquettes). A small baseline study conducted in several villages found that on average, female-headed households spend significantly more on energy annually than households of married couples. FHH spent 120 Euro more on energy annually than married households, and the overall maximum annual spending for FHH was 300 Euro more than mixed households.<sup>92</sup> This difference most likely reflects the fact that FHH have less ability to collect or prepare solid fuels, such as firewood and dung, and are also not able to adopt some of the energy-saving practices that are common in the studied villages (for example, use of energy efficient stoves, insulating the home or use of solar water heaters).

Poor quality housing and energy poverty affect the entire population, but women, children and the elderly, who spend the most time at home, are more greatly affected. Collecting and preparing solid fuel (for example, making dung or coal dust briquettes) and cooking are tasks primarily carried out by women and girls. Therefore, insufficient clean sources of energy have a significant effect on their health and also limit the time that they have for other productive activities or for rest (gender differences in time use are discussed in more detail below). Use of unclean solid fuel sources for cooking is correlated with indoor air pollution and respiratory illnesses. A large majority of rural households (81 percent) have a separate building for cooking, so it is likely that this practice reduces exposure to harmful pollutants. Furthermore, a comparison of data between 2005 and 2015, shows that the proportion of rural households using solid fuels for cooking has decreased from 48 percent to 41 percent (a similar trend was observed among urban households).<sup>93</sup>

## C. Safe drinking water and sanitation

More than two-thirds of the rural population has access to improved (safe) drinking water sources (71 percent of rural households). Of these households, most (30 percent) make use of public taps or standpipes, followed by water piped into the dwelling.<sup>94</sup> Of the 28 percent of rural households relying on unimproved water sources, most use open or surface water (19 percent), followed by water delivered by tanker (six percent).<sup>95</sup> Almost all rural households have improved sanitation facilities (94 percent), and the most common type is a pit latrine with slab (70 percent of rural households), followed by an improved pit latrine (24 percent).<sup>96</sup> Flush toilets connected to a central sewage system are virtually non-existent in rural areas. Female-headed households are only slightly more likely to have drinking water piped into the home and access to a central sewage system.

89 Feed the Future FEEDBACK, 2014, pp. 28-29.

90 This category includes liquid petroleum gas, natural gas and biogas.

91 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 18.

92 Women in Europe for a Common Future. 2014. Tajikistan Gender, Livelihood and Socio-Economic Study. p. 28.

93 Ibid. p. 19.

94 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 14.

95 Ibid. p. 14.

96 Ibid. p. 16.



Table 6. Access to Improved Water Supply and Sanitation Sources for Female- and Male-Headed Households in Rural and Urban Locations (2007)

Description	FHH		MHH	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
% of households using plumbing as a water source	28.3	88.9	23.4	83.4
% of households connected to a central sewage system	2.5	62.4	1.9	51.6

Source: TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, pp. 117-119.

According to the Khatlon household survey, female adult only households are less likely to have water (for drinking or washing) piped into the dwelling, and are more likely to collect water from taps in the yard or public taps. Likewise, they are much less likely than households with male and female adults to purchase water from tanker trucks or in bottles.<sup>97</sup>

As is the case with limitations in energy supply, women are especially burdened by water scarcities because they are the family members who use the most domestic water (for cooking, cleaning, laundry and bathing children) and expend the most time collecting water when it is not piped into the home. A lack of hygienic sanitation facilities (as well as clean water for hand washing) is associated with a risk of diarrhoeal illness and transmission of other diseases within the household. Any family member can be affected by illness, but children and the elderly are especially at risk. Given their traditional responsibility for treating family members who are ill, substandard sanitation facilities can also increase women's care work.

## C. Household goods

The prevalence of durable consumer goods is an indicator of socio-economic status and, in Tajikistan, it also demonstrates the availability of remittances. Data on specific household goods, particularly labour-saving domestic appliances, can also be used to assess the intensity of women's household chores. Rural households are less likely than urban households to own electrical appliances that are of particular benefit to women, in part due to unreliable energy supply. Additionally, the time that women must spend on household tasks limits the time that they have for productive activities, such as formal employment, and personal activities, such as education or professional training.

Even when the household has some home appliances, power outages and fluctuations in electrical supply mean that women are often not able to use them or can only use them for limited periods of the day. Likewise, a lack of access to water piped into the house may dissuade rural families from purchasing washing machines. Additionally, the fact that a large majority of rural households have televisions and DVD players suggests that they prioritize the purchase of electrical goods that are used by all family members for entertainment, over those that are used for domestic chores.

Table 7. Selected Goods Owned by Urban and Rural Households (%)

Goods	Rural Households (%)	Urban Households (%)
Refrigerator	35.0	77.3
Freezer	2.1	6.1
Washing machine	10.9	39.6
Vacuum cleaner	13.1	48.1
Sewing machine	63.3	49.7
Television	95.9	97.9
DVD player	77.8	86.4
Computer	6.9	25.0
Internet connection	1.3	8.3
Indoor heater / stove (burzhuika)	87.0	36.4
Mini-generator (dvizhok)	16.4	8.8
Wood / fuel stock	93.3	36.9

Source: TajStat, 2013, p. 19.

<sup>97</sup> Feed the Future FEEDBACK, 2014, pp. 30-32.

## D. Rural transport and women's mobility

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There are no gender specific data on transport use in Tajikistan. However, Tajikistan's poor road infrastructure (the result of deterioration over time, limited investment in repair and the harsh climate) makes travelling from rural areas to urban centres difficult. Geographical isolation contributes to poverty and is also a factor that impedes progress toward specific development goals, such as the reduction of maternal mortality and improving access to education. Enhancing the rural population's access to transport can also have distinctly gendered impacts, for instance, it can potentially contribute to a rise in rates of male migration and can also lead to an increased workload for women on farms and in the household.<sup>98</sup> According to the Rural Access Index, 74 percent of rural residents in Tajikistan live within two kilometres of the nearest all-season road, a figure that translates to 1.3 million people without access to rural transport.<sup>99</sup>

Women in rural areas experience limited mobility, not only due to poor road infrastructure, but also due to a lack of reliable and safe public transport options and the cost of private transport. Car ownership has almost doubled in the last decade, and rural households are more likely to own a vehicle than urban households.<sup>100</sup> However, although there are no prohibitions on women driving, most rural women rely on male drivers for transportation. This is supported by data which shows that in 2007, more than twice as many male-headed households had cars than female-headed households.<sup>101</sup>

Social norms regarding women, especially young women, travelling independently also impede their mobility. Interaction with formal institutions is generally considered to be a "male" role (partly because men predominate in administrative structures as leaders and employees), and women are either discouraged by family members, or choose themselves not to engage with public bodies. In a study of rural women's involvement in community groups that manage water resources, some female respondents commented that, "[w]omen do not travel to government offices" and that they, "... persuade their men to talk on their behalf."<sup>102</sup>

Such limitations on women's mobility have important implications for women's ability to take part in agricultural production at various levels of the value chain, including selling goods by roadsides and in local markets, or engaging in trade in urban centres. In addition, women's more limited mobility complicates the process of registering farming enterprises, applying for loans, paying taxes on land or livestock, taking part in training and accessing extension services, in addition to other activities associated with agricultural production.

98 Roberts, P. Shyam, K.C. & Rastogi, C. 2006. Rural Access Indicator: A Key Development Indicator. Washington DC, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. p. 2.

99 World Bank Access to Rural Transport database (available at <http://www.worldbank.org/transport/transportresults/headline/rural-access>). [accessed January 2016].

100 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 20.

101 TajStat & UNICEF. 2009. Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey 2007. Dushanbe. p. 125.

102 World Bank. 2009. Agricultural Activities, Water and Gender in Tajikistan's Rural Sector: A Social Assessment of Konibodom, Bobojon Ghafurov, and Yovon. Dushanbe. p. 46.

## IV. Gender and poverty

Assessing differences in the levels of poverty for women and men is challenging because the most recent poverty study, that included sex-disaggregated microdata, was conducted under the Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey in 2009. Since then, the NSO has based poverty estimates on measures concerning the dynamic of economic growth. This methodology is problematic, firstly because it assumes a relationship between growth and poverty reduction, and secondly, because it may not effectively account for food crises in the country and the impacts of the global economic crisis.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, in 2012, the NSO and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, working in partnership with the World Bank, started to develop a new national methodology to measure poverty in Tajikistan. The resulting data are not directly comparable with data collected before 2009. However, the new methodology is based on household budget surveys that are administered quarterly, which will enable a more accurate assessment of changes in poverty rates.<sup>104</sup>

### A. Poverty rates

Successive living standards surveys, carried out since 1999, show a decrease in poverty levels, and there is virtually no difference in the absolute poverty rate between women and men (in 2009, the rate was 46.6 percent for women and 46.7 percent for men). However, women face a greater risk of extreme poverty than men within every age group, and the gap is widest at pension age (see Table 8 below). Analysis of poverty rates by sex of the household head also indicates that women-led households are considerably more at risk of extreme poverty. In 2009, 22.9 percent of surveyed female-headed households met the definition of extreme poverty, compared with only 16 percent of male-headed households.<sup>105</sup> FHH tend to be smaller than MHH, but specifically, they have fewer working-age adults that can contribute to the household budget or take on a share of child care responsibilities. These factors, as well women's more limited access to higher paid employment opportunities, explain why FHH are at greater risk of impoverishment.

Table 8. Extreme Poverty Levels for Women and Men (%) (2009)

	Women	Men
Total	14.0	13.6
Age 0-14	16.5	16.2
Age 15-24	12.2	11.7
Age 25-62	13.2	12.6
Age 63 and older	13.1	11.8

Source: Mezentseva, 2012, p. 82.

At the time of writing, the NSO is transitioning to the new methodology (following staff training and other preparatory work), and only preliminary data, not disaggregated by sex, are available. As of 2014, the poverty level for rural households was 36.1 percent (and 23.5 percent for urban households), while the extreme poverty level was 19.7 percent for rural households and 10.7 percent for urban households.<sup>106</sup>

Because differential poverty data for women and men are missing, information on patterns of key asset ownership offers another means of understanding relative poverty rates. Although limited, there are some sex-disaggregated data available on ownership of real estate, moveable property and household assets. While there are no formal or legal barriers to women's property ownership, culturally and traditionally property is registered in the name of male relatives and inheritance follows a patrilineal pattern. As a result, most women are "asset poor", meaning that they either have no ownership rights or hold property jointly. Without full ownership, women's ability to use property (including to sell, rent out or offer property as collateral to secure loans) is compromised, and this exposes them to the risk of poverty and extreme poverty in cases of divorce and abandonment, and in situations where they are unsupported by a male property owner. Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate how uncommon it is for women to independently own housing (note that missing data are excluded from each chart).

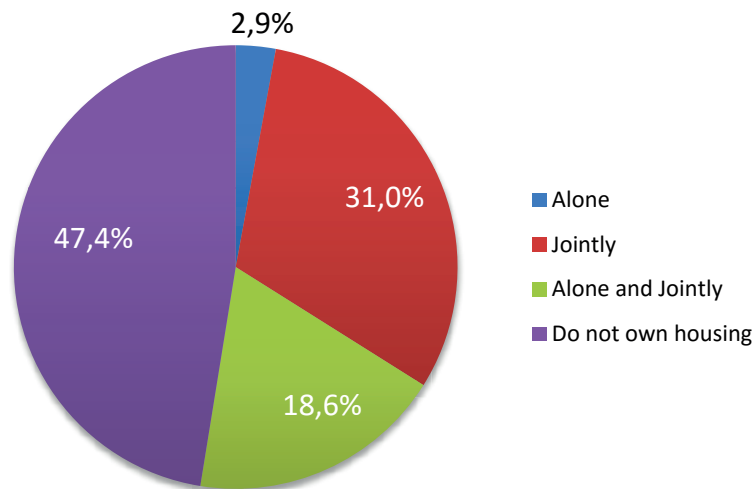
<sup>103</sup> TajStat, 2015e. Poverty Measurement in Tajikistan: A Methodological Note. Dushanbe. p. 5. [in Russian].

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. pp. 5-9.

<sup>105</sup> TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, p. 30.

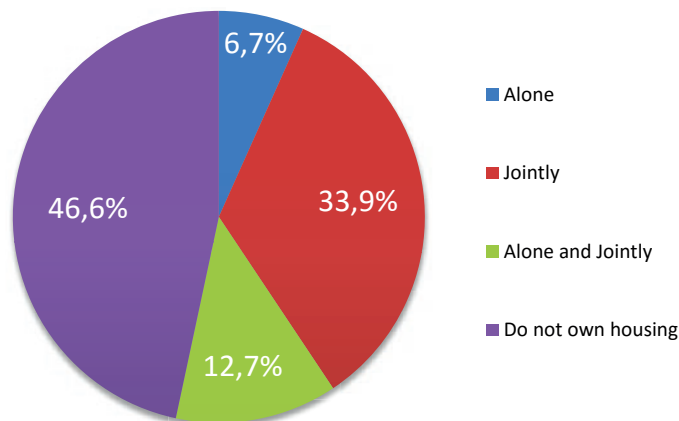
<sup>106</sup> TajStat, 2015e, p. 24.

Figure 1. Rural Women's Ownership of Housing (% owners)



Source: TajStat et al., 2013, p. 220.

Figure 2. Urban Women's Ownership of Housing (% owners)



Source: TajStat et al., 2013, p. 220.

Gender-based patterns of land and livestock ownership are discussed in the following section of this gender profile, in the context of agricultural assets and rural livelihoods.

Women also experience income poverty due to the significant gender wage gap in Tajikistan. In 2014, women's average wages (across all sectors of the economy) were equivalent to 60 percent of men's wages.<sup>107</sup> The wage gap is partially explained by the predominance of women in low paid sectors of the economy (for example, education and health care) and also that women are more likely than men to have part-time work and to leave the job market for periods of time due to child care responsibilities. Notably, Tajik labour law does not have any provisions for paternity leave but allows any family member caring for a child to take parental leave. There are no official data about men's annual child care leave, but labour surveys conducted in 2004 and 2009 found that no men took this leave (either to care for children under 1.5 years or for children between the ages of 1.5 and three years).<sup>108</sup>

In the last decade, the gender wage gap has narrowed slightly, which may be partly attributable to wage increases in a number of fields. Nevertheless, the World Bank estimates that only a proportion of the gender wage gap is the result of variables such as the different employment patterns of women and men: gender-based discrimination and stereotypes are also significant factors.<sup>109</sup> There is a widespread presumption, especially

<sup>107</sup> TajStat. Gender Statistics Database. (available at <http://www.stat.tj/en/Gender6/Genderbaz/>). [accessed September 2015].

<sup>108</sup> International Labour Organization. 2014. Maternity Protection and the Childcare Systems in Central Asia: National Studies in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Moscow. p. 31.

<sup>109</sup> Sattar et al., 2013, p. 40.

among employers, that “women have access to other resources through spouses and other family members”<sup>110</sup> and are not the primary earners in the household. Therefore, increasing women’s pay, or reducing the pay gap, has not been a priority for policy-makers.

A considerable proportion of women who are employed in agricultural work (and women in other types of work) receive no payment or only in-kind payments. This indicates that they are poor in terms of low income, and simultaneously that their (in-kind) earnings cannot be saved or used to purchase basic goods or services. According to the 2012 DHS, approximately half of female survey respondents (in rural and urban locations combined) received cash only incomes. Just under a quarter (20 percent) received cash and in-kind income, 19 percent were not paid for their work, and 8 percent received only in-kind income.<sup>111</sup> A fuller review of women’s payment for work in the agricultural sector is included in a later section of this gender profile.

As noted above, female life expectancy is longer than male life expectancy in Tajikistan. Because women retire at an earlier age than men<sup>112</sup> (and in the case of rural women, are more likely to have engaged in informal agricultural work for which they do not accrue pension rights), they also live longer with smaller pensions, a situation that puts them at greater risk of economic insecurity. While men accounted for only 40 percent of those receiving old-age / retirement pensions in 2013, the average male pension payment was 248.10 somoni compared with 199.61 somoni for women.<sup>113</sup>

### B. Women’s economic empowerment

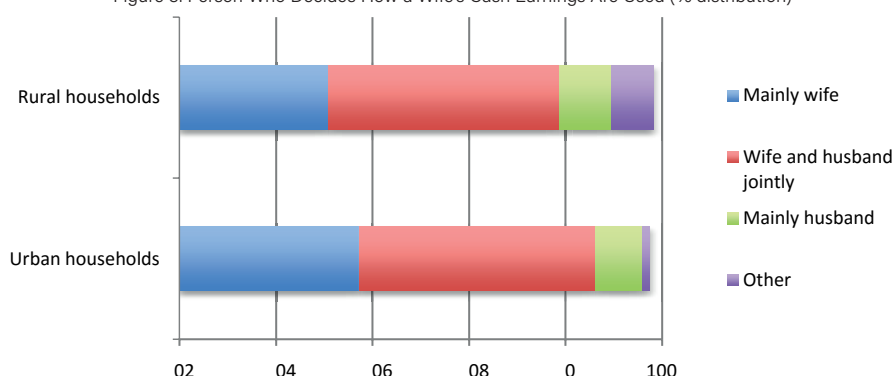
Economic empowerment refers to agency or the ability to make decisions about and use economic resources.

Even though a woman has waged employment, this does not necessarily mean that she can independently make decisions about how her earnings will be used. The DHS included questions about women’s control over their own earnings and the data revealed that approximately one third of women “mainly” make decisions independently about how their earnings will be used. Women in urban households are slightly more likely to make such decisions independently. Women in rural households (slightly more often than urban women), reported that it was mainly their husbands who made such decisions (in about 11 percent of households) or the decisions were made by other family members (about nine percent of households).<sup>116</sup> Joint decision-making between spouses is common in both rural and urban households.

#### Box 3. Definition: Women’s Empowerment

The UN defines “women’s empowerment” as consisting of five components: (1) women’s sense of self-worth; (2) their right to have and to determine choices; (3) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (4) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and (5) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.<sup>114</sup> Economic empowerment refers more narrowly to the capacity to exercise control over one’s livelihood through the ability to make choices on what productive activities to engage and invest in, to decide how and when to engage in markets and to influence the terms on which to do so.<sup>115</sup>

Figure 3. Person Who Decides How a Wife’s Cash Earnings Are Used (% distribution)



Source: TajStat et al., 2013, p. 217.

<sup>110</sup> United Nations Office in Tajikistan, 2010, p. 62.

<sup>111</sup> TajStat et al., 2013, p. 216.

<sup>112</sup> Men are eligible for the old-age pension at 63 years of age, with at least 25 years of covered employment; women are eligible at 58 years of age, with at least 20 years of covered work, and with further reductions in the required years of employment for mothers of five or more children or children with disabilities.

<sup>113</sup> Note that the average pension payment is an aggregate of pension payments for old age, disability, loss of a breadwinner and social payments but that women represent 60 percent of pension recipients across all categories. (TajStat, 2014b, pp. 122-123.)

<sup>114</sup> United Nations Population Information Network. Guidelines on Women’s Empowerment. (See FAO Term Portal, available at <http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/>).

<sup>115</sup> OECE. 2012. Poverty reduction and pro-poor growth: The role of empowerment. p. 22.

<sup>116</sup> TajStat et al., 2013, p. 217.

It is notable that when comparing answers to questions about who decides how the wife's cash earnings are used with decisions about the husband's earnings, in both cases about half of respondents reported that such decisions are made jointly by the husband and wife. Men are not much more likely than their wives to be the main decision-makers about their incomes, and in 18 percent of rural households, other family members make decisions about the husband's earnings.<sup>117</sup> These findings reflect the intra-household dynamics of many rural families, in which working age men migrate and send their earnings home in the form of remittances. In the typical multigenerational family, it is the head of the household – the migrant's father – who receives and makes decisions about how the remittances are used.

Other studies suggest that in extended families, migrants' wives seldom directly receive remittance income, and therefore they are not involved in major decisions about how it is spent. Typically, the wife receives a portion of the income to make small household purchases. In addition, many migrants' wives also work, and contribute their income to the family budget. According to one survey, more than half of migrants' wives reported that they consult with their husband, his parents or other relatives about purchases, almost a quarter (23 percent) give the income they earn to the head of the household, and only 18 percent manage their own income.<sup>118</sup>

A pressing issue in Tajikistan is the number of women who are considered "abandoned" by their migrant husbands. Such women may only receive remittances sporadically or may lose contact with their husbands when they completely stop supporting their families. When they are not in receipt of remittances, these women and their children experience long periods of poverty. They also face the risk of social exclusion by their husbands' families and even their own families. If these women do not own property, or they have joint property rights with the husband who cannot be located, they have access to even fewer economic resources. In the absence of their husbands, women in rural areas who are members of migrant families face particular difficulties finding jobs that can be combined with agricultural work, which is physically challenging and low paid.<sup>119</sup> Some women engage in small-scale entrepreneurship or self-employment if they are able to.

### C. Nutrition and food security

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The government and donors both recognize the importance of improving the nutritional status of the population and cooperate on projects to increase food security. As noted above, Tajikistan, is heavily dependent on food imports, and both urban and rural households spend an estimated 55 percent of their consumer expenditure on food.<sup>120</sup> Poverty and nutrition are linked, and food insecurity can result from a lack of access to sufficient and nutritious food due to the unavailability of such foods, limited purchasing power, macro-level distribution problems and choices about food use at household level.

Tajikistan consistently had the highest rate of undernourishment in the European and Central Asia region (defined as the percentage of the population with a caloric intake below the minimum dietary energy requirement); the rate has grown from 28 percent in the early 1990s to 33 percent in 2014-2016.<sup>121</sup>

In Tajikistan, some indicators of poor nutritional status do not show clear gender patterns. Both women and men exhibit similar risk factors for diet-related, non-communicable diseases such as raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose and raised cholesterol.<sup>122</sup> The prevalence of overweight adults is the same for males and females, but women are more likely to be obese. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in levels of "overnutrition" among women, affecting 30 percent of women of reproductive age and 59 percent of women aged 41 to 49 years.<sup>123</sup> High body mass index (BMI) in women is more common in the urban female population, but BMI rates can indicate food insecurity more generally.

Micronutrient deficiency among women (as well as children) remains a particular public health concern because a lack of diverse diets is associated with household food insecurity. At national level, around 59 percent of women and 53 percent of children under five show iodine deficiency. The prevalence of anaemia among women has decreased, but 24 percent of women (aged 15-49 years) are anaemic,<sup>124</sup> with the highest rates in GBAO and

117 Ibid. p. 218.

118 Olimova, S. 2012. "Tajikistan: The Role and Status of Women in Migrant Households." *Diaspora*. No. 2. pp. 86-123. (available at [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2014/0583/analit01.php#\\_FNR\\_1](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2014/0583/analit01.php#_FNR_1)). [in Russian].

119 Kurbanov, 2013, p. 1.

120 TajStat. 2014a. *Food Security and Poverty* No. 3. Dushanbe. p. 137.

121 FAO. 2015. *Regional Overview of Food Security Europe and Central Asia. Focus on healthy and balanced nutrition*. Rome. p. 1.

122 Global Nutrition Report. 2014 *Nutrition Country Profile: Tajikistan*. (available at [http://globalnutritionreport.org/files/2014/12/gnr14\\_cp\\_tajikistan.pdf](http://globalnutritionreport.org/files/2014/12/gnr14_cp_tajikistan.pdf)).

123 Chaparro, C., Oot, L. & Sethuraman, K. 2014. *Tajikistan Nutrition Profile*. Washington DC, USAID Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA). p. 1.

124 Note data are from 2009. Ibid. p. 1.

the RRS. Rural households are less likely than urban households to consume iodized salt, and rural women are less likely than urban women to take iron tablets during pregnancy and vitamin A post-partum.<sup>125</sup> According to a household survey that included questions on women's dietary diversity, women who live in households with both male and female adults have higher dietary diversity scores compared with women in households with only female adults.<sup>126</sup>

From 2015, the FAO and the Tajik NSO have been piloting an updated indicator in the Women's Dietary Diversity Score – the Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women (MDD-W) indicator – that uses ten food groups with a cut-off at five. Between 2014 and 2015, sample studies using the MDD-W were conducted with 1 032 women in all regions across the country. The mean dietary diversity was between six and seven, indicating adequate dietary diversity in most women. However, women in rural areas, and women with lower incomes, consumed less nutrient dense foods than women in urban areas.<sup>127</sup> The findings might have been influenced by the timing of the survey (conducted from May until August), and FAO recommends additional data collection during lean seasons or times of low food availability.

The risk of food insecurity is variable and is dependent on factors such as the season, size of harvest, amount of remittance income, increase in food costs and even intra-household decision-making. In general, the risk of food insecurity is highest between the months of February and April, when rural household food reserves are coming to an end, agricultural work that requires expenditure is beginning and migrant family members are preparing to leave, which also requires additional funds.

In general, rural households in Tajikistan are slightly less likely to be food insecure than urban households. According to official figures, the share of the budget spent on food increased by a greater extent in rural households than in urban households, when comparing data from 2014 to 2015.<sup>128</sup> Expenditure alone does not indicate whether rural households are consuming nutritious foods, but analysis of per capita food consumption by type of food shows that rural and urban households have fairly similar nutritional profiles, although rural households consume more grain and dairy products and fewer vegetables and eggs.<sup>129</sup> These differences reflect the tendency of rural households to sell the agricultural products that they produce rather than consume them. Furthermore, the level of nutritional knowledge among household members also plays a role in food insecurity, but studies of men's and women's access to information and choices about food have not been conducted. In-depth analysis of the ways in which men's role in purchasing food (see the section below on women's agency) and women's responsibility for preparing meals influences intra-family nutrition would be useful.

Gender is a more important factor in household food security than rural or urban location. For example, female-headed households are significantly more likely to be food insecure than male-headed households. A 2008 survey of 700 households found that, "[a]lmost half of the severely food insecure households were headed by a woman and one third of the moderately food insecure, compared to one fifth of the food secure households."<sup>130</sup> Severely food insecure households are those that have few assets, cash or savings; they also lack access to kitchen gardens, have little cultivated land and generally do not keep livestock or poultry. The above-mentioned study found that severely food insecure households had enough fruit and vegetables to be self-sufficient for no more than one month.<sup>131</sup> Typical coping strategies for food insecurity include: relying on less preferred but less expensive food; limiting portion sizes; borrowing food in-kind or purchasing food on credit; restricting adult consumption in favour of children's consumption; and not eating for whole days. It appears that women, to a higher degree than men, resort to harmful coping strategies such as restricting food or skipping meals.<sup>132</sup> This pattern might be a reflection of the number of food insecure female-headed households, women's role in food preparation and decisions to privilege men's nutrition where possible. Food shortages affect entire households, but food insecurity can have a particularly detrimental effect on prenatal health and development, breastfeeding and child nourishment.

## D. Time poverty

Women face constraints on the time they can devote to formal employment because they spend considerably more time than men in unpaid domestic labour. Women in rural areas have the least amount of free time,

<sup>125</sup> TajStat et al., 2013, p. 166, p. 169.

<sup>126</sup> Feed the Future FEEDBACK, 2014, p. 45.

<sup>127</sup> Lazarte, C. E., Mouratidou, T., Kurbanov, S., Qulov, A. & Lee, W. T. K. 2015. Pilot studies. Integrating a Dietary Diversity Module into the Household Budget Survey in Tajikistan. Presentation at a joint seminar of the Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and FAO. 18 November 2015.

<sup>128</sup> TajStat. 2015b. Food Security and Poverty. Bulletin No. 2. Dushanbe. p. 82 [in Russian].

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 110.

<sup>130</sup> World Food Programme and the Government of Tajikistan. 2008. Emergency Food Security Assessment in Urban Areas of Tajikistan. Food Security, Livelihoods and Nutrition Assessment. p. 23.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>132</sup> Food Security Monitoring System. 2015. Bulletin No. 14 - Tajikistan. p. 4.

because they have additional responsibilities for farming and care of livestock, and there is also a lack labour-saving appliances within the household (for example, automated washing machines). Table 9 below shows the differences in the amount of time that women and men, in both rural and urban locations, spend per day on unpaid labour. Data are from a time use survey conducted in 1998, but are the most recent comparative data for women and men that are available.<sup>133</sup>

Table 9. Time Used for Unpaid Domestic Work by Women and Men in Rural and Urban Areas

Unpaid Work	Female Time Use (hours per person per day)		Male Time Use (hours per person per day)	
	Rural areas	Urban areas	Rural areas	Urban areas
Laundry	0.90	0.92	0.01	0.02
House cleaning	0.96	1.06	0.04	0.17
Cooking	1.43	1.53	0.02	0.08
Other house work	1.75	1.26	1.50	1.35
Auxiliary farm work	1.13	0.30	2.03	0.65
Care for children	0.77	0.71	0.37	0.39
Total	6.95	5.78	3.97	2.66

Source: TajStat, 2010, p. 151.

Questions about women's time use were also included in the Tajikistan Living Standards Measurement Survey (TLSS) for 2003 and 2007 (see Table 10 below). The data do not allow any comparison with how men spend their time, but they do indicate that women's time burden increased in some areas during the four years between the surveys (for example, collecting water, food preparation, house cleaning and laundering) and decreased in other areas. Notably, the time burden on rural women for daily activities such as gathering firewood, animal grazing, milking and tending vegetable plots is still sizeable, accounting for several hours per week. Increased time burdens on women can be attributed to: droughts and scarcity of water; women taking on more agricultural activities due to the absence of men; the need to supplement the family budget through the sale of home-produced foods; and, perhaps, decreasing reliance on ready-prepared foods (purchased bread, for example).

Significantly, there is very little difference in the total average time that rural and urban women spend on household activities, equating to more than 32 hours per week. In 2007, married women living with their husbands spent an average of more than 48 hours per week on unpaid domestic activities, presumably because they were living in larger households, which increased their workload.

Table 10. Average Time Spent by Women on Household Activities (2003 and 2007)

Unpaid Work	2003 Time Use (hours per week)		2007 Time Use (hours per week)	
	Average	Average	Rural areas	Urban areas
Collecting water	1.40	1.89	2.30	0.78
Gathering firewood	1.70	0.54	0.69	0.14
Animal care and grazing	2.10	1.78	2.24	0.53
Milking animals	1.10	1.03	1.29	0.34
Tending vegetable plot	3.40	3.03	3.94	0.60
Going to market	2.80	0.91	0.72	1.44
Food preparation, baking, washing dishes	2.90	7.34	6.82	8.76
House cleaning, laundry, ironing	2.30	5.77	5.54	6.38
Sewing, knitting for household use	1.80	1.06	0.97	1.30
Child care, helping with schoolwork	7.40	7.77	6.60	10.88
Caring for elderly or sick relatives	5.70	0.99	0.99	0.99
Total	data missing	32.11	32.10	32.13

Sources: TajStat, 2010, p. 152 [for TLSS 2003 data]; TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, p. 101.

Women's time poverty has significant implications for their ability to be formally employed in full-time work, to start and run their own businesses, to pursue education or training opportunities, to enjoy rest and free time and for their overall health.

<sup>133</sup> At the time of writing this national gender profile, the NSO and the World Bank have launched a project to implement the national strategy for the development of statistics, which will include a component on measuring women's and men's time use. It is expected that such data will become available in 2016.



## V. Gender issues in agriculture and rural livelihoods

FAO's core set of gender indicators in agriculture serves as a framework for basic gender analysis of the sector. In the case of Tajikistan, some data are collected against almost half of the 18 indicators but not for all of them. Furthermore, during the validation workshop to review a draft of this report, gender and agriculture experts made a number of recommendations about how the FAO indicators could be further refined to better reflect the situation in the country. However, existing data on access to key resources such as land, credit and livestock, as well as information about women's distinct roles in agricultural production, indicate that Tajikistan shares many characteristics with developing countries where agriculture is underperforming. In such countries, despite women's crucial contributions to agriculture and rural enterprises, as farmers, workers and entrepreneurs, they all "face gender-specific constraints that reduce their productivity and limit their contributions to agricultural production, economic growth and the well-being of their families, communities and countries."<sup>134</sup>

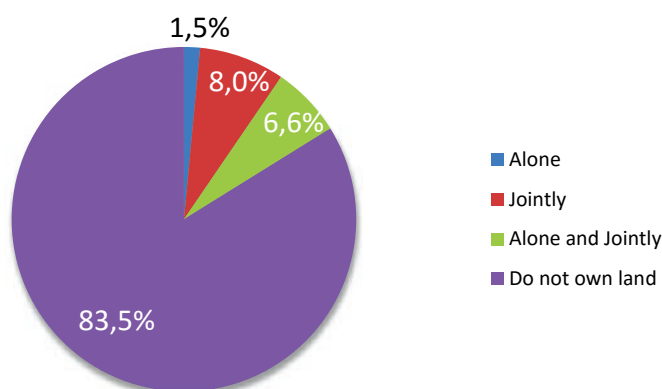
### A. Land ownership

In Tajikistan, access to land has a specific legal meaning. There is no private land ownership, but individuals have the right to use land through land tenure. In this gender profile, "ownership" of land refers to land use rights that are conveyed to individuals whose names are included on land certificates and licenses. Rural households typically have small plots, or kitchen gardens, close to the house, and may also have access to other types of land plots, for example, independently-held farmland (dekhan farms) or presidential lands (land that was transferred to rural households through presidential decrees, in order to bolster the size of garden plots that were smaller than the national minimum).

Although there has been significant gender sensitive reform of the Land Code, and efforts to improve women's access to land in practice, the prevalence of traditions and customs mean that land certificates are most often registered only in the name of the male head of household. According to one survey that asked why women are not registered on land certificates, two thirds of respondents were unable to give an answer (stating that they did not know), and 21 percent of respondents stated that is because they "prefer to keep certificates with men."<sup>135</sup> The fact that social taxes for dekhan farms are calculated as a fixed monthly fee for each shareholder on the certificate is a further disincentive to register wives or daughters-in-law as shareholders. Almost five percent of respondents in the above-mentioned survey cited social taxes as the reason for omitting women from land certificates.

It is the norm in Tajikistan that women do not own any land, as illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 below. As expected, women in rural areas are slightly more likely than urban women to own land either independently or jointly.

Figure 4. Rural Women's Land Ownership<sup>136</sup>



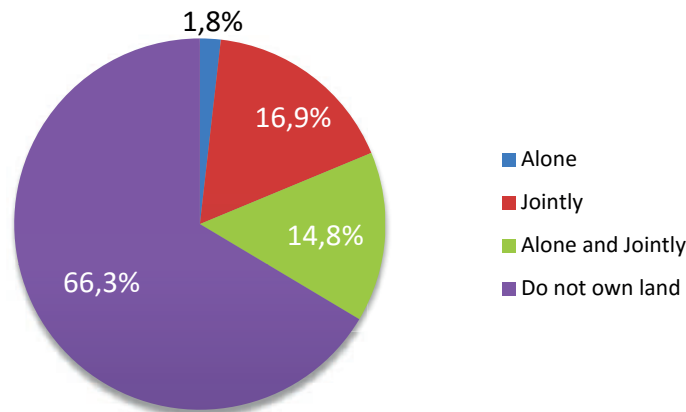
Source: TajStat et al., 2013, p. 220.

<sup>134</sup> FAO, 2011, p. vi.

<sup>135</sup> Bakozoda, K., Nabiev, R. & Haydarov, J. 2011. Assessment of Legal Issues of Farmers in Tajikistan and Knowledge of their Rights. Survey Report. Dushanbe, Zerkalo Center of Sociological Research. p. 31.

<sup>136</sup> Note that the DHS uses the term "land ownership" to refer to land use rights granted under the Land Code of the Republic of Tajikistan to individuals or legal entities, including for rights to use land for agricultural production. (TajStat et al., 2013, p. 20.)

Figure 5. Urban Women's Land Ownership



Source: TajStat et al, 2013, p. 220.

(Note that missing data is excluded from both the figures.)

According to 2007 data on agricultural assets, the majority of rural households possessed land (86 percent), compared with just over a third of urban households (excluding Dushanbe where 38 percent of households had land).<sup>137</sup> Male-headed households were also more likely than female-headed households to own land (70 percent of MHH, compared with 52 percent of FHH), and they tended to own larger plots of land. The average size of land plots belonging to MHH was 15.2 sotka,<sup>138</sup> and the average size of FHH land plots was 9 sotka. Therefore, on average, men's plots were about 70 percent larger than women's plots.

Rural populations are highly dependent on land for agricultural purposes, both for growing crops and raising livestock. Considering average land areas in rural locations only, Table 11 demonstrates that when land owned by households is combined with rented land and land rented out, MHH have on average almost double the land area of FHH (39 sotka for MHH compared with 20 sotka for FHH). Both households headed by women and by men use most of their land plots for farming, and very few rural households, regardless of the sex of the head, have land that they rent out.

Table 11. Average Land Areas in Rural Locations, by Household

Land areas (in sotka per household)	FHH	MHH
Average own land area	13.6	19.2
Average own land area used for farming	13.6	19.0
Average rented land area	3.4	9.9
Average own and / or rented land area used for farming	17.0	28.9
Average own / rented and / or rented out land area	20.4	38.8

Source: TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, p. 133.

Women's lack of access to land is underpinned by several forms of inequality. Women often lack information about their rights to land as members of collective farms or about the process of land registration. Other women do not have the means, either financial or in terms of time resources, to undertake the registration process. Even when women make attempts to assert their rights to land, many are "... effectively excluded from the process of obtaining dekhan or household land-use rights because administrators are often dismissive of women's farming capabilities and knowledge. As a result, women are more likely to hold lesser shares of the land that they work and are less likely to report tenure security."<sup>139</sup>

In terms of the characteristics of the land plots that are registered to women, they are less likely to have rights to use "presidential lands" and more likely to have rights to household plots. Furthermore, women's land plots are generally further away from their homes. Women also report that during processes to re-register their land rights (after divorce or the death of a spouse), they received "the worst land plots", at a considerable distance from irrigation facilities or with poor quality soil.<sup>140</sup> This observation is substantiated by their smaller harvests and lower yields, as discussed in more detail below.

<sup>137</sup> TajStat and UNICEF, 2009, p. 130.

<sup>138</sup> A sotka is a measurement of area equivalent to 100 square metres.

<sup>139</sup> USAID. 2010. Tajikistan - Property Rights and Resource Governance Profile. Washington, DC. p. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Kobzar, E. 2007. Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector. UNIFEM and CIDA: Dushanbe. p.20.

### B. Entrepreneurship and agricultural markets

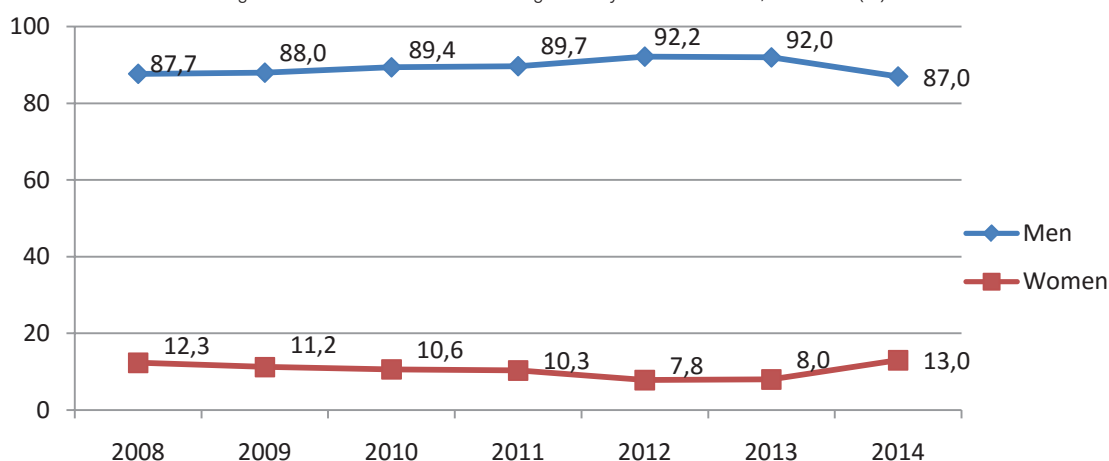
Official data on entrepreneurship indicates gender differences but not specific information about the types, sizes or locations of businesses that women and men operate. The number of women registered as owners of individual enterprises, both as patent and certificate holders, has increased annually in the last four years (from over 6 300 patent holders in 2010 to almost 18 800 in 2014; and from more than 8 900 certificate holders to over 55 700 in the same period).<sup>141</sup> In 2014, women represented 21.3 percent of individual entrepreneurs operating on the basis of a patent and 38.0 percent operating on the basis of a certificate.<sup>142</sup> Growth in private enterprise is not limited to female businesses, but the rate of male-led start-ups has not been as dramatic as it has been for women. Male entrepreneurs still largely outnumber female entrepreneurs, but because the number of women starting businesses has been increasing at a greater rate, the proportion of women entrepreneurs is steadily growing. This phenomenon suggests that women are both interested in, and able to enter, what has traditionally been considered a “male” field. Nevertheless, women’s businesses tend to be smaller in size than men’s and are often at the individual level. Women’s entrepreneurship “is focused on such industries and activities that do not require large start [up] capital and can do without large investments...!”<sup>143</sup> For this reason, women’s businesses are concentrated in sectors that do not require large numbers of workers and they often occupy spheres that are “traditional” for women, such as sewing workshops, handicraft production, culinary businesses and services.

Dekhan farms are the most common type of agricultural enterprise in Tajikistan. They are privately-owned commercial farms that function as legal enterprises and can be based on the work of an individual (a sole entrepreneur), a family or a group of people (a collective).<sup>144</sup> Family and collective dekhan farms are managed by a head who officially holds the farm’s land registration certificate and represents the legal interests of the farm. Tajik law requires heads of dekhan farms to maintain employment records for all persons working on the farm for more than five days, and therefore, dekhan farm workers are entitled to receive employment benefits, such as state pensions.

The number of dekhan farms has increased annually, from a total of 30 842 in 2008 to 108 035 in 2014. Women represent a small fraction of dekhan farm managers (13 percent in 2014), but their numbers are steadily increasing and the gap between male and female dekhan farmers has closed slightly in recent years. In 2014, there were over 14 000 women heading dekhan farms.<sup>145</sup> The growth in women-led dekhan farms from 2013 to 2014 is attributed to state and donor efforts to increase women’s involvement in dekhan farming and to register individuals who once worked on collective farms as individual farmers.<sup>146</sup>

The gender barriers to women’s leadership of dekhan farms has not been studied in detail, but they are most likely to include factors such as limited access to productive resources, a lower level of education, training and agricultural knowledge, and perceptions of women’s leadership abilities.

Figure 6. Trends in Dekhan Farm Management by Women and Men, 2008-2014 (%)



Sources: TajStat, 2015c, pp. 53-63.

141 TajStat. Gender Statistics Database. [accessed September 2015].

142 Ibid.

143 Bozrikova, T. 2011. Business Environment Assessment of Female Entrepreneurship in Tajikistan. Geneva, UNECE. p. 45.

144 Law On Dekhan Farming (2009).

145 TajStat. Gender Statistics Database. [accessed September 2015].

146 The US-led Feed the Future programme, for example, has a component on legal aid centres that assist women to assert land use rights and to legalize family farms. For more information, see <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/tajikistan>.

Unfortunately, data on dekhan farming are not disaggregated by type of farm, but women are more likely to manage family dekhan farms than collective or individual farms. For example, in 2004, women managed 9.6 percent of family dekhan farms, compared with 5.5 percent of individual dekhan farms and 3.7 percent of large collective dekhan farms.<sup>147</sup> Current data on the size of male- and female-managed dekhan farms suggests that women tend to manage farms of smaller size. In 2014, out of all planted crop land on dekhan farms, only 6.4% was managed by women.<sup>148</sup> Women's lack of formal leadership in farming enterprises masks the large female workforce in this type of farming, which is more accurately demonstrated by data which shows that women hold more than half of the shares in larger collective dekhan farms.<sup>149</sup> Further data are needed, including the number of employees, to represent the potential differences between dekhan farms managed by women and men.

Women's de facto role in farm management, related to the absence of men due to labour migration, is not captured in official statistics. It is common practice for men to remain the legal head of dekhan farms, even when they are absent from the country and it is mainly the female family members who are involved in day-to-day farm management. The absence of legal recognition of their management role places constraints on female farmers in terms of their lack of control over resources. Furthermore, limited information about the work that women are actually undertaking to run smallholder farms, or their contributions to the maintenance of the household, complicates the process of policy-making.

Female-headed households, which includes those women abandoned by migrant husbands, also have fewer resources to start an agriculture business venture. For example, a small-scale needs assessment, conducted in seven villages in the Sughd province, found that while households of married couples used several sources of funding to support agriculture and other income-generating activities (for example, personal funds, remittances, bank loans and funds from friends), female-headed households relied exclusively on personal funds and savings.<sup>150</sup> There are several grant programmes for female entrepreneurs in Tajikistan, including one awarded by the Committee on Women and Family Affairs and financed by the state budget. From 2006 to 2012, a total of 210 female entrepreneurs received grants through this programme,<sup>151</sup> but it could not be confirmed what proportion are businesses connected to agriculture. The National Association of Business Women of Tajikistan has twice run a national competition (2012, 2014) for female entrepreneurs, and most recently, 17 percent of applicants (or 56 contestants) had agricultural businesses.<sup>152</sup>

Data on women's formal engagement as business owners does not fully capture the reality that many women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities at micro and informal levels. In fact, a large segment of the population works in informal employment, and although there are no national statistics on informal labour, the 2009 Labor Force Survey found that informal employment was higher among men (60.4 percent of all informal workers). Informal employment includes individual entrepreneurs operating without legal status, as well as people working on dekhan farms, people working on household plots that produce goods for sale in local markets, and people who help family members and work on rented agricultural lands.<sup>153</sup> (Non-entrepreneurial informal employment is discussed in a later section of this report.) It is common for rural women to sell surplus products, such as milk and eggs, or handicrafts without registering as a business, or perhaps not even considering themselves to be business women. Informal entrepreneurship, and indeed informal labour generally, does not afford the worker any social protections or employment benefits, such as annual leave, sick pay or pension payments. Crucially for women, they do not accrue maternity leave, paid leave, pensions or other social benefits when working on an informal basis.

Lastly, in addition to farming enterprises, rural women engage in other forms of entrepreneurial activities, such as producing and selling handicrafts and foods from agricultural products. Rural women are also well-placed to take advantage of business opportunities not connected to agriculture, in the service sector (for example, private day-care centres) and in hospitality (for example, guesthouses or tourist services), and would benefit from additional business planning and management support in these sectors.

## C. Rural finance

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The availability of finance is critical to starting and supporting small businesses. While considerable efforts have been undertaken in Tajikistan to improve access to credit (with special attention to microcredit programmes for women), women are still less likely to borrow than men.

147 ADB. 2006. Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies- Tajikistan Country Gender Assessment. Manila. p. 51.

148 TajStat, 2015c, p. 63.

149 ADB, 2006, p. 51.

150 Women in Europe for a Common Future, 2014, p. 19.

151 Statement of Mahfirat Khidirzoda, Head of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs of Tajikistan. Farah-2014 Journal. National Association of Business women of Tajikistan (NABWT): Khujand. p. 79. [in Russian].

152 Ibid. p. 5.

153 Kuddusov, J. 2010. Labor Market Review Tajikistan. European Training Foundation: Turin. p. 15.

The total number of microloan recipients has increased annually in Tajikistan since 2008, and, according to data from the National Bank of Tajikistan, women have consistently represented approximately a third of all borrowers.<sup>154</sup> This figure most likely represents an aggregate of borrowers from banks and microfinance institutions, as records of the Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan (AMFOT) show that on average, only 26.7 percent loans from microfinance institutions were issued to women in 2015.<sup>155</sup> Women also receive smaller amounts of credit than men. In 2013, women represented 37 percent of all microfinance borrowers through AMFOT, but they accounted for only 29 percent of the total amount of loans; and similarly, women represented 30 percent of borrowers from commercial banks, but received 26 percent of total bank loan amounts.<sup>156</sup>

Determining rural women's and men's access to finance is complicated by the fact that statistics about borrowers do not cross-tabulate the borrower's sex against location and purpose of the loan. In 2015, 19 percent of all loans were issued for agriculture (agriculture represented 33 percent of all loans from microfinance organizations and 11 percent of bank loans).<sup>157</sup> In contrast, 16 percent of all loans were consumer loans, and 43 percent of loans were issued for trade activities. A survey of *dekhan* farms (with an equal number of male- and female-headed farms), found that none of the women had received credit from a bank.<sup>158</sup> On the other hand, analysis of a specific microfinance programme suggests that women who run agricultural or trade businesses have a higher probability of taking loans than women with whom they shared several characteristics (including, average remittance income, residence in the same region, employment status and age, among others) who work in other sectors.<sup>159</sup> This information does not necessarily suggest that women borrow to start up or support an existing business. Both women and men apply for loans for various reasons. One study of women's access to microfinance found that 36 percent of surveyed farmers reported using their loans for non-income generating purposes,<sup>160</sup> such as payment for family rituals or home repairs. This finding suggests that clients often do not understand the purposes of business loans and there is a need to improve the financial literacy of borrowers, especially in rural areas. Banks and microfinance institutions might find it useful to undertake client outreach and education aimed specifically at rural women.

Women and men face some common barriers to accessing credit, such as high interest rates. There are no legal restrictions on women's ability to apply for loans, and loan requirements are gender neutral. However, it is precisely this neutrality that is problematic, because loan procedures do not take into consideration the range of factors that specifically affect women. Studies indicate that women's lack of collateral precludes them from applying for large loans (to be used to support a business, for example), and women can generally only borrow small amounts using jewellery or other household property as collateral. Women express concern over high interest rates and their ability to meet repayment requirements, and this deters them from applying for loans (women who have agriculture businesses express particular reluctance to acquire debt because they are not confident about predicting crop yields).<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, women generally have lower levels of education, and more specifically, have limited financial knowledge and experience of making decisions about finances (for example, in relation to household budgeting and savings). Therefore, they are more likely to lack the confidence to take loans and are possibly even unnecessarily fearful of taking on debt or interacting with financial institutions.<sup>162</sup> Rural women face additional obstacles to accessing finance, including limited mobility and restrictions on their time. In more conservative communities, cultural perceptions that women should not deal with finances or engage with formal institutions, such as banks, further restricts their access. There is very limited information about the marketing and client outreach programmes of financial institutions, but banks generally use agricultural fairs "to communicate with prospective clients from farming and rural communities."<sup>163</sup> The success of this method for reaching female farmers or women in rural areas is unclear.

Although data is available on women as credit recipients, this does not necessarily mean that they are empowered to make decisions about the use of borrowed funds. Women are more likely to share decision-making with men or to defer to male family members. Analysis suggests that one of the main reasons behind the relatively large number of female microcredit recipients in 2008 under special programmes targeting women, was that men "[took] advantage of the system by sending their wives or daughters to take out business loans that will actually be used by the male family members."<sup>164</sup> Similarly, a tracking study of a programme that provided women with business training and loans found that among the credit recipients, 21 percent stated that their husband was mainly in control of the loan, 44 percent said that decision-making was equal, and in 35 percent of cases, women reported that they were in control of the loan.<sup>165</sup>

154 TajStat. Gender Statistics Database. [accessed September 2015].

155 AMFOT (Association of Microfinance Organizations of Tajikistan). 2015. Financial-Economic Review of Tajikistan for the Second Quarter of 2015. Dushanbe. p. 27.

156 AMFOT. AMFOT Members Statistical Data Analysis for the Reporting Period of 01 January to 31 December 2013. pp. 6-7.

157 Ibid. pp. 30-31.

158 ADB, 2006, p. 115.

159 Gravesteyn, R. 2012. Microfinance and Women Entrepreneurship: An Impact Assessment of a Start-up Loan Programme. Tajikistan, IMON International. p. 16.

160 Pandya, A. & Wilkinson, K. 2011. A Seat at the Table: The Role of Microfinance in Women's Economic Empowerment in Tajikistan. p. 46.

161 ADB. No date. Tajikistan Country Gender Assessment [unpublished].

162 Pandya & Wilkinson, 2011.

163 Ibid. p. 45.

164 Ibid. p. 38.

165 Gravesteyn, 2012, p. 20.

## D. Crop agriculture

There is very limited information that compares the farming practices of women and men. A 2006 survey of 288 dekhan farms found that, "a slightly higher proportion of women-lead dekhan farms are able to support their families through dekhan farm income and produce", suggesting that women-led farms are at least as productive as farms led by men.<sup>166</sup>

However, specific data about harvests on dekhan farms indicates that dekhan farms headed by women have smaller harvests than men's farms in every category of crop (see Table 12 below). Smaller harvests can be explained by the fact that female-managed farms are smaller on average, but female farms also have lower yields for every crop, with the exception of corn and cotton (which are almost equal to the yields of male-managed farms). Lower yields could be related to the poorer quality of the land, a lack of irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides, women's more limited knowledge of farming practices to help them increase yields (for example, seed selection, planting practices and hybrids) and a lack of access to extension services.

Table 12. Harvest and Yields of Female- and Male-Managed Dekhan Farms (2014)

Categories of crops	Female- headed dekhan farms		Male-headed dekhan farms	
	Harvest (tonnes)	Yield (centner <sup>167</sup> per hectare)	Harvest (tonnes)	Yield (centner per hectare)
Grain	47 333	26.3	694 927	31.1
Wheat	39 117	28.1	479 956	30.3
Corn	2 381	48.5	75 536	47.9
Cotton	19 890	21.6	292 077	21.5
Potatoes	9 518	165.5	333 932	247.1
Vegetables	21 566	243.1	604 374	307.8
Melons and gourds	4 538	170.6	349 140	270.1
Fruit trees	7 369	12.8	102 581	14.7
Vineyards	3 188	21.0	63 287	34.4

Source: TajStat, 2015c, pp. 77-94.

Sex-disaggregated data on a range of issues, including, the number of harvests per year, the use of hired farm labour, the availability of equipment and harvesting practices, would be useful to provide a clearer picture of the relative productivity of male- and female-led dekhan farms.

## E. Livestock

Animal husbandry is a major agricultural activity, and raising livestock is the norm for rural households (73 percent of households have livestock, including cattle, horses, donkeys, mules, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry). A significant number of urban households (a quarter of all urban households, excluding Dushanbe, and almost 2 percent of households in Dushanbe) also keep livestock.<sup>168</sup> There are gender differences in the extent to which households are engaged in raising livestock. Households headed by men are more likely than female-headed households to keep livestock and to have a larger number of animals across all categories of animal ownership. When FHH do have livestock, they tend to have cattle and poultry, possibly because dairy farming is traditionally seen as "female" work or because selling extra milk and eggs is a relatively low intensity means of supplementing household income. The pattern of livestock ownership is generally the same for women and men; the majority of households own cattle (54 percent and 66 percent of FHH and MHH, respectively). Poultry are the next most commonly-owned form of livestock (owned by around a third of rural households).

<sup>166</sup> ADB, 2006, p. 115.

<sup>167</sup> A centner is a metric unit of measurement of weight used in some former Soviet countries. 1 centner is equivalent to 100 kilograms.

<sup>168</sup> TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, p. 134.

Table 13. Livestock Ownership in Rural Locations by Female- and Male-Headed Households

	FHH	MHH
Any livestock (cattle, horses, donkeys, mules, pigs, sheep, goats) - ownership by household (%)	59.5	71.4
Any livestock (as above and poultry) - ownership by household (%)	63.8	74.6
Cattle - ownership by household (%)	54.0	65.7
- average number per 1000 households	1 314.1	1 996.8
Horses, donkeys, mules - ownership by household (%)	14.4	22.6
- average number per 1000 households	200.4	880.9
Pigs, sheep, goats - ownership by household (%)	20.3	29.8
- average number per 1000 households	1 172.8	2 647.1
Poultry - ownership by household (%)	33.4	37.7
- average number per 1000 households	2 462.4	3 921.0

Source: TajStat & UNICEF, 2009, pp. 136-137.

Gender differences in the ownership of livestock is both a reflection of differential access to the resources needed to buy or keep animals, and it also indicates the presence of gendered roles in livestock management. For instance, feed preparation, household dairy production (tending cows and milking) and poultry farming are generally perceived as women's responsibilities. Men have greater involvement in grazing, feed production and the purchasing and sale of livestock. Women and men also have differing roles in the processing of livestock products: men are more often involved in activities such as sheep shearing, transporting products to market and butchering, while women undertake meat and dairy processing, as well as preparing wool for sale and making handicrafts (for example, cleaning, carding, spinning and dyeing wool).

As is the case in other areas of farming, women's success in raising livestock is dependent on their access to information and level of knowledge about running a farming enterprise, and their access to finance and to other key resources, such as veterinary and extension services and training. For example, one programme that addresses gender issues within the livestock sector found that women often lack knowledge about the annual livestock registration process at the jamoat office. During field research, female farmers explained that male officials ask them about the number of animals they own and tell them the sum that they must pay. However, the women do not know how the figures are calculated, how much they pay per head or why the sum differs from year to year.<sup>169</sup>

### F. Access to agricultural inputs

Agricultural inputs are resources that improve agricultural production and efficiency. Examples include farm equipment and machinery, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, irrigation and veterinary services. There are no sex disaggregated data on the availability of key agricultural inputs to rural men and women, therefore conclusions can only be drawn from other available information. In general, a lack of key inputs prevents many people, both women and men, from taking up farming as a business. In a survey conducted in Sughd, Khatlon and RRS, between 73 percent and 78 percent of respondents (dekhan farm members and leaders) cited a "lack of machinery, seeds, fertilizers, chemicals or water" as the main impediments to founding a dekhan farm.<sup>170</sup>

Data about ownership and use of farm equipment, as well as the average number of farming machines, for male and female farmers is lacking. However, it is known that the majority of small-scale farmers have very limited access to agricultural equipment. Many use obsolete equipment or rely on labour-intensive practices, such as harvesting by hand and use of traditional tools. There are over 110 000 farming enterprises (almost all of which are dekhan farms), but the country as a whole has only 10 446 tractors, 447 grain combine harvesters and 122 mechanized cotton-pickers.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Material provided by Angelika Brustinow, international consultant on the Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) project, implemented by GIZ in Tajikistan.

<sup>170</sup> Bakozoda et al., 2011, p. 32.

<sup>171</sup> TajStat. 2015a. Agriculture in the Republic of Tajikistan. Statistical Compilation. Dushanbe. p. 308, p. 310, p. 316. [in Russian].

According to the Tajikistan Living Standards Survey administered in 2003, small numbers of rural households were using machinery, but it was mainly male-headed households that were likely to have access to such resources (3.6 percent of MHH used machinery compared with 2.9 percent of FHH).<sup>172</sup> Similar data for 2007 are not disaggregated by sex. According to a survey of a relatively small number of dekhan farmers, female farmers experienced greater difficulties than men in “accessing agricultural equipment, having it repaired, and seeing agricultural specialists.”<sup>173</sup> Even when agricultural machinery is part of the farm holding, prevalent gender roles mean that it is atypical for women to use it. A 2009 study of the gendered division of labour on household plots / presidential land and on joint farms (kolkhoz or sovkhoz) in Sughd and Khatlon found that it was men who usually perform specialized tasks. Between 78 percent and 98 percent of tractor and machine operators in the study area were men.<sup>174</sup> Women generally undertake low-skilled manual work such as weeding, sowing, transplanting, harvesting and cotton picking, using basic tools. Moreover, Table 13 above demonstrates that only 14 percent of FHH, compared with 23 percent of MHH, own horses, donkeys or mules, and these figures suggest that households headed by women probably also have fewer farming implements that are drawn by animals (for example, ploughs and wagons).

When female-headed households do not own farming equipment, they are able to either borrow it from other farmers or lease it if funds are available. Another coping mechanism for female farmers is to “work their land less intensively,” meaning that they use smaller amounts of fertilizer and improved seeds than their male counterparts.<sup>175</sup> In 2003, 43 percent of MHH used fertilizers, compared with 38 percent of FHH.<sup>176</sup>

Pesticides can also be considered to be an agricultural input, and FAO includes the “percentage of holdings using chemicals by type of chemicals and sex of the holder” in its core set of agricultural gender indicators. In preparing this gender profile, no data were found on male and female farmers’ use of pesticides or chemicals, but the regulation of safe pesticide handling and disposal practices is a very important issue in Tajikistan. Soviet pest control practices relied on the intensive use of chemical pesticides, especially with monoculture cotton crops. Today, many smallholder farmers cannot afford to purchase pesticides and therefore do not use them. However, some chemical pesticides are still used to combat cotton pests. Tajikistan has ratified the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and as a state party has committed to develop an implementation plan that includes information exchange, public information and education (with an emphasis on programmes for women and children), and research and technical assistance to protect human health and the environment. The government reports that the implementation of this plan has not yet taken place due to insufficient funds, inadequate information and difficulties with engaging stakeholders in the process.<sup>177</sup> There is an acute need for research on the gendered impacts of handling and disposing of pesticides in Tajikistan. On the one hand, men are most likely to be engaged in hazardous work such as chemical spraying, but on the other hand, women also face the risk of exposure to pesticides because they are the primary cotton pickers. Existing projects in Tajikistan on introducing ecological pest management practices and technologies would also benefit from additional information about the specific practices of male and female farmers, as well as differences in their levels of knowledge.

Access to irrigation is an acute concern for farmers in Tajikistan, as it is elsewhere in Central Asia, and there is also a gender dimension to this issue. Tajikistan has a relatively arid climate and a large proportion of cropland is sown with water intensive crops, including cotton. Almost all arable land (84 percent) is served by an irrigation system that was developed before independence, and the infrastructure is now in a poor condition and in need of capital repairs.<sup>178</sup> Infrastructure problems cause water shortages (for both irrigation and household consumption), but additionally, “many rural people and agriculture suffer the effects of [a] rising water table and increasing soil salinity.”<sup>179</sup> Water-logged soil and reduced soil fertility, due to irrigation inefficiencies, lead to decreased crop yields and “undermines the productivity of agricultural lands,” further contributing to the cycle of poverty.<sup>180</sup> For rural residents, access to water for personal irrigation is highly dependent on proximity to large farms (with which they must sometimes compete for water resources). Smallholder farmers make use of irrigation canals, streams, rivers and rainwater. Irrigation canals are also a main source of household drinking water, and whole communities are required to “devote productive time to cleaning irrigation system drainage overflows and preventing flooding.”<sup>181</sup> Rural water resources are managed by Water Users Associations (WUAs). WUAs ensure that water use is equitable (a critical concern in areas at risk of drought), collect user fees and play a role in settling disputes over water resources. The role of women and men in WUAs is discussed in more detail in a later section of this report on governance and networks, but women’s representation in such organizations is minimal.

172 Rocca, V., Bossanyi, Z. & Di Giuseppe, S. 2014. Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia-A Focus on the Gender Gap in Agriculture. Rome, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. p. 37.

173 ADB, 2006, p. 115.

174 World Bank, 2009, pp. 114-115.

175 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc, 2014, p. 19.

176 Rocca et al., 2014, p. 37.

177 Committee on Environmental Protection of Tajikistan. 2010. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. National Report Pursuant to Article 15. Second reporting. (available at <http://chm.pops.int/Countries/Reporting/NationalReports/tabid/3668/Default.aspx>).

178 ADB. 2014a. Assessment of Agriculture and Rural Development. (Linked Document 8. Tajikistan Responding to the Changing Development Conditions. Country Assistance Program Evaluation). p. 3. (available at <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/8-Agriculture-Rural-Dev.pdf>).

179 World Bank, 2009, p. 15.

180 Ibid. p. 15.

181 Ibid. p. x.



As the World Bank notes, “[w]ater shortages and drainage shortcomings are not specifically targeting women. Nonetheless, ...poverty, infrastructure and services shortcomings, opaque land rights, water and drainage problems, and most importantly the structure of cotton production affect women more negatively than men.”<sup>182</sup> In fact, several areas of gender inequality are associated with women's limited access to irrigation. A 2005 study of 43 dekhan farms producing cotton crops found that farms headed by women were, on average, smaller than those headed by men – a figure that is consistent with findings a decade later – and also that women-led dekhan farms had less irrigated land.<sup>183</sup> While male-headed dekhan farms had an average of 35.6 hectares of irrigated land, women-led farms had 12.6 hectares. Not only did female dekhan farmers have smaller land plots overall, they also had a smaller proportion of irrigated land. The figures above translate to a situation whereby 93 percent of land farmed by men was irrigated, compared with only 83 percent of land farmed by women.<sup>184</sup>

### G. Agricultural extension services and training

The lack of agricultural extension and advisory services is a problem encountered by all smallholder farmers in Tajikistan. Very few farming households receive public extension services, and agricultural information is most often disseminated through projects led by international development organizations<sup>185</sup> or informal exchanges with other farmers. There is insufficient funding for state or business advisory services for farmers, and while donor projects are better funded and utilize skilled experts, they are not coordinated, resulting in scattered and duplicative efforts.<sup>186</sup>

Women's ability to access extension services is also constrained by factors such as more limited mobility, fewer networks and a lower level of education than men. Research conducted in Tajikistan on sustainable farming practices to mitigate climate-related shocks, found that knowledge about such practices is low among all farmers, but there are also gender differences. Farmers mainly obtain information about sustainable practices from other farmers, but, “within villages, female-headed households do not seem to benefit from the knowledge-sharing networks that male farm heads enjoy”. This lack of knowledge is a key factor in reducing opportunities for women farmers to adopt sustainable practices.<sup>187</sup> Women do report that they call upon local agronomists when they need assistance or advice about their household plots, but they also turn to neighbours or other family members.<sup>188</sup> Some donor-led projects focus on women farmers as a target group. The FAST (Farmer Advisory Services in Tajikistan) programme, for example, has a component on training and disseminating good practices among women who farm at household level and on commercial dekhan farms. Through jamoat agricultural extension teams and farmer learning groups, women gain knowledge of new farming practices (for example, selection of high-quality seeds, pest and weed management, and improved practices to reduce crop loss and enhance storage and food preservation), which has led to increased crop yields.<sup>189</sup> Nonetheless, access to extension services and information is only one facet of access to agricultural inputs. The issue of rural women's ability to use the information about farming practices that they gain through training or by word of mouth is another important consideration. The topics of women's agency and participation in decision-making are discussed in more detail in a later section of this gender profile.

The representation of women in the country's agricultural education and training system is another measure of gender gaps in agricultural knowledge. With the growth in dekhan farming, agriculture graduates and extension specialists are in high demand. However, in contrast with the large number of women who are engaged in agricultural work, only a very small number enter professional and higher educational institutions to study agriculture. In the 2013-2014 academic year, women represented eight percent of students studying agriculture.<sup>190</sup> A more detailed review of the seven universities and the two vocational colleges that offer at least one agricultural speciality, found that while women constituted between four and eight percent of students specializing in subjects such as agronomy, livestock processing, agricultural machinery technician and veterinary medicine, they were better represented in the subject of food processing (and as students of the Tajik Academy of Agricultural Sciences, a research institution).<sup>191</sup> The highest rate of enrolment for female students is in technical and vocational colleges in Isfara and Khujand. This is likely to be related to the “cultural climate”

182 Ibid. p. 39.

183 Kuvatova, 2014, p. 10.

184 Ibid. p. 10.

185 For example, Oxfam in Tajikistan recognizes that there is a gap in extension services provided to women smallholder farmers and implements a Village Advisory Model to improve access to expert agronomists.

186 Kazbekov, J. & Qureshi, A. S. 2011. Agricultural Extension in Central Asia: Existing Strategies and Future Needs. Working Paper 145. Colombo, International Water Management Institute. p. 26.

187 World Bank. 2014b. Tajikistan. Autonomous Adaptation to Climate Change: Economic Opportunities and Institutional Constraints for Farming Households. Washington DC. p. ix.

188 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc, 2014, p. 19.

189 FAST is a USAID-managed project under the U.S. Government's Feed the Future Program. (More information is available at <http://www.meas-extension.org/home/associate-awards/farmer-advisory-services-tajikistan-program-fast>).

190 TajStat. 2014b, p. 82.

191 Jones, K., Richter, K. & Ludgate, N. 2015. InnovATE Study: Agricultural Education and Training System in Tajikistan. USAID. p. 5, p. 7.

in the Sughd province and “the desirability of food processing careers to women.”<sup>192</sup> The overall low presence of women in academic institutions which focus on agriculture is attributed to the fact that most agricultural specialities are perceived as “male work,” and there has been little support to help women enter these fields.

## H. Pasture management

Specific methods of livestock raising in Tajikistan have put a strain on pasture resources. Under the Soviet system, livestock production relied heavily on the use of animal feed that was grown on large-scale state farms. Today, the number of livestock owned by smallholder farms has increased significantly, but feed is in short supply or unaffordable, and farmers rely heavily on grazing, a situation that has led to “an intensive, year-round overgrazing [of] traditional spring / autumn pastures”<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, under the Tajik Land Code, pastures can be registered to individuals for long-term or permanent use and, thus, some pasture land was annexed into private farms, while “the majority of animals remained in households with no formal access to grazing lands”<sup>194</sup> The 2013 law “On Pastures” created a system of Pasture Users Associations (PUAs), but exclusive property rights are prevalent and give rise to conflicts of interest. Dekhan farms or other agricultural enterprises can organize as Pasture Users Associations. There are currently 274 PUAs that manage an area of 43 296 hectares.<sup>195</sup>

According to some estimates, up to 80 percent of pastureland is under the threat of degradation and erosion, and therefore demand and competition to use pastureland is high. Field studies indicate that some PUAs and small-scale livestock farmers have no access to this type of land.<sup>196</sup> While there are a number of projects in Tajikistan dedicated to developing livestock production and improving pasture management that acknowledge the specific needs of female farmers, experts also note that, “specific analyses of changing gender roles in pasture management and ways to improve the situation of women have not been conducted.”<sup>197</sup> During a workshop to discuss a draft version of this gender profile, experts also recommended the inclusion of a specific indicator on access to pastures within the core set of gender and agriculture indicators adapted to Tajikistan.

One of the most significant issues facing women is the limited recognition of the roles that they play in raising livestock, or the ways in which roles are divided along gender lines. Because women have more limited access to land generally, it stands to reason that they are also more constrained in accessing pastures. While women are well represented in PUAs (46.7 percent of all members), they are less visible in management roles. Fewer than a third of PUA management positions are held by women (31.4 percent), and there are only seven female PUA leaders in total.<sup>198</sup>

## I. Forestry

While Tajikistan is a mountainous country, forests account for a little more than three percent of the country's total land area.<sup>199</sup> A significant proportion of the population lives in or near forests, but forest lands are also under severe threat. It is estimated that in the past century, forest lands have been reduced by 75 percent (with an accelerated rate of deforestation in the last decade<sup>200</sup>), due to illegal felling and overexploitation of timber for domestic fuel, farming and uncontrolled grazing. Deforestation and subsequent soil erosion have serious ramifications for the likelihood and severity of natural disasters. All forests are state property but are considered a shared asset of the Tajik people. State forestry enterprises (leskhoz) manage almost all forest land and are engaged in forest protection and conservation, as well as the management of forest wildlife (including for hunting and fishing). Because their operating budgets are small, leskhoz are mainly funded through the harvesting and sale of non-timber forest products.<sup>201</sup> Smallholders can enter lease agreements with the leskhoz, for example for planting fruit trees, and villagers may purchase firewood from leskhoz staff.

192 Ibid. p. 7.

193 Rakhimov, S. 2014. “Pasture Reforms in Tajikistan.” Presentation at the Central Asian Practitioners’ Conference on Advancement of Sustainable Pasture Management. Bishkek. 17-19 November 2014. (available at <http://www.naturalresources-centralasia.org/index.php?id=63>).

194 Robinson, S. & Fabian, A. 2014. Pasture management in Central Asia-regional learning for reform. Rural 21: The International Journal for Rural Development. 17 November 2014. (available at <http://www.rural21.com/english/news/detail/article/pasture-management-in-central-asia-regional-learning-for-reform-00001321/>.)

195 Material provided by Angelika Brustinow, international consultant on the Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) project, implemented by GIZ in Tajikistan.

196 Ibid.

197 Pasture Management Networking Platform/FLERMONECA. 2015. Information Newsletter. April- June 2015. Dushanbe. p. 4.

198 Material provided by Angelika Brustinow, international consultant on the Forest and Biodiversity Governance Including Environmental Monitoring (FLERMONECA) project, implemented by GIZ in Tajikistan.

199 FAO. 2014b. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. Country Report Tajikistan. Rome. p. 4.

200 Tandon, N. 2011. Climate Change: Beyond Coping. Women smallholder farmers in Tajikistan. Oxford, Oxfam GB. p. 51.

201 Kirchof, J. F. & Fabian, A. 2010. Forestry Sector Analysis of the Republic of Tajikistan. Dushanbe, GTZ. p. 15.

Although the forestry sector has recently become a priority area for the government and development partners / organizations, it has long been an important sector of the economy. Due to insufficiencies in other fuel sources, rural households depend greatly on timber for cooking and heating (according to official estimates, one in every two households uses firewood as a primary fuel source<sup>202</sup>), but at present demand for firewood outweighs supply. Grass cutting and hay gathering are both a source of income and livestock fodder.<sup>203</sup> Forests are rich in other products, such as fruits, nuts, berries (for example, apricots, apples, plums, cherries, walnuts, pistachios, almonds, mulberries and hawthorn), honey, medicinal plants and herbs, all of which are either consumed or sold by forest villagers, thereby contributing to the local economy. While the volume of non-timber forest products has declined since the Soviet period, hundreds of tonnes of fruits and nuts are still processed annually and the figures have been increasing.<sup>204</sup> Experts suggest that there are also opportunities to expand forest vegetation and that more effective use of the forestry sector could “enhance the value of the land.”<sup>205</sup> A long-term state Strategy on Forest Sector Development for 2016-2030 is currently under development, and the draft document highlights the importance of the forest sector as part of the green economy, in both primary and secondary production (a source of non-timber products and important for recreation and tourist services).

In terms of how gender intersects with forestry, the picture is less clear. Sex-disaggregated data about employment in leskhoz and in other enterprises that deal with forest products are limited and inconsistent, perhaps because of the use of differing survey methodologies. The draft Strategy on Forest Sector Development identifies a gender imbalance in employment within the forestry industry, with men representing 92 percent of employees. According to data submitted to the FAO forest resources assessment in 2008, there were only 23 women (two percent) out of a total of 1 002 staff working in public forest institutions.<sup>206</sup> Labour market statistics for 2010 indicate that the total number of people employed in “forestry” was 1 700, of whom 200 (or 12 percent) were female employees.

The fact that leskhoz are underequipped, and staff are required to carry out patrol functions on foot (covering several thousand hectares of forest land can take a number of days), suggests that this type of work is unlikely to be considered suitable for, or accessible to, women. Salaries for leskhoz staff are low and not sufficient to support a family, so most employees have to seek additional sources of income.<sup>207</sup> In general, the forestry sector has not been able to attract young and trained specialists. The average age of forestry sector workers has increased in recent years (20 percent are in the pre-pension age group of 55 to 63 years), and only 20 percent of all forestry employees work in their speciality fields.<sup>208</sup>

In Tajikistan, men dominate in educational fields related to forestry, but overall, there are very few trained specialists in this field of either sex. All 44 graduates who achieved certification or a degree as a forestry technician in 2008 were men, and only four out of 36 professionals working in publicly-funded forestry research centres were women.<sup>209</sup>

Women's almost invisible role in forestry enterprises and research institutions does not mean that they are not engaged in forest activities in other ways. As discussed above, rural women spend a significant amount of time collecting firewood for domestic fuel. In comparison, male household heads are usually responsible for buying firewood.<sup>210</sup> Ecological organizations have noted that widespread deforestation has resulted in women and children spending more time collecting wood. In the case of some villages in the Pamir region, women and children have to travel 15 or more kilometres for fuel (where they once travelled two to four kilometres), sometimes spending the night in the field.<sup>211</sup> It has been estimated that a household uses 400 to 500 bundles of firewood a year: the purchased equivalent would cost around 50 diram per bundle in rural areas.<sup>212</sup> Therefore, women's unpaid labour collecting firewood effectively generates an income equivalent to 250 somoni. As a general rule, women in forest villages engage in the informal collection of non-timber forest products, for home consumption and for sale, and this pattern is likely to be replicated across Tajikistan. In 2013, the sale of non-timber forest products, combined with ecosystem services, was estimated to value almost six million somoni.<sup>213</sup> Dedicated research is needed for an enhanced understanding of the ways in which both women and men are engaged in the processing and sale of forest products.

Women and men can play important roles in conserving forest areas by eliminating harmful agricultural practices (cropping and grazing) and by identifying the types of indigenous plants that can be used in the long term for

202 Draft Strategy on Forest Sector Development for 2016-2030, provided by FAO.

203 Kirchhof & Fabian, 2010, pp. 15-16.

204 TajStat, 2015a, p. 328.

205 Kirchhof & Fabien, 2010, p. 11.

206 FAO. 2010. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010. Country Report Tajikistan. Rome. p. 43.

207 Kirchhof & Fabien, 2010, p. 31.

208 Draft Strategy on Forest Sector Development for 2016-2030 [in Russian], materials provided by FAO Representation in Tajikistan.

209 FAO, 2010, p. 46.

210 World Bank. 2014a. Assessment of Household Energy Deprivation in Tajikistan. Policy Options for Socially Responsible Reform in the Energy Sector. Washington, DC. p. 8.

211 ADB, no date.

212 Note that costs were accurate in 2007 and may have increased since then (Kobzar, 2007, p. 18).

213 Draft Strategy on Forest Sector Development for 2016-2030, provided by FAO.

reforestation.<sup>214</sup> Both women and men have specific knowledge about trees and non-timber forest products that should be taken into consideration by forest management. However, because women are largely absent in the formal forestry sector (in employment and in policy positions), special efforts are needed to ensure that they can also contribute their knowledge.

The Strategy on Forest Sector Development for 2016-2030 and the national Action Plan on the Implementation of the Strategy for the first five years, both of which are concurrently being drafted, should play a role in increasing gender-specific information about the forestry sector. The Strategy foresees the establishment of a national supervisory board on forestry that will include the participation of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs and gender experts. Under the draft national action plan, the Forestry Agency will conduct regular analysis of the sector using quantitative and qualitative indicators, some of which will reflect gender concerns.

### J. Fisheries and aquaculture

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Tajikistan is rich in wildlife, and the fishery sector is recognized as having the potential to improve rural livelihoods. During the Soviet period the government supported large-scale fish farms, but many fisheries were privatized after independence. However, due to factors such as insufficient policy and technological support, deteriorating facilities, loss of trade channels with former Soviet republics and limited support for research, there have been few investors in commercial fisheries and production has fallen considerably.<sup>215</sup> Fish production fell from almost 4 000 tonnes in 1990 to just over 280 tonnes in 2007, and today the fishery sector accounts for less than 0.1 percent of the country's GDP.<sup>216</sup> Despite such challenges, the government of Tajikistan recognizes the potential contribution of the fishery sector to rural development, and in 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture formulated the Policy and Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development for Poverty Alleviation. The policy consists of four interlinked goals for the fishery and aquaculture sector, including social goals on poverty alleviation, food security and increasing employment. At the same time, it aims to, "... [improve] gender equity and [generate] higher incomes and better livelihoods in rural and mountain areas."<sup>217</sup> Small-scale dekhan farms that are engaged in the fishery sector appear to exhibit the potential for growth. Dekhan farms account for a very small percentage of the total reservoirs, ponds and lakes used for fishing, but in 2014, they were responsible for 60 percent of the total fish catch (1 016.30 tonnes).<sup>218</sup>

In order to promote women's participation in aquaculture, all gender-based inequalities or barriers that are present in the fishery sector need to be identified. Unfortunately, this process is made more difficult because there are virtually no official data on the roles of men and women working in fisheries or aquaculture. In general, this sector employs very few people. It is interesting to compare, for example, the total number of people employed in the combined fields of agriculture, forestry and hunting (1 524 200 people in 2014) with those who were employed specifically in fish breeding (200 people).<sup>219</sup> Moreover, the majority of fisheries employees are male. In 2013, men accounted for 200 waged employees in fisheries, while there were only 30 waged female workers.<sup>220</sup> The low level of female representation, especially compared with women's presence in other forms of agricultural production, could be connected to the fact that post-harvest fish processing and marketing – both areas that traditionally employ women – are underdeveloped. A lack of research on fish value chains also means that the potential economic benefit to women and men from increased investment in the fishery sector is not known.

### K. Governance and networks

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At national level, women are underrepresented in decision-making positions in government. The state target for a minimum level of 30 percent representation by women in public bodies, which operates as a "soft quota", has led to an increase in the number of women working as civil servants. In 2014, women represented 23.4 percent of all employees in public administration (4 393 women), but they only occupied 17.1 percent of leadership positions in national and subordinate structures combined (528 women).<sup>221</sup> Gender experts maintain that official policy

214 Tandon, 2011.

215 Khaitov, A., Gafurov, A., van Anrooy, R., Hasan, M., Bueno, P. & Yerli, S. 2013. Fisheries and Aquaculture in Tajikistan: Review and Policy Framework. Rome, FAO. p. xi.

216 Ibid. p. 1, p. xi.

217 Ibid. p. 53.

218 TajStat, 2015a, pp. 330-331.

219 TajStat, 2015f, p. 41.

220 TajStat, 2014b, p. 90.

221 Committee of Women's and Family Affairs. 2014. Press conference of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the

has operated as a “glass ceiling” for women and restricted them to lower ranking or deputy positions.<sup>222</sup> Since the official programme focused on encouraging women to enter public service, without particular attention to leadership roles, it seems to have reinforced traditional views that women are suited to “rank and file” posts, rather than decision-making roles. Furthermore, the number of women in management and specialist posts varies by ministry and agency. Women are better represented in government offices that have responsibility for the social sector, such as the Ministry of Health. Table 14 below illustrates female representation in management posts for selected state bodies that are relevant to agriculture and rural livelihoods.

Table 14. Proportion of Female Civil Servants in Selected Ministries, Committees and State Agencies (2014)

Office	Women Managers (%)	Women Specialists (%)
Ministry of Agriculture	20	21
Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources	0	38
Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	13	49
Committee on Environmental Protection	13	24
Agency for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography	24	27
Agency on Statistics	36	59

Source: TajStat, 2014b, pp. 115-116.

Women have not reached the 30 percent threshold in the national parliament that is considered to be critical for having an effective voice in decision-making. At present, women constitute only 15 percent of parliamentarians of the Majlisi Oli of Tajikistan (19 percent of the Majlisi Namoyandagon [lower chamber] and 6.3 percent of the Majlisi Milli [upper chamber]).<sup>223</sup> Currently, there is a woman deputy chair of the Majlisi Oli (it is her second term in this post). Notably, women are well-represented in political parties (representing between a quarter and almost half of members of party factions in the current parliament). However, during elections, political parties generally put forward a much smaller number of female candidates than male candidates.

Women’s role in governance might appear to have limited relevance in the everyday lives of female farmers or women in rural communities. Nevertheless, it influences how society perceives women’s roles and, in particular, women’s place in setting the agenda for agricultural reforms. Achieving gender-balance in national offices would improve the legitimacy of government institutions; and increasing the representation of women would transform the offices, by making them more accessible to women who represent half of all constituents.

Women have made significant progress in entering political office at local level, and in 2014 they represented 43 percent of the heads of local authority (the chairperson) at jamoat level.<sup>224</sup> Women’s achievements at jamoat level may be the result of several factors. On the one hand, these leadership positions hold less power and prestige and, combined with the high rate of male outmigration, women might face less competition for these posts. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence suggests that women are perceived to be well-qualified for resolving community problems and less influenced by corruption and personal interests, which makes them preferable local-level leaders. Greater engagement with female leaders should, therefore, be a critical component of rural development policy-making and planning.

One measurement of women’s empowerment in agriculture, conducted using an index developed by the US government, found that women’s access to group membership in Tajikistan is one of the most significant areas of disempowerment.<sup>225</sup> The indicator for group membership takes into consideration community leadership, membership of economic and social groups and confidence in public speaking. Women’s participation in associations and groups that serve as networks for farmers, or deliver extension services and training, is generally low. For example, the National Association of Dekhan Farms of the Republic of Tajikistan estimates that out of 16 000 members, approximately 2 000 are women (12.5 percent).<sup>226</sup> Some service providers organize farmers into production groups for the purpose of delivering information and training. The National Agricultural Training Center is one example. This training centre works with approximately 2 000 farmers and, of these, around 35 percent are women. The centre also observes that, “... [women’s] participation is sex-segmented by topic with more women participating in vegetable producer groups than beef fattening.”<sup>227</sup> Women appear to be fairly well represented at the local level in networks such as the Seed Association of Tajikistan and the Association of Livestock of Tajikistan, but they play a very limited role in their management or leadership.

Republic of Tajikistan, 30 July 2014. (available at <http://kumitaizanon.tj/ru/news/id/150>). [in Russian].

222 ADB, no date.

223 Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliaments (available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>) and of the Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan (available at <http://www.parliament.tj/en/>) [accessed September 2015].

224 Government of Tajikistan. 2014. National Review of the Republic of Tajikistan to Implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. p. 32. [in Russian].

225 Malapit, H. J., Sproule, K., Kovarik, C., Meinzen-Dick, R., Quisumbing, A., Ramzan, F., Hogue, E. & Alkire, S. 2014. Measuring Progress Toward Empowerment. Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index: Baseline Report. Washington, DC, International Food Policy Research Institute. p. 29.

226 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc, 2014, p. 17.

227 Ibid, p. 17.

Water Users' Associations are one of the most important social assets for rural communities because they regulate water use for irrigation. Traditionally, control over water for irrigation has been considered a "male" sphere, with women having responsibility for household water management. Women are not generally active in WUAs, even in the regions with high levels of male outmigration, and despite the significant role that women play in agriculture, including on farms and in kitchen gardens. WUAs do not adequately integrate all local water users, and a study in Sughd suggests that the associations "serve ... members consisting mostly of male owners / directors of farms and representatives of jamoats."<sup>228</sup> Another key position – the mirob (a local water technician who controls and monitors irrigation) – is usually always held by men because the job requires physical strength (including opening and closing canals). The absence of men in many rural areas, the increasing number of female-headed households, and "traditional and religious distancing of females from other non-kinsmen", has given rise to a situation in which women have to take on a more active role in water management, albeit in an informal capacity. Research conducted in Sughd province documented that, culturally and traditionally, "male water masters would not be able to enforce water distribution to kitchen gardens and collect fees from the FHHs," and that the male mirob would not be able to "shout at women, fine them or close their water", especially in light of the fact that kitchen gardens are the main sources of survival for many households.<sup>229</sup> WUAs have increasingly involved women in gathering fees for irrigation services and given them some oversight of water distribution, but on the whole, it appears that they have not been formally employed as WUA staff or in mirob positions.

Beyond the sphere of agriculture, women are more likely to be engaged in civil society organizations that represent their particular interests as women. Tajikistan has well-developed women's non-governmental organizations and NGO networks that are led by committed individuals. Such organizations engage in advocacy, research and the provision of services to women, for example through associations of business women and women lawyers.

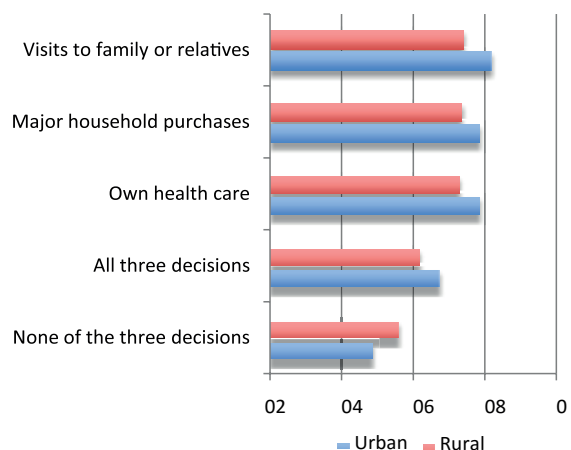
## L. Rural women's agency

The topic of male outmigration, and the ways in which this phenomenon has resulted in changing gender roles for women, specifically requiring them to take on non-traditional roles in the absence of husbands or other male family members, has been much debated in Tajikistan. On the one hand, it was anticipated that women in rural locations would be empowered by their expanded roles and would have gained the authority to participate in decision-making. On the other hand, research suggests that, "the absence of men does not necessarily lead to an increase in women's decision-making."<sup>230</sup> Decision-making in this context does not refer to formal leadership positions in business or the public sector, but instead to women's agency and the process of solving problems and making choices in their personal lives, including about farming practices.

Measuring women's agency, or indeed women's empowerment generally, is made more complex because multiple indicators need to be used and data can be subjective (for example, asking respondents to report on who makes specific decisions in the household). Nevertheless, efforts to use a standard index to measure women's empowerment have shown that both women and men in Tajikistan experience some form of disempowerment but women are more than three times as disempowered as men.<sup>231</sup>

Women's agency is dependent on the types of decisions in question. When married women were surveyed about their participation in decision-making at household level, 34.2 percent responded that they did not participate at all in decisions concerning visits to family and relatives, major household purchases or

Figure 7. Women's Participation in Decision-Making by Rural and Urban Location (% of women who usually make decisions by themselves or jointly with husband)



Source: TajStat et al., 2013, p. 222.

228 Mukhamedova, N. & Wegerich, K. 2014. Land Reforms and Feminization of Agricultural Labor in Sughd Province, Tajikistan. Colombo, International Water Management Institute (IWMI). p. 14.

229 Ibid. p. 17.

230 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc, 2014 p. 18.

231 Malapit et al., 2014, p. 29.

their own health care.<sup>232</sup> Additionally, rural women were less likely than urban women to take part in decision-making in these areas (see Figure 7).

As documented in the preceding section on women's economic empowerment, family dynamics are an important predictor of women's decision-making. In traditional and multi-generational households, younger family members usually defer to the decisions of the head of household, and in the case of a woman, this would include her husband and his family. A young and newly-married woman traditionally has low social status within the family, but this position changes once she has children, especially when she becomes a mother-in-law to her son's bride. Joint decision-making within households is also common, especially when multiple family members are living together. Furthermore, women's participation in decision-making is positively correlated with age, number of children, educational level and financial status (whether they are employed for cash earnings).<sup>233</sup>

In general, women have greater agency over non-economic decisions, especially those concerning children, and those pertaining to their spheres of influence (for example, concerning kitchen gardens or medical care for family members). In contrast, men take leading roles in decisions about savings and spending, taking loans, large purchases, choice of crops and the sale of agricultural products or livestock. Anecdotal evidence suggests that even when they are working abroad, husbands are often consulted about key decisions concerning agricultural production. A survey and focus groups conducted among residents of seven villages in Sughd and RRS (Hissar district), asked respondents (the large majority of whom were women) about how decisions were made in the household.<sup>234</sup> The findings indicate that in households with both male and female adults, men and women tend to make many decisions jointly, but men are still more likely to act independently when making financial decisions and decisions about work outside of the home (see Table 15 below). When respondents were asked about the person in the household who makes specific decisions about agricultural production, the results show that women are quite involved in this type of decision-making. However, during focus group discussions, female respondents offered opinions such as, "women listen to men" and follow their instructions about farming, and "women carry out the work but decisions (regarding resources) are made by men."<sup>235</sup>

Table 15. Gender and Patterns of Household Decisions (distribution of decision-making, %)

Type of decisions	Husband and wife jointly	Husband alone	Wife alone	Parents
About agricultural crop production	39	20	41	0
Person who sells surplus agricultural products	20	49	29	2
Purchasing food for the household	17	52	31	0
Purchasing furniture and tools for the house	27	69	4	0
Participation in public activities	27	22	51	0
Working outside the home	17	83	0	0

Source: WECF, 2014, p. 15.

Another assessment that was conducted among male and female dekhan farm members and leaders, as well as local government staff, from three provinces (Sughd, Khatlon and RRS), posed a theoretical question about the types of decisions concerning agriculture that are "mainly made by women."<sup>236</sup> The responses indicate that men and women hold different perceptions about the extent to which women participate (or should participate) in decision-making (see Table 16 below). Female respondents tend to perceive that women have greater participation in the specific decisions included in the survey than the male respondents. However, while the survey revealed gender differences in the degree to which the respondents think that women are involved in decision-making, there is overall agreement that women are more likely to make decisions about land use and the cultivation and marketing of agricultural products, and are less likely to make strategic decisions concerning agricultural practices (for example, taking up or discontinuing agricultural activities) or livestock management.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>232</sup> TajStat, 2013, p. 222.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. pp. 216-217.

<sup>234</sup> Women in Europe for a Common Future, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>236</sup> Bakozoda et al., 2011.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

Table 16. Answers to the Question "What decisions are mainly taken by women?" by Sex of the Respondent (%)

Types of decisions	Men's responses	Women's responses
Initiating (new) agricultural activities or stopping agricultural activities	15.8	19.2
Land use planning and cultivation (e.g. type of crops, timing of activities)	35.1	36.8
Livestock management	14.7	23.8
Processing of agricultural products	26.2	33.0
Marketing of agricultural products	40.9	45.2

Source: Bakozoda et al., 2011, p. 42.

The results of these surveys should be viewed with some caution because the responses might be influenced by the phrasing of the question. Nonetheless, the data suggest that greater efforts are needed to support women to take a more active role in decision-making in general, and in particular concerning agricultural production.



## VI. Gender inequalities in agricultural labour

Agricultural work is a basic fact of life for both women and men in rural communities. Some members of rural households engage in formal employment in agriculture, but almost all adults undertake some form of work on household plots and tend livestock, even though they may have other, non-agricultural employment or be considered unemployed.

In terms of formal labour, agriculture is the largest single employment sector for both women and men. In 2013, 49.5 percent of all working women, and 44.2 percent of all working men, were engaged in agricultural work, representing around 239 000 women and 257 400 men.<sup>238</sup> It is worth noting that more recent data are not complete. However, in 2014, the number of female hired (contractual) workers in agriculture had decreased to 204 200, while the number of men working in agriculture increased to 290 200, but overall the total employment figures showed little variation.<sup>239</sup>

Official statistics generally combine several categories of related work: agriculture, forestry and fisheries / aquaculture. Further disaggregation by sub-sector reveals that the majority of workers of both sexes are, in fact, employed in agriculture. Labour market data from 2010 (the most recent available) indicate that few men, and almost no women, are contractually employed in forestry or aquaculture / fisheries (see Table 17 below).

Table 17. Number and Share of Wage Employees by Sub-Sector and Sex, 2010

Sub-sector	Women		Men	
	Number of female employees per sector	% of female employees per sector*	Number of male employees per sector	% of male employees per sector*
Agriculture	207 000	49.9	296 100	48.6
Forestry	200	0.05	1 500	0.2
Fisheries	40	0.01	100	0.02

Source: TajStat, 2012a, pp. 53-55; pp. 58-59.  
(\* as a % of all female / male wage employees nationally)

While the number of women who are officially employed in agriculture is lower than the number of men, the share of women working in this sector, compared with women working in other sectors, is consistently greater. Women, who are formally employed, work almost exclusively in three sectors – agriculture, education and health – while male employment is more diverse. It is estimated that 85 percent of employed women are working in these three sectors combined, and the sector with the largest share of female workers (estimated to be 75 percent) is agriculture.<sup>240</sup>

The feminization of the agricultural sector is attributable to the dismantling of the collective farm system, which dramatically reduced the number of employment opportunities for members of the rural population. Moreover, while men have migrated to find work, women have taken up work in low paid agricultural jobs. The global economic crisis and increasing food prices have also pushed women into agricultural work.<sup>241</sup>

Despite women's prominent role in the sector, they face discrimination in terms of remuneration. While women's salaries in agriculture have increased, the gap between women's and men's wages has also widened, suggesting that the growth in women's wages has not kept up with men's (see Table 18 below). In 2013, women's wages equalled 57.5 percent of men's wages, and the trend appears to be worsening.<sup>242</sup> The wage gap is partly attributable to the fact that men often perform specialized labour, and women are more likely to be engaged in seasonal and part-time work.

Table 18. Women's and Men's Average Wages in Agriculture

Average monthly nominal wage (in somoni)							
2008		2009		2011		2013	
Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
74.40	113.79	79.44	121.64	142.68	212.80	211.34	367.59

Sources: TajStat, 2012b, p. 116 [data for 2008, 2011]; TajStat, 2014b, p. 118 [data for 2009, 2013].

<sup>238</sup> TajStat, 2014b, p. 90.

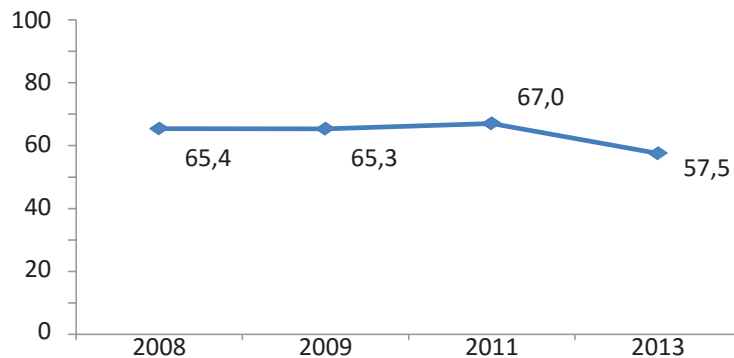
<sup>239</sup> TajStat. Gender Statistics Database. [accessed September 2015].

<sup>240</sup> Abdulloev, M. 2013. Gender Aspects of Agriculture. Dushanbe, TajStat. p. 1.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>242</sup> TajStat. 2014b, p. 118.

Figure 8. Trends in the Gender Wage Gap in Agriculture (%)



Source: TajStat - calculated using the data in Table 18.

Women's formal employment in agriculture presents only a narrow view of women's engagement in this sector because their participation in agriculture is typically informal. When former state-owned collective farms were privatized, several new positions were created: the *sahimdor* (collective owners, an employee position with a monthly cash salary); *hectarchi* (seasonal labourers who receive output based wages in cash or in-kind); and *mardikor* (short term output based workers).

Women are commonly hired as *mardikor* workers and organized into informal groups, or brigades. Women's tasks are, "largely restricted to field labour, such as weeding, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting, which do not require decision-making, whereas the selection of seeds, fertilizers, and plant protection materials is controlled by men."<sup>243</sup> Notably, a large proportion of women working as *hectarchi* or *mardikor* do not have formal contracts, and while this type of labour offers flexibility, women generally receive very low pay or only in-kind payments. In-kind payments are usually in the form of cotton stalks or mulberry branches that can be used as household fuel. Women also report receiving food items, soap, and even empty jam jars.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, women's labour is concentrated at peak times, such as the harvest season, and during the winter months their income-earning opportunities are more restricted. Most rural women undertake agricultural work as second and third occupations, typically on household plots and presidential lands (cotton farms) to earn extra income for the household.

Of substantial concern is the large number of women who undertake agricultural work without receiving any wages. According to the 2012 DHS, out of those women who worked in agriculture at any time in the 12 months preceding the survey, more than half (58.7 percent) were not paid, while a quarter (24 percent) were paid in cash and in-kind, and 12.7 percent were paid exclusively in-kind. Less than five percent of the surveyed women were paid in cash only (compared with 58.6 percent of women who were engaged in non-agricultural work).<sup>245</sup> When reflecting on gender disparities in Tajikistan, gender experts identify the agricultural sector as one of the most exploitative in terms of women's labour.

243 Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) project/ Fintrac Inc, 2014, p. 16.

244 Kobzar, 2007, p. 17.

245 TajStat et al., 2013, p. 40.

## VII. Conclusion

A number of factors, ranging from the specific geography of the country to the historical dominance of state-controlled farming and today's deficit of critical inputs, all make agriculture a challenging prospect for any smallholder or dekhan farmer. Yet agriculture remains vital to a large segment of the rural population. While the high rate of male labour migration from rural areas and abroad is described as a major push factor in women's uptake of farming and the management of dekhan farms, Tajik women have actually been formally engaged with agriculture throughout the country's history. Many of today's successful female farmers come from a generation that gained skills in managing collective farms under the Soviet system. However, a younger generation of women is also engaged in almost all aspects of agricultural production, despite facing a number of gender-based constraints in many areas. Women do not participate in agriculture on an equal footing with men. They experience substantial challenges, including the constraints of rigid gender roles in rural communities, limited access to financial resources, a lower level of knowledge about the legal requirements of running a farming enterprise, and dependence on men to navigate the various networks that are involved in the production and marketing of agricultural products. The influence of gender stereotypes, particularly that agriculture is not a "female sphere", and a lack of role models remain pervasive issues that can weaken women's confidence to undertake new ventures. Despite such obstacles, experience shows that female farmers can thrive when their access to resources is improved, and that women are often quick to adapt to new practices. Developing the agricultural sector, and improving the livelihoods of the rural population, is dependent on supporting women to realize their full potential alongside men.

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The purpose of this national gender profile was to collect and compile available data and information from diverse sources in order to shed light on gender disparities in rural settings and the status of rural women across a number of dimensions, with a focus on inequalities in agricultural employment. This publication aims to provide policy-makers, gender activists and researchers with a clearer picture of the types and degree of the main gender inequalities in agriculture and concerning rural livelihoods in rural Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan/Turkey.

This national gender profile was discussed at the national workshop (time, location) in which experts commented on a draft version of the present report. The group of reviewers consisted of both data producers and data user stakeholders, such as statisticians from the national statistical service, representatives of the key ministries, agriculture experts, gender experts, the civil society sector, and representatives of international development organizations and financial institutions that support projects dedicated to rural women. This publication incorporates their specific suggestions and insights.



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