

The overview of roles of men and women in water resources management in South Kazakhstan

Implemented under the project “Valuation of Ecosystem Services for Improving Agricultural Water Management in Kazakhstan”

Project period: 2014-2015

Project area: Low Syr Darya Basin, Turkestan region, South Kazakhstan

Studied villages: Bugun, Staryi Ikan and Karachik, which represent a typical situation and challenges of upstream and downstream settlements

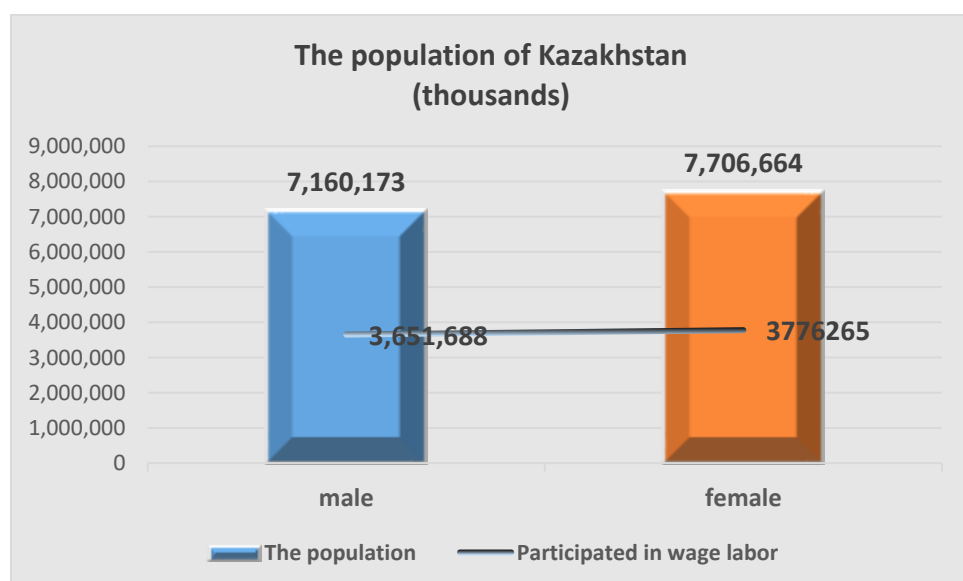
General Information on Gender in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a Central Asian republic. The economic and political situation in Kazakhstan reflects its transition to independence and a free market economy following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan’s formal recognition as an independent state on 25 December 1991.

The laws of Kazakhstan widely recognize the principle of nondiscrimination based on gender, including recognition in the constitution and in the labor code. Kazakhstan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 29 June 1998 and joining its Optional Protocol on 4 July 2001, enacted the Law on Combating Domestic Violence, which provides comprehensive measures for the prevention of physical, psychological, sexual, or economic violence against women and guarantees special social services for victims of violence.

Statistics of Kazakhstan shows that the number of the population in general and the number of men and women involved in economic activities in particular, is quite balanced from gender aspect. The ratio of women and men population is 52% and 48%. Women's participation in wage labor is 49% women and 51% men. For example in Afghanistan, the percentage of working women is 15%.

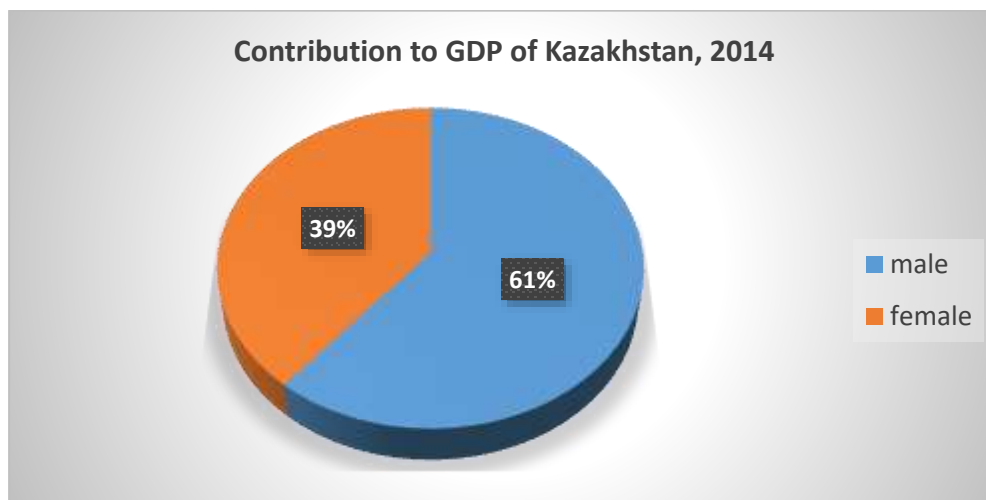
Graph 1. Gender disaggregated statistics on the population of Kazakhstan and those involved in wage labor.



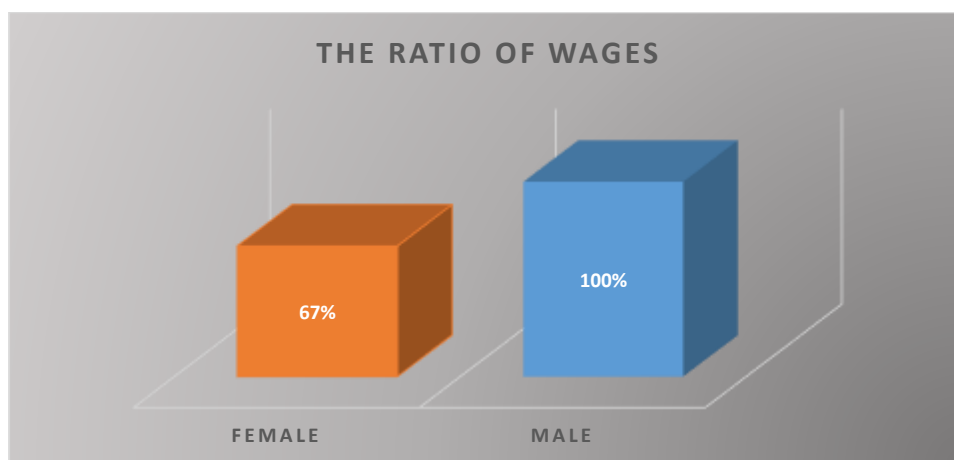
Gender equality in Kazakhstan is supported by the policy of public administration. Number of women in decision-making positions is progressively increasing. Nevertheless, there are still a lot to do. For example, the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is the highest body performing legislative functions, women ratio is 22%. The Agrarian Committee of the Majilis presented 90% by men.

The economic contributions of men and women in the Growth Domestic Product and their wages proves a gender imbalance (Graphs 2 and 3).

Graph 2. Contribution of men and women in GDP of Kazakhstan



Graph 3. The ratio of wages



The percentage of female unemployment in Kazakhstan is almost 20% higher than the percentage of male unemployment (59.5% and 40.5%). At the same time, unemployment among women is more durable. Women work mainly in areas dominated by state-owned companies, where salaries are much lower than in the commercial sector. This situation is recognized by the government and reflected in the strategy for gender equality, which stated: "Owing to the existing stereotypes regarding the distribution of roles in society, women have fewer rights and opportunities in life than men" (Government of Kazakhstan 2005, 6).

ADB's study on gender equality in Cambodia, Philippines and Kazakhstan reported that gender inequality in Kazakhstan increased after independence in terms of patriarchal attitudes, domestic violence, and women's loss of decision-making power in the public sphere. It says also that Kazakhstan do not recognize gender equality as a normative macroeconomic goal in their national development plans. The use of

macroeconomic policies to directly expand employment has been limited, and gendered impacts remain underexplored.

Purpose and questions of the research

The research aimed to understand:

1. if a gender based constraints and/or challenges to access to and use of different water resources exist in studied villages? If exist...
2. how existing and potential water issues affect women in comparison to men (groups and individuals)?
3. If there is a need in specific empowering and capacity building activities along with incentive-based mechanisms for enabling women groups adopting a more rational use of water resources?

Besides the above, the research aimed also to see availability of gender-disaggregated data on the region and village level (population, age, education, agriculture, poverty, economic activity, unemployment).

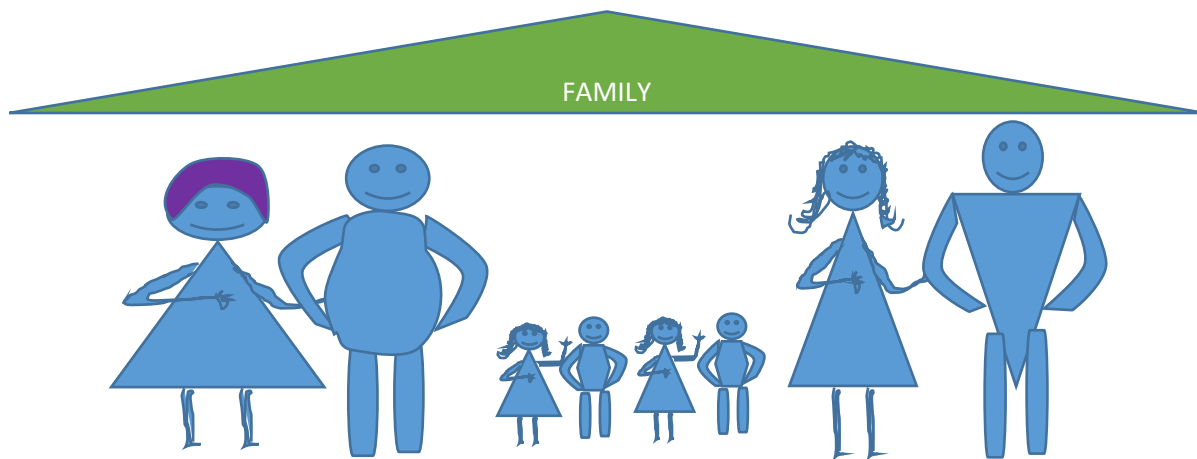
Research findings:

South Kazakhstan is the most populated region, almost 19% of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2,760,842 people) live here. The main source of income of local population is agriculture, which is basically a "male" sphere of activity (77% of male workers). Agriculture is the most low-income sector in Kazakhstan, which meets also problems with outdated infrastructure, strong land degradation and the impact of climate change.

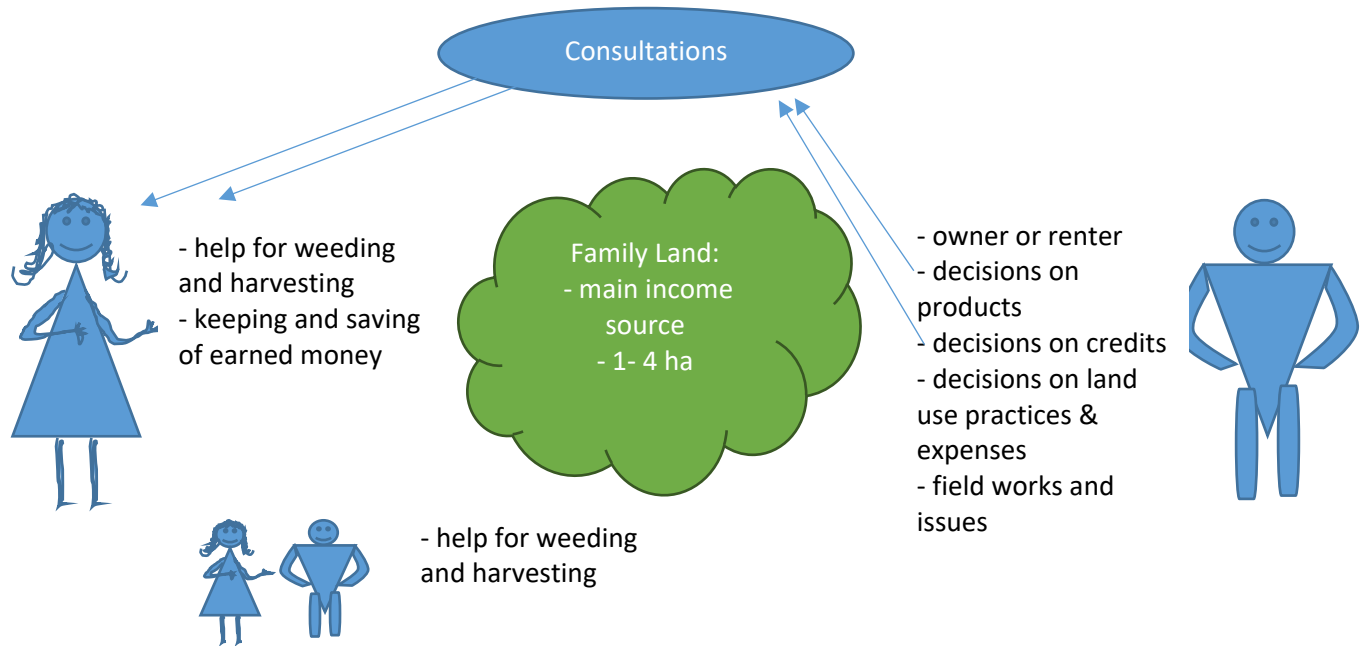
Gender-disaggregated data on village and region levels is not available in open access. The maps of villages do not include this data as well. Absence of this data has prevented to conduct some gender-based comparisons on such as education, economic activity, unemployment, salary ration, poverty, etc. Accordingly, research findings are based on discussions with local stakeholders and experts through interviews, focus groups and round tables.

Women remain subordinate to men in daily life. There is a strong gendered division of roles. No one women in studied area occupy a high level position in public bodies. Few of them work in local administrations on technical positions (receptionist, bookkeeper and cleaning lady), even less work in water and land management bodies. While staff of schools and medical clinics, where wages are low, mostly occupied by women.

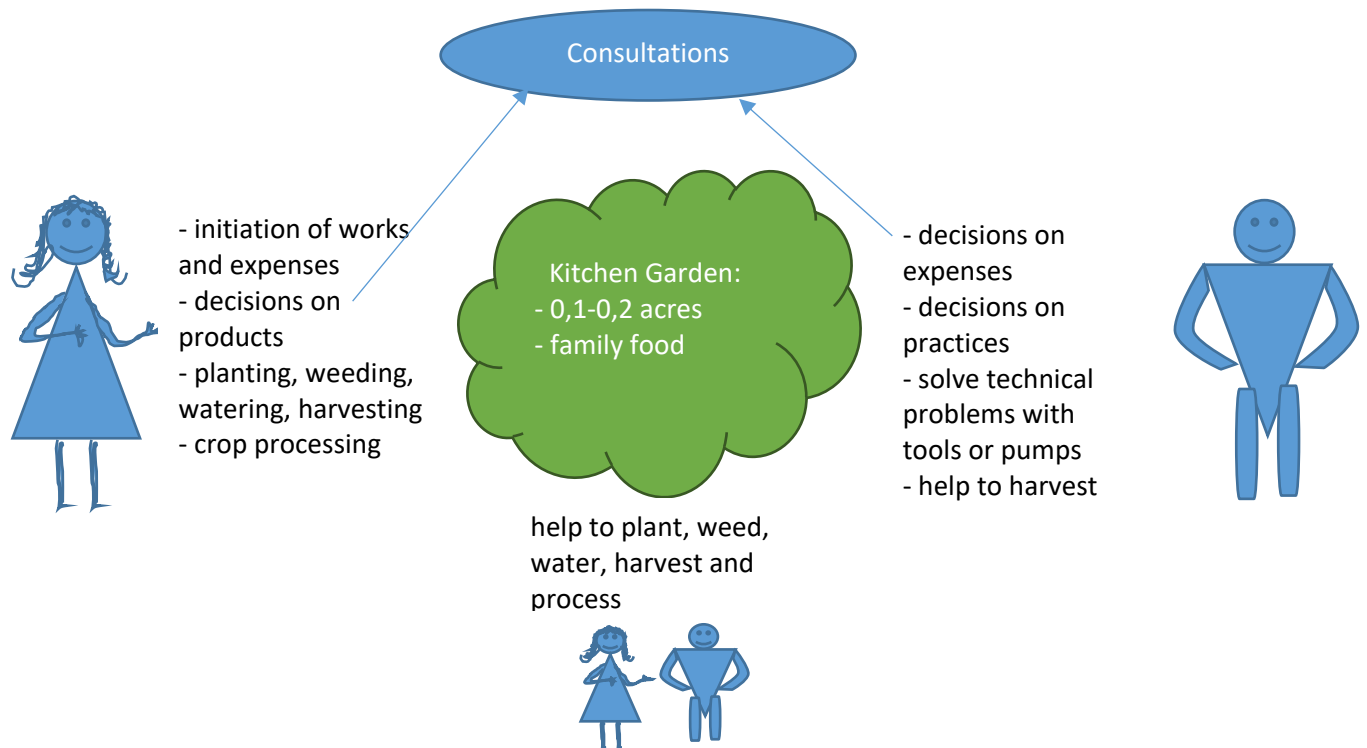
Picture 1. Typical structure of family in studied villages



Picture 2. Typical distribution of roles of family members in **Family land** management



Picture 3. Typical distribution of roles of family members in **Kitchen Garden** management



There are very limited opportunities for men and women to have jobs in studied villages. According to the own estimation of participants of FG meetings, unemployment among women reach 70-75%. The reasons indicated both, traditional approach to gender roles and lack of job opportunities for women, such as objects of social infrastructure, scientific laboratories, etc.

Business in studied villages is mostly represented by very small entities, with 1-3 permanent workers. Men lead entities such as café-restaurant, petrol station, feeding stations, points for cotton, joineries, saunas. Women lead smaller entities, such as stalls, pharmacy and veterinary pharmacy, bakery, small cafés.

Information about new technologies in land and water management people receive from each other, they even do not know about capacity building events conducted by newly established office at the region level authorities. People have no information about water quality, soil composition.

Participants of all focus groups know about credit, but have a hard access to credit products. Because there are only two options: Agriculture credit with 7% of interest rate targets only by big farmers or associations, which have more than 300 ha of land. Consumer credits have 23%-28% of interest rate, which is very expensive. Credit decisions in families are taken by men and women together, but the last word – take a men.

Due to social norms, beliefs, and values within family and kinship systems, women have greater responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work, which affects their ability to engage in paid work on the same terms as men. Besides domestic unpaid job work, women also contribute in economic activities of their men: farming and small business. An attempt to identify a contribution of women in family budget failed due to a very different range of opinions, possible both: because respondents undervalue, or never value of these jobs and unwillingness to open their privacy.

All three villages, especially Karachik and Saryi Ikan strongly suffer from water shortages, especially in watering season. Nevertheless, local families mostly use traditional practices in water and land use, in processing of agriculture products. More effective technologies, such as drip irrigation, only begin appearing in studied area.

Local authorities follow centralized planning model when the government determines development models and pulls down development indicators. Ecosystem services are not taking into consideration in decisions. Opportunities provided by innovative planning tools, such as SWAT and RIOS/InVEST modelling, are hardly known on project territory.

It is necessary to recognize that involved stakeholders have a slight idea about the ecosystem services and their value. Discussions on water value and willingness to pay for water identified the difference in opinion between men and women. While men expressed their readiness to pay and tentatively indicated a percentage - up to 3% of the income from the harvest, women are strongly against any payments. Women insists, that all costs for irrigation infrastructure and rehabilitation of land, should be taken by the authorities. The opinion of local experts is that 3% is absolutely impossible to reach indicator, because at the moment farmers pay approximately 0,001 % of the income.

The study revealed clear gender- and location-based differences in water use in studied villages. For example in Bugun village, which is upstream, 30 km far from the nearest market. Having easier access to the only water source - Bugun reservoir, families have bigger size of family land and smaller size of kitchen garden, 3-5 ha and 10-15 acres accordingly. Harvest is sold in bulk. Women here are hardly involved in farming business. Accordingly, they are less involved into business discussions and financial decisions of their men. They are even quite proud of not being involved into selling of harvest on the market. On kitchen garden, women produce fruits and vegetables only for family use.

In Saryi Ikan, the middle user of Bugun reservoir, which is situated 22 km from the nearest market. Families here use smaller size of family land, but bigger size of kitchen garden, 1-4 ha and 15-20 acres accordingly. It is because the irrigation water from Bugun reservoir is ended in the middle-end of July, but kitchen gardens are watering by pumping from water wells. Men and women here follows similar approach as those in Bugun village. Men sell harvest in bulk. Women stay aside and process harvest from kitchen garden only for family use.

In Karachik village, which represents the tail-end user, but 9 km from the nearest market, all available lands are used for farming and kitchen garden, the last one a bigger then in other two villages. Unlike, women in other Bugun and Saryi Ikan villages, women in Karachik village pursue different livelihood

strategies. They are involved into selling of harvest. They sell fruits and vegetables from kitchen garden, as well as milk and meat products on the nearest market. They are actively involved into farming business decisions, keep family budget and participate in financial discussions of their family.

In spite of different livelihood strategies, women in all villages in all focus groups expressed their interest to build their skills and capacities on following subjects:

- Greenhouse organization and keeping
- Available and effective technologies to process meat, milk, fruits and vegetables and arrange their post-harvest saving (drying fruits)
- Soil quality: characteristics and opportunities to decrease salinity
- Science of farming: when, what and how to seed? Soil preparation and planting. Insemination.
- Water saving technologies, drip irrigation
- New agriculture cultures relevant to local conditions.
- Science of doing business: business planning, budgeting, cost benefit-analysis

Conclusions:

The study confirmed that women are companion and fellow member of their men, but their capacities for more effective use of water and land services are undiscovered and unused yet.

There are no gender based constrains to access and use of water resources. But, women are hardly participate in water related decision making on all levels: family, village, region and even national.

Shortage of water in irrigation season negatively affect both men and women, and economic development of the region in total. Low economic development of the region causes lack of business opportunities for all population, but especially affects women. Because they have even less opportunities for job finding, changing life strategy, starting business initiatives and getting education.

State initiative on building capacity of local population on business planning and other practical issues in keeping agriculture and livestock related business activities, is not known by people who do not work in state bodies.

Even small assistance to women to update their skills and capacities to improve their practices in water and land use and products processing, will help to decrease disadvantages resulting from gender inequalities and their economic development.

People have no clear understanding of the term gender and the concept, considering it rather 'a feminist appeal'.

There is lack of gender disaggregated data and official statistics.

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