SECURING WOMEN'S RESOURCE RIGHTS THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

Country Virtual Learning Exchange Workshop Series

Insights from

KYRGYZSTAN
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Prepared for the project: Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches for Securing Women’s Resource Rights (WRR), led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)-World Agroforestry (ICRAF) together with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

SECURING WOMEN’S RESOURCE RIGHTS THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

In 2020, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invited a consortium of the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to work with selected IFAD projects to promote and strengthen women’s land rights through the integration of gender transformative approaches (GTAs) in rural development interventions by improving policies, tools and practices.

https://www.cifor.org/wlr
https://www.ifad.org/en/gender_transformative_approaches

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**Virtual Webinar Insights**

**WEBINAR OVERVIEW - 5TH DECEMBER 2023**

The webinar commenced with an overview of the project’s background including the gender analysis methodology. Key findings from the gender analysis were presented, shedding light on challenges such as lack of information, gender disparities in land rights, and conservative shifts in communities. Moreover, the webinar provided insights into the pilot design and implementation, including legal counselling, trainings on financial literacy, social media marketing, and family harmony, as well as study tours. Throughout the session, speakers offered recommendations for addressing gender inequalities and promoting women’s empowerment in land ownership, with an emphasis on replicating and scaling up GTAIs in other contexts.

**OPENING SPEAKERS**

- Elnura Sarieva, Policy and Technical Specialist, IFAD
- Gulnara Ibraeva, Principle Investigator, Jer-Bailyk project in Kyrgyzstan, PIL LLC.
- Buazhar Abdykadyrova, Coordinator, Jer-Bailyk project in Kyrgyzstan

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**Project Background**

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The project paired with the Global Initiative, the Access to Markets Project (ATMP) (2016-2024), aimed to raise incomes and enhance economic growth in pastoralist communities. Its development objective was to improve access and integration of smallholder livestock farmers into remunerative markets for their products, leading to improved and equitable returns. The ATMP project focused on improving selected value chains by providing comprehensive support to enhance their performance and increase outputs. The project collaborated with champions within these value chains who are willing to strengthen their business models through partnerships among value chain actors. Smallholder livestock producers were included in each value chain, aiming to enhance their market integration and improve their income opportunities. Pasture users’ unions, facilitated by Kyrgyzstan’s Community Development and Investment Agency (ARIS), actively participated in identifying and mobilizing target groups at the community level, ensuring transparency and community involvement to maximize project benefits. The set of activities that took place in Kyrgyzstan under the global initiative is referred to as the ‘Jer-Bailyk’ project.

**APPROACH TO GTA DEVELOPMENT**

The initiative’s approach to developing Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) involved conducting socio-legal and gender analyses to understand women’s access to land rights and tenure security. Primary data collection complemented secondary data to gain insights into attitudes and norms surrounding women’s land rights.

Findings were shared back with the communities involved, who were asked to provide priorities for subsequent activities. Together, these inputs were used to design the GTA.

**GENDER ANALYSIS**

The gender analysis involved Key Informant Interviews with ATMP staff and community members from four selected villages. Purposive sampling ensured representation from diverse communities, reflecting varying levels of gender equality.

Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews provided insights into community dynamics, land rights, and participation in pasture management, engaging both men and women to capture a comprehensive understanding of gender relations and resource rights.

**Key Findings**

**LACK OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE:**

Community members demonstrated a lack of understanding of rules, policies, and procedures related to land, including land rights, taxes, digitalization, and conflict resolution. This gap in knowledge hindered effective land management and equitable distribution of resources.

**CONCERNS ABOUT TRANSPARENCY:**

There were concerns among communities regarding the lack of transparency and efficiency in the management of common lands and other productive resources, such as pastures and forests. This lack of transparency contributed to distrust and hindered collective land use initiatives.

**LOW INVOLVEMENT AND INTEREST:**

Despite the importance of collective land use, there was a low level of involvement and interest among community members. This lack of engagement posed challenges for sustainable land management practices and hindered efforts to maximize the potential of communal resources.

**GENDER DISPARITIES IN LAND RIGHTS:**

Kyrgyz legislation provides equal rights to land to women and men. Yet, a significant majority of respondents (both women and men) supported the idea that men should have more rights to land than women. This perspective perpetuated gender disparities in land ownership and limited women’s access to and control over productive resources.

**CONSERVATIVE SHIFT:**

There was an observed conservative shift in communities, often framed under the slogan of “return to Islam.” This shift contributed to reinforcing strict gender roles and further marginalizing women’s participation in land and pasture management.

**VULNERABLE GROUPS:**

Two groups identified as having less access to land were youth and women. Female-headed households faced additional challenges in hiring labour for agricultural activities, exacerbating gender inequalities in agricultural production.

**LIMITED ACCESS TO LAND AND MIGRATION:**

Limited access to land discouraged young people, especially girls, from pursuing agricultural livelihoods in their communities. This exacerbated a lack of economic activities and encouraged migration to urban areas in search of employment.

**GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN PRACTICE:**

Although everyone is considered equal before the law, in practice, girls and young women often did not receive benefits from their land plots when leaving their parental family. Registration of new land was typically done in the man’s name, perpetuating gender-based discrimination in land ownership and inheritance practices.
**Pilot design & implementation**

The pilot was structured into several components, each targeting specific challenges and opportunities identified through the gender analysis.

**LEGAL COUNSELLING**
- Initiated legal counselling services to address community members’ questions and concerns regarding land ownership.
- Developed easy-to-use reference materials focusing on land rights, ownership documentation, and inheritance laws.
- Held meetings with local stakeholders to discuss the importance of transparency in land management.
- Highlighted ongoing efforts to digitize ownership documents to ensure equitable access to land resources.

Feedback from the legal counselling training revealed persistent challenges in land ownership rights, particularly concerning gender disparities. Despite legal provisions granting equal land rights, cultural norms and perceptions often hinder women’s involvement in decision-making and land ownership. Additionally, complexities arise in inheritance practices, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines on land rights distribution.

**TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

**FINANCIAL LITERACY**
- The training aimed to empower participants to think critically about how gender influences financial decisions, to support more gender-equitable decision-making.
- Emphasized the interconnectedness of financial stability and land ownership.
- Training included budgeting, savings, and investment opportunities.
- Introduced specialized modules on Islamic banking to cater to the specific needs of the community.
- Invited experts to provide insights and guidance on practical financial practices in land management.

Feedback from the financial literacy training highlighted the significance of understanding financial concepts and their connection to land ownership. Challenges emerged regarding gender disparities in resource ownership, prompting discussions on legal rights and societal norms.

**DIGITAL LITERACY**
- Training to leverage technology for community engagement.
- Introduced innovative technologies and the role of social media and digital information in raising awareness on key issues such as women’s rights.

Feedback from this training highlighted significant challenges in promoting gender equality, particularly in communities with deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and conservative views. Despite efforts to foster discussion and understanding, recruiting participants for discussion groups proved difficult, and scepticism persisted among participants regarding the objectives of the training. Resistance from religious authorities and community leaders further complicated efforts to address gender disparities and empower women in decision-making processes, underscoring the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play.

**TRAINING WORKSHOPS (CONTINUED)**

**HARMONY IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (GENDER)**
- Promoted family harmony and equitable decision-making.
- Reframed discussions to focus on gender dynamics within communities.
- Facilitated open dialogue and discussion groups to explore women’s rights in land ownership.
- Empowered local activists to challenge traditional norms and advocate for gender equality.

Feedback from this social media marketing training emphasized the importance of digital literacy and freedom of speech in empowering participants, particularly young women, to engage in online discourse and advocate for their rights. While challenges were encountered, such as reluctance among older women to trust social media, participants gradually embraced the platform and expressed interest in utilizing it for community discussions. Tailoring training sessions based on participants’ prior experience with social media proved beneficial for effective learning and engagement.

**STUDY TOURS**
- Three different study tours were created based on participants’ interests and priorities, namely meeting women who owned and ran:
  - Guest houses,
  - Beekeeping businesses, and
  - Raspberry farms.
- Provided a means for women to meet women business owners and learn from them.
- Focused on practical application and knowledge exchange.
- Explored alternative livelihood opportunities and learned from successful business models.
- Fostered confidence and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship.
- Facilitated networking opportunities and collaboration among participants and with business owners, who represent role models for participants.

The study tours yielded positive outcomes, providing valuable information and assistance to participants. Participants expressed appreciation for the initiative, citing improved understanding of Kyrgyzstan’s laws and opportunities for women.

**IMPACT**
While reactions varied across villages, the project’s impact in addressing challenges related to land resources was evident, despite some encountered difficulties.
- The pilot project demonstrated promising results in raising awareness, building capacity, and fostering community engagement around land ownership and gender equality. Participants reported increased confidence in navigating legal and financial matters, as well as a greater sense of empowerment in advocating for their rights.
Panel Discussion

The project’s impact in providing practical training on gender approaches and financial literacy was highlighted, with a commitment to continue using its tools and methodologies.

SUMMARY

During the panel discussion, participants reflected on the challenges encountered during the project, including opposition from certain community members. They emphasized the importance of learning from these experiences and integrating lessons learned into future endeavours. The effectiveness of the project in inspiring participants and fostering family harmony was acknowledged, along with observations of active discussions among participants about challenges and opportunities for change. The project’s impact in providing practical training on gender approaches and financial literacy was highlighted, with a commitment to continue using its tools and methodologies. Furthermore, efforts to promote women’s land ownership rights in agriculture and forestry were discussed, noting the strong interest and engagement of women in learning about income-generating opportunities. Plans for future seminars and study tours were outlined, with an emphasis on their role in sustaining momentum and interest among participants, particularly women. Overall, the discussion underscored the positive outcomes of the project and its potential for continued impact in empowering women and promoting community development.
The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and World Agroforestry (ICRAF) envision a more equitable world where trees in all landscapes, from drylands to the humid tropics, enhance the environment and well-being for all. CIFOR and ICRAF are CGIAR Research Centers.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and malnutrition. These four interconnected global crises have put at stake the wellbeing of our planet for years. Fueled by COVID-19, their impact on agriculture, landscapes, biodiversity, and humans is now stronger than ever. Reversing this negative trend is a challenge, but also an opportunity for bold choices and integrated solutions. Established in 2019, the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) was created to address these four crises, maximizing impact for change at key points in the food system.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Established in 1975, IFPRI currently has more than 600 employees working in over 50 countries. It is a research center of CGIAR, a worldwide partnership engaged in agricultural research for development.

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