



Empowering Energy

Rural women and energy issues in Kyrgyzstan: women's initiatives for sustainable development

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Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous country with a predominantly agricultural economy.

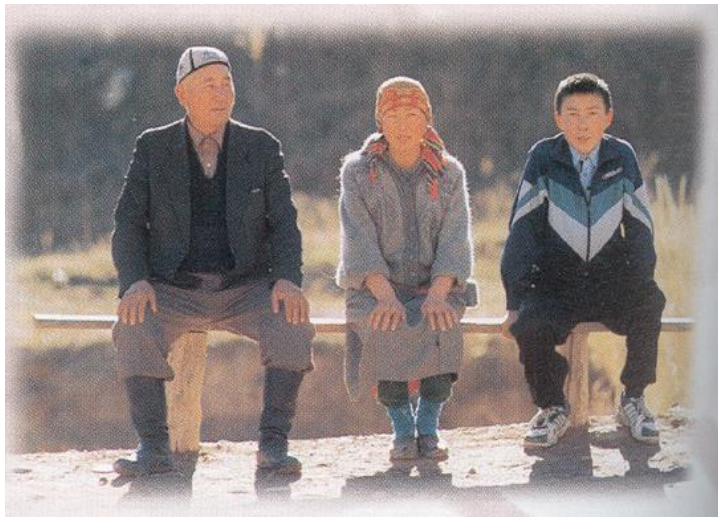
The population of the Kyrgyz Republic is 5.5 million.





More than **70%** of population in the Kyrgyz Republic live in **rural area** and **64% of villagers are women.**

The most specific feature of the rural population today is its growing poverty.



Different figures of the poverty level in Kyrgyzstan are quoted, from 53% to 80% and higher, with more than **80% of all poor people living in rural areas.** In general, women are poorer than men, and the tendency of **feminization of poverty** is increasing.

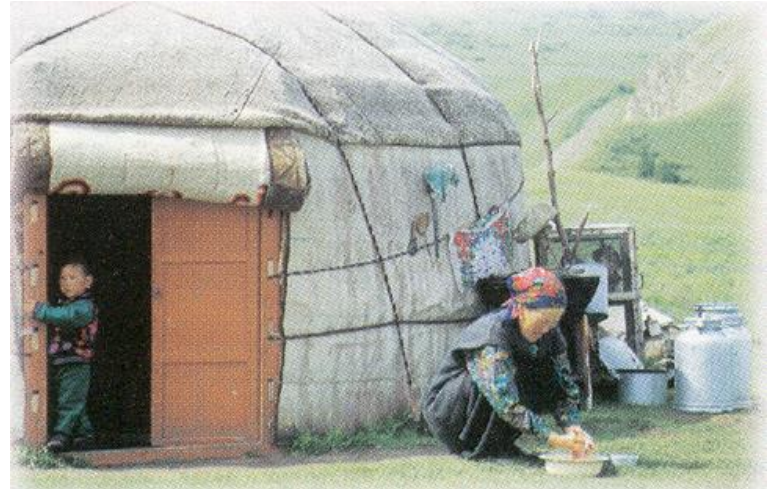


Rural women

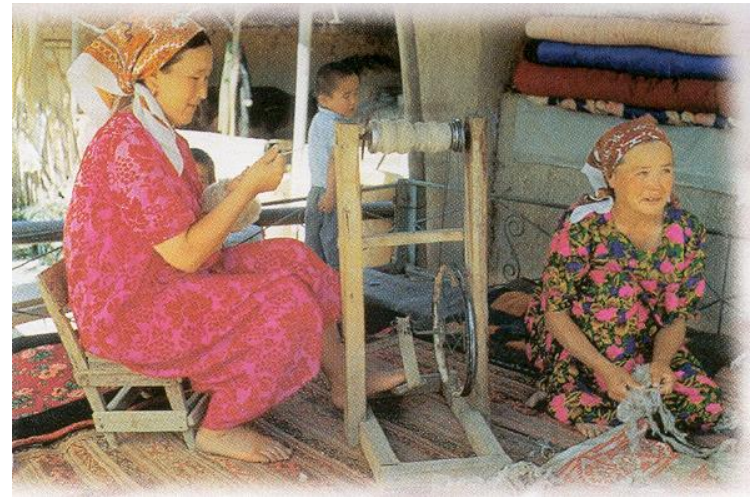
Economic crisis and the deterioration of the living conditions of rural women placed them in vulnerable position. **Women often face legal and institutional barriers** to economic activity outside home, including laws or customs that limited their right to own land, inherit property, work with credit and etc.

ALGA survey shows:

- Many women have no official marriage and divorce papers
- When women run a business, ownership rights often in name of husband



Picture from village life (djailoo)





But women not just 'victims' but new actors in development process.

Meeting with rural women



Working groups at the training



- **Rural Women's Association "Alga"** is a voluntary public organization, which was founded in 1995 by the initiative of the rural women.
- ALGA implements programs on improvement of rural women status
- Engages women in development processes in the rural areas
- Promote rural women's economic and social empowerment
- Based on rural women's priorities and situation
- Whilst simultaneously raising awareness on stereotypes and rights
- Regional and international networking with WECF on women and sustainable development and energy



Living conditions in the rural areas are far behind those in urban areas.

Lack of heating, lighting, cooking fuel and safe sanitation, poor quality of drinking water and malnutrition-these are the most common problems faced by rural women. There is no gas supply in the villages.



The burden on rural women in the management of the household chores increases **significantly in winter period**. Women particularly emphasized that during the winter in comparison with summer period they have to spend more time on household chores.

- Additional winter activities include inciting furnace for home heating and cooking, as well as boiling water for household needs.
- Even though there are electricity connections, rural women do not use electricity due to the blackouts and high prices



Workload of rural women with domestic work is very high since women are responsible not only for the household but also for the health of each family member and that of the domestic animals.



- Rural women spent lots of time and efforts to barely meet the basic needs
- They lack time and opportunities for income-generating activities of the family
- First step: priority for them to reduce unpaid care work at same time as earn income: so home-based entrepreneurship
- Other barriers to employment outside home are: lack of access to resources, finance, no pre-school child care, harassment in public transport, driver licence, gender stereotypes



Rural women express that their priorities are:

- To reduce health problems of children, family members
- This require clean water and safe toilets
- Less indoor smoke, air pollution from heating and cooking
- Increased income from sales of products and providing services



Testing drinking water quality



From rivers as source, to protected wells managed by user-cooperatives



Community-run resource centres provide services including new sanitation solutions (Ecosan)

Community-run services include:

- Nitrate tests of drinking water (indication for microbiological pollution)
- Building drinking water wells and pumps (instead river water)
- Building safe toilets for homes and schools (clean and secure)
- Build energy effective stoves for cooking (less smoke)
- Solar water heaters for hot water (saves time, money on fuel)
- Solar fruit driers to increase speed, quality and sales-price



Energy efficient stove:

- burns fuel more efficiently
- produces less smoke than conventional ovens because of better combustion technology. Different types of stoves:



- Best ones are for heating where the hot waste air is guided through space inside an interior wall in the house
- These ovens are used for both heating and cooking.
- Through installing such a stove, a family will
 - reduce household fuel costs
 - improve family's health and reduce health care costs



Solar food driers:



- Solar driers and other energy technologies can play an important role in developing new positive understanding of gender roles
- Such energy technologies should improve the health situation, create opportunities to save resource and increase income
- Women invest, build and maintain the solar driers autonomously
- Women are traditionally responsible for the effective functioning of the home
- Now also for new technologies that increase women's position in families and their control over resources



From home-based entrepreneurs to cooperatives and SMEs

Important role for rural women CSOs:

- Prerequisite is **women leadership** development
- Policy advocacy and awareness raising to **address barriers** (violence against women, lack of child care support, health care..)
- **Support women to obtain official papers** to secure their livelihoods (marriage, land, bank accounts...)
- Step-wise economic empowerment, **creating skills, women self-help groups**, providing access to technologies and finance for **home-based entrepreneurship**
- Next level: help **create gender-equitable cooperatives** (transparent elections, institutionalize aim of parity at all levels)
- Cooperatives provide training women in business development and promoting alternative technologies
- Examples food and handicraft cooperatives





Recommendations

- Important to support women's organisations to engage in international networking
- To then ensure that voices of grassroots women are heard and they present their priorities to policy makers
- Policy advocacy for state programs for social financial mechanisms for non-commercial infrastructure in rural areas
- Advocate for national sustainable development programs on energy, water, climate, that have transformational gender equality criteria





Thank you for attention!

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empowering energy

Join us! Sharing our knowledge from the ground - we'll discuss how gender just energy cooperatives can act as important players in the fight for climate action and women's economic empowerment!

2:30 PM

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