



REPORT

“Gender Dimension in Development of Agricultural VACs (in GIZ Projects “Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction through Community-Based Management of Walnut-Fruit Forests and Pastures in Southern Kyrgyzstan; Sustainable Economic Development in Jalal-Abad Oblast”)

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1. Introduction

Initiatives to develop VACs in the Kyrgyz Republic often ignore the interests of at least half of the population - women. Women, bearing the lion's share of labor in households and in various types of agricultural enterprises, tend to face the asymmetry of costs and benefits, with invisibility and non-recognition of their contribution to development, more often face barriers and restrictions in access to services and to opportunities for implementing their business initiatives.

Introduction of gender approaches in initiatives for VAC development in agriculture could correct this imbalance. Gender equity and equality is the starting point for inclusive development of value chains, it "opens up" opportunities for young people with disabilities and other social minorities.

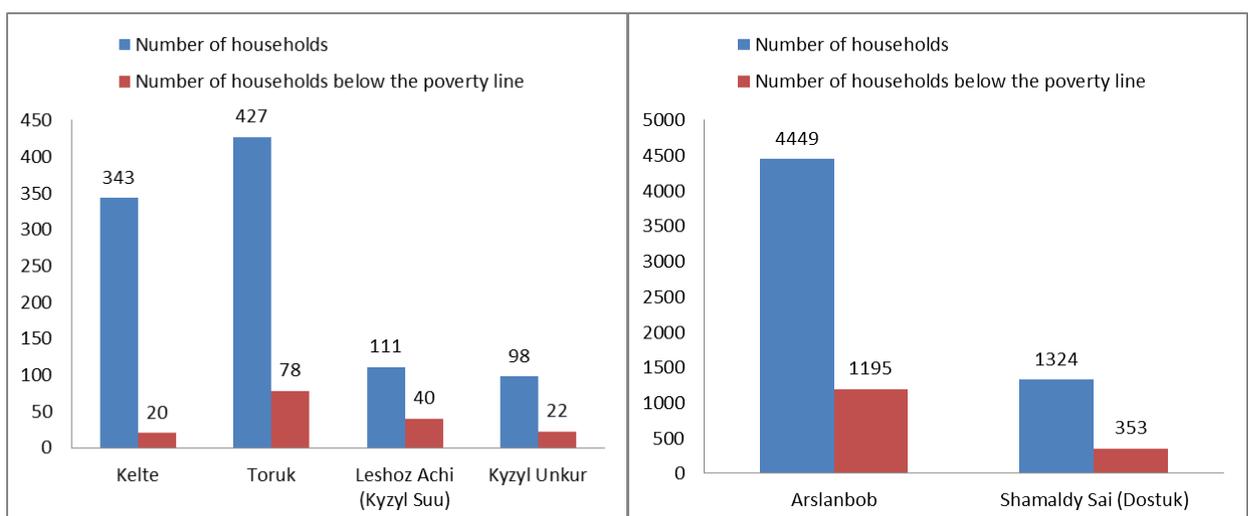
The GIZ Projects "Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction through Community-Based Management of Walnut-Fruit Forests and Pastures in Southern Kyrgyzstan", "Sustainable Economic Development in Jalal-Abad Oblast" from the start are aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

This report allows conducting a rapid assessment of existing political, economic, social and technological factors of influence on involvement of women and men in local development, and identifying practical ways and approaches to empowering women in management of natural resources and income generation from forests in GIZ projects' areas. The research methodology is available in Attachment 1.

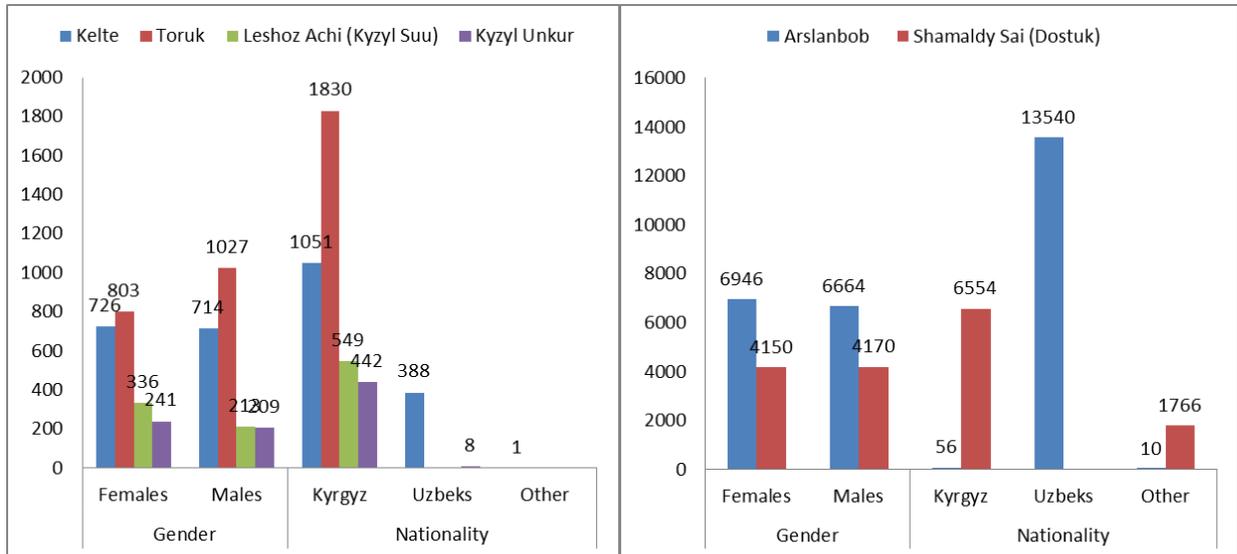
- **Brief Information on Selected Villages and Development of Agricultural VACs**

The sampling of the study included six villages in Jalal-Abad oblast: Arslanbob, Achi, and Kyzyl-Unkur (villages of Bazar-Korgon raion covered by the "forest" project), as well as Shamaldy-Sai (Nooken raion), Kelte (Ala-Buka raion) and Toruk (Aksy raion - villages covered by the NaWi project).

The pilot villages represent the types differing in size, ethnic structure, remoteness from the raion center and automobile roads, availability of markets: for example, the villages Toruk, Kelte, Achi (Kyzyl Suu) and Kyzyl Unkur are small, up to 500 households, while in Arslanbob and Shamaldy Sai villages the households number in the thousands; the share of households living below the poverty line varies from village to village: in Kelte village it is 5%, while in Achi (Kyzyl Suu) it is almost 38%.



Distribution of population by gender and ethnicity also has a number of peculiarities: some villages are monoethnic, others are mixed, in some villages the female population predominates (which rather reflects the depletion of male population as a result of migration processes).



Profile of Arslanbob village

Arslanbob is a dead-end village in the mountain area of a small Babash-Ata mountain range, the Fergana spur in the Central Tien Shan. An ancient village is still waiting, according to the villagers, for the discovery of its true history: in the vicinity of the village, in the cave, archaeologists discovered a Stone-Age site. The historical-architectural monument tomb-mazar Arslanbob-Ata that is located in the center of the village dates back to the 16th century: according to legends, the mazar was built in honor of the legendary gardener who planted the surrounding forests¹. Local old-timers even claim that the town of Balasagyn, the capital of the Karakhanid state, was not located on the territory of modern Tokmok city, as the official history of Kyrgyzstan says, but just where the village of Arslanbob is today. Discovery of this story, according to these residents, will give new breath to development of Arslanbob in general, and tourism in particular.

Arslanbob is famous not only for its walnut forests, but also for waterfalls located a few kilometers from the village. The history and nature of Arslanbob attract tourists – not only from Kyrgyzstan but also from abroad, an old Soviet-era tourist base (a recreation facility (pansionat) five kilometers from the village) is still there, and in the last decade guest houses' network actively develops, originating under the CBT (community based tourism). At the time of the study, there were 15 guest houses in the village from the CBT network certified by Emergency notification process complex (in Russian: КАТО - комплекс аварийно-технологического оповещения) as meeting the standards.

The village is scattered on the slopes of the mountains so that the streets of the village, like streams, flow down to the foot where the main center of the village is located: bazaar, shops, tea-house. The local population of slightly less than 14 thousand people (mostly ethnic Uzbeks) earn their living by gifts of nature (collecting in the forest nuts, barberry, dog-rose, mushrooms, plum, apples), in beekeeping, and livestock (more often cattle) and poultry, and crop farming (potatoes, carrots, pumpkins, garlic). According to local informants, there are two dryers provided by the GTZ project, which are used by residents of these mahallas-jamaats not only for drying nuts, but also for drying fruits.

Every day the local market operates in the village, but on Wednesdays a fair opens, to which residents come also from nearby villages with no market. Separately from food and clothing fair, a little farther from the center, there is a livestock market, which also operates on Wednesdays.