



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# GENDER, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT SERIES



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT



**Gender, agriculture  
and rural development  
in Uzbekistan**

Country Gender Assessment Series

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
ACRONYMS	IX
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	XI
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Why is gender relevant to agriculture and rural development?	1
1.2. FAO in Uzbekistan	1
1.3. Scope and purpose of the gender assessment	3
1.4. Methodology	4
1.4.1. Limited gender-sensitive information and data	4
<b>2. COUNTRY OVERVIEW</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1. Macro-level view of gender equality	7
2.2. Socio-economic profile	8
2.3. Political and institutional profile	10
2.3.1. International commitments	10
2.3.2. National machinery for the advancement of women	11
2.3.3. National law and policy	12
2.4. Demographic profile	14
2.4.1. Population, sex ratios and household composition	14
2.4.2. Migration	15
2.5. Health	17
2.6. Education	19
<b>3. GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILY FARMING</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1. Rural labour	23
3.1.1. Agricultural work	24

3.1.2. Rural off-farm work	25
3.1.3. Informal and temporary working arrangements	26
3.2. Land ownership and farm structures	27
3.2.1. Farm ownership and management	27
3.3. Status of rural women: gender roles, agency and empowerment	30
3.3.1. Women's role in formal decision-making: associations and political office	32
4. GENDER ISSUES IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS	35
4.1. Crop production and horticulture	35
4.2. Livestock	36
4.3. Fisheries and aquaculture	36
4.4. Sericulture	37
4.5. Forestry	38
4.6. Agricultural extension services, training and information	38
4.7. Access to irrigation and other agricultural inputs	39
4.8. Entrepreneurship and access to markets	40
4.9. Access to finance	42
5. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL WOMEN	45
5.1. Housing conditions	45
5.2. Energy sources	46
5.3. Safe drinking water and sanitation	46
5.4. Rural transport	48
5.5. Social infrastructure and protection	48
5.5.1. Childcare and preschool education	49
5.6. Time use	50
6. FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION	53
6.1. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk management	54
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	55
7.1. What FAO can do	55
7.2. What the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources and other government bodies can do	57
REFERENCES	59
GLOSSARY	69

## TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

Table 1: Priorities of the Government of Uzbekistan and FAO from the 2018–2022 CPF	2
Table 2: Gender Inequality Index (GII) values for Uzbekistan, compared with regional values (2015)	8
Table 3: Rural and urban population by sex and region, in thousands of persons (2017)	14
Table 4: Life expectancy at birth, by sex and location	18
Table 5: Comparisons of data on female heads of farms (2008 and 2013)	29
Table 6: Data on female heads of farms, by region (2013)	29
Table 7: Number of legal enterprises and proportion operating in the agricultural sector (2017)	40
Table 8: Access to utilities in rural and urban housing stock (2013)	45
Table 9: Estimated drinking water coverage for rural and urban households (2010)	47
Table 10: Proportion of rural and urban households using improved sanitation facilities (2015)	47
Figure 1: Poverty levels by consumption expenditure, for rural and urban locations (% of total population)	9
Figure 2: Female and male enrolment in class groups 1 to 9, disaggregated by location (2016–2017 academic year), (%)	19
Figure 3: Out-of-school children and adolescents, disaggregated by sex (2016), (%)	20
Figure 4: Female and male enrolment in specialized secondary and tertiary education institutions (2016–2017 academic year), (%)	20
Figure 5: Distribution of female and male students of vocational educational institutions, by specialization (2014–2015 academic year), (%)	21
Figure 6: Employment rate (%) correlated with level of education, for women and men	22
Figure 7: Distribution of agricultural production by type of farm enterprise (2017), (%)	28
Figure 8: Distribution of decisions and responsibilities in the family (% of surveyed households)	31
Figure 9: Distribution of women's businesses by sector (%)	41
Figure 10: Distribution of free time use by economically active women and men, by location, 2006 (%)	50

Figure 11: Distribution of free time use by rural women and men, 2006 (%) 51

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Box 1: Examples of gender-blind policies 13

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Box 2: State prize for girls and women for academic achievement 21

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## ACRONYMS

BWA	Association of Businesswomen of Uzbekistan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPF	Country Programming Framework
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSN	food security and nutrition
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GNI	gross national income
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	information and communication technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	maternal mortality rate
NAP	national action plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	purchasing power parity
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UZS	Uzbekistan Sum
WCU	Women's Committee of Uzbekistan
WHO	World Health Organization
WUA	Water Users' Association



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender equality is a core value of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) because women make up a large proportion of the agricultural labour force, they are the majority of food producers, and at the same time, they contribute significantly to the care of their households. Yet persistent gender inequalities mean that women's potential as farmers and entrepreneurs is greatly diminished, which in turn affects the wellbeing of families and results in productivity losses at the national level. Closing the gender gap in agriculture is a critical means of increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and nutrition insecurity and promoting economic growth.

In parallel with developing a Country Programming Framework for 2018–2022 for the Republic of Uzbekistan, FAO has conducted gender analysis in the form of a countrywide gender assessment. This Country Gender Assessment aims to inform the development of strategic objectives at the national level, and it provides recommendations to ensure that gender is taken into consideration in project design and implementation. The following are the most critical issues and gender inequalities relevant to the agricultural and rural development sectors and to food security and nutrition in Uzbekistan that should be given priority in future policy-making and programming. Detailed recommendations are contained in section 7 of the full report.

### Lack of data and qualitative analytical material

One of the key limitations of this Country Gender Assessment that also constrains the setting of priorities and strategic objectives for FAO is the lack of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data that would provide a clearer picture of gender inequalities relevant to agriculture in Uzbekistan. The State Statistics Committee maintains a gender statistics database covering eight topics (including labour, healthcare, education and social protection). Such gender statistics are a useful starting point for the present assessment but they provide only a narrow perspective on the situation of rural women as very few are disaggregated by residence (urban / rural). Furthermore, none of the indicators in the database corresponds to the *FAO Core Set of Gender Indicators in Agriculture* (see FAO, 2016a, *Agri-Gender Statistics Toolkit*).<sup>1</sup> National policies and programmes on agriculture and rural development and on food security and nutrition tend to be gender neutral and are not grounded in gender analysis. However, national policy documents in areas such as reproductive health, social protection, political participation or employment are more often linked to or target women explicitly.

The mandate of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, the national mechanism that coordinates women's affairs, focuses on assistance to women in the context of strengthening the institution of the family. From 2018, the national mechanism is strengthened by creating a Scientific and practical research center «Oila» under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Because the Women's Committee provides targeted support on increasing employment opportunities for women, especially rural women, it should theoretically lend its expertise to rural development and agricultural reform. The Women's Committee also leads the process of state reporting to the United Nations on the fulfilment of commitments relevant to women's rights and development goals, and thus it should liaise with other government agencies on data and information exchange and about how they are implementing programmes for the benefit of women in Uzbekistan. There is, however, an overall need to increase awareness among policy-makers of the importance of gender equality as a standalone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and a precondition for achieving all of the SDGs, and to build capacity in data collection and gender mainstreaming.

<sup>1</sup> The FAO Core set of gender indicators in agriculture are also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/b-bb179e.pdf%20%20%20>.

## Country overview

Over the past decade, poverty levels have declined significantly in Uzbekistan. Poverty is still characteristic for rural populations however, and is driven by factors such as low agricultural productivity, high dependency rates within households, limited access to productive assets (for example, infrastructure, energy, land, water, and technical and financial services) and a high level of informality in rural labour markets. While the services sector and industry are areas of higher growth, agriculture is still one of the most significant employers in the country. Almost half of the population of Uzbekistan lives in rural areas and engages directly in agriculture-related activities, on which they depend for their livelihoods.

The most prominent gender disparities in Uzbekistan are observed in women's positions in the labour force and employment, their limited access to higher education and low representation in political office and decision-making posts. Gender stereotypes continue to be prevalent and have a profound impact on women's access to opportunities and resources.

**Labour and employment patterns:** The female labour force participation rate for Uzbekistan is 48.5 percent, and the male labour force participation rate is 76.6 percent. While the gender gap in labour force participation rates is on par with that of middle income and developing countries in Europe and Central Asia, the particularly low female employment rate for the 18–35 age group indicates that women take almost exclusive responsibility for unpaid care work in Uzbekistan. Of note, a recent survey indicated that 80 percent of the population favours a traditional family model in which the man works outside the home and earns money while the woman takes care of the house and children. Women's underrepresentation in formal employment translates to the loss of a key economic resource. If the average female employment rate in Uzbekistan equalled that of the countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it would mean that 1.03 million more women would be contributing to the national economy.

The labour market of Uzbekistan exhibits gender-based segregation, both vertical and horizontal, with women tending to be concentrated in low-paid sectors of the economy, which is usually public service (primarily, education, healthcare and social security); at the same time, they are almost absent from sectors that correlate with higher pay and prestige (construction, transport, communications and other technical fields). As a result, the gender wage gap has been estimated to be between 60 and 53 percent, meaning that women's average monthly wages are around half those of men's.

Labour migration is a common feature of rural areas where limited employment and income-generating opportunities, as well as low wages, are push factors for both men and women. Men make up the large majority of labour migrants – both internal and international (they represent around 85 percent of labour migrants to Russia, for example) – which means that women are more often the family members who are 'left behind'. There is an increase in the number of wives abandoned by labour migrants (due to divorce or because they no longer receive remittances) in rural areas. Not only must these women take on a larger share of domestic duties and agricultural work, but also they are especially vulnerable to poverty and social stigma and at risk of exploitation from human traffickers.

**Educational opportunities:** Overall, the educational system exhibits gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment and in female and male literacy rates, as well as positive indicators for access to compulsory education in rural areas. However, at the level of secondary vocational education, girls are channelled towards a narrow spectrum of academic subjects (primarily public health and education) that are associated with low growth areas in the labour market. Female enrolment in vocational educational courses on agriculture is considerably lower than their engagement as workers in the sector. Female tertiary education rates have been declining; young women represent only 38 percent of students enrolled in higher education. Because advanced educational levels correspond closely with greater employment opportunities for women in particular, special efforts are needed to increase the potential for young women in rural areas to take advantage of professional education offered in cities.

**Health profile:** There have been important improvements in women's reproductive health, but maternal mortality rates remain high in some regions. Most obstetric complications and maternal deaths occur among rural women, where fertility rates are also higher than in urban areas. Programmes focused on improving reproductive and maternal health outcomes have focused

generally on increasing access to high quality healthcare. For rural women in particular, increasing their economic empowerment and income-earning opportunities can also have the effect of naturally lowering fertility rates.

Economic empowerment of rural women, – e.g. by increasing income-earning opportunities – may eventually lead to lower fertility rates.

## Agricultural labour, farming and rural enterprises

Around a quarter of the employed population works in the combined fields of agriculture and forestry. However, a high percentage of agricultural work is informal (unpaid work on family farms, temporary and seasonal work, and self-employment). Rural women have very limited opportunities for employment outside of agricultural work (for example, work in the public sector or off-farm income-generating activities) and are overrepresented in informal employment.

Women's labour in agriculture tends to be low-skilled manual labour, and seasonal/temporary work not covered by a written contract. When women work informally on *dehkan* (smallholder) farms, they do not receive protection under labour law in terms of sick pay, maternity or childcare leave.

In terms of a formal role as farm owners and managers, women represent only around four percent of the heads of private farming enterprises for the country as a whole, with some variation by region. There are no data about women heading *dehkan* farms, but since a very small number of women are heads of household, they are unlikely to be the formal heads of *dehkan* farms. Still, women contribute significant labour on *dehkan* farms, and in migrant households, they can be the de facto farm managers.

There are no official data on businesses at the micro, small or medium levels that are also disaggregated by sex or by location. However, women represent around 38 percent of individual entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan. Small-scale surveys indicate that more than half of women entrepreneurs in rural areas work from home in handicrafts or food production, and so their businesses are typically individual or micro enterprises. Women's businesses tend to be smaller in scale because female entrepreneurs have more limited access to financial resources, including start-up capital, credit and loans. Rural women, in particular, have difficulties accessing finance, as they are not usually registered property owners (hence, they lack collateral). They also tend to have more limited knowledge about loan application processes and business planning and face constraints on their time and mobility. Few financial products meet their needs as agricultural producers or address their perceptions of the risk of defaulting on loan repayments.

## Gender issues in agriculture and rural livelihoods

Determining the role that women play in horticulture (fruit and vegetables), crop production, livestock production, aquaculture, sericulture, apiculture and forestry is severely constrained by a lack of data and dedicated research. In general terms, each of these sectors exhibits a gender-based division of labour, meaning that women and men perform distinct forms of work, with women more likely to be concentrated in labour-intensive and non-managerial roles. Women are also more likely to be engaged in informal work (rather than formal employment) as family members, especially on small-scale farms, and so their contributions are often not visible when national policies and strategic goals are set. Because they are underrepresented in formal farming structures, women have much more limited access to important agricultural inputs and as a result, their productivity is reduced.

**Horticulture** and **crop diversification** have the potential to generate income for rural households and to increase dietary diversity and food security. Women farmers highlight specific difficulties that they face relating to horticulture, such as the low quality of seed selection, decreasing crop capacity

(due to land deterioration and insufficient water supply), and lack of access to good quality machinery – all of which negatively impacts on crop yields. Women also play an important role in tending kitchen gardens, which contribute to more than 80 percent of agricultural production (excluding crops such as cotton, wheat and rice). The informal nature of women’s contribution in this area means that rural advisory services and other programmes that are aimed at farmers often fail to reach women as a target audience. The processing of agricultural products is an area in which there is potential for job creation aimed at rural women.

Outside of farming as a formal occupation, most rural households keep **livestock**. Men have greater involvement in the sale, slaughter and breeding of livestock, whereas women usually graze and feed livestock and are responsible for milking animals and preparing dairy products, as well as the informal sale of surplus products (for example, milk and eggs). While the head of the household typically take decisions about the use of profits from farming, women tend to decide independently how to use the funds that they receive from these informal sales. It is important to facilitate access to markets for women who produce and sell agricultural products (both livestock and others) and to build their capacities in income generation as a way of increasing their position in key value chains.

Women play a limited role in **aquaculture** (there are almost no women working as formal employees on fish farms), mainly in retail trade. National strategies on the development of aquaculture and capture fisheries envision actions to engage women in the profitable areas of fish production, processing and marketing, but there is insufficient analysis to determine the extent to which any such initiatives have taken place or been effective. Likewise, **sericulture** receives government support, and there have been initiatives to promote it as a home-based work option for women. Yet no information was found during this assessment about the specific roles that women play in sericulture or the kinds of support they require.

Women are almost absent from employment related to **forestry and forest management**. Forestry work is considered a ‘masculine’ field, which is reflected in the fact that women account for around only four percent of the total staff working in public forest institutions (usually as secretaries or cleaners). Despite the lack of a formal role, women are engaged in forest use in other ways, such as gathering non-timber forest products (medicinal herbs, seedlings and some fruits), which they process. Men are typically responsible for selling these products. Men also form the majority of ticket holders that regulate the use of forestland, and women rarely enter into formal negotiations with forest enterprises. Proactive measures should be taken to ensure that women who use forest resources also have a voice in forest management.

Women have limited access to key agricultural inputs and productive resources, including **extension services, machinery / farm equipment and irrigation**. With the exception of some projects that provide training exclusively for female farmers, women are underrepresented in training on technical agricultural subjects. There is an increasing number of online resources and advisory services in Uzbekistan, but given that, rural women are less likely to use digital technology, these resources may not be reaching this particular audience.

Small-scale studies indicate that female farmers tend not to own farm equipment and machinery (tractors, grain harvesters, and so on) but, whenever possible, they rent it locally. The gendered division of labour is such that men tend to undertake work that requires machinery and this creates an expectation that using such equipment is not ‘women’s work’. Similarly, irrigation is viewed as a ‘male’ responsibility, and as a result, women represent a small minority of members of water users’ associations (some Water Users’ Associations have no female members). However, male outmigration has meant that many women must take on water management for *dehkan* farms and kitchen gardens. They often face specific difficulties negotiating for their right to irrigation.

### Rural infrastructure

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Inadequate household infrastructure in rural areas impacts on entire households but also has a particular impact on women as it increases their domestic work burden. Women bear the responsibility for housework and the care of children and dependents and, as a result, their time is restricted. Economically active women in rural areas spend 45.9 percent of their free time on unpaid domestic labour compared with 16.6 percent of rural men’s free time. The time poverty that rural women experience prevents them from realizing their full potential to develop agricultural enterprises or other entrepreneurial activities that generate income.



A large proportion of rural households have unreliable electricity supplies, with frequent interruptions, and so they rely on unclean fuel sources for heating and cooking (coal, firewood). Women spend additional time gathering fuel and are unable to use labour-saving technologies (such as washing machines, sewing machines or vacuum cleaners). Only a quarter of rural households have water piped into the premises. The collection of household water is primarily the responsibility of the women in the household, and this task adds to their daily chores. Women are the major users of water for domestic activities and, thus, water shortages affect them acutely.

The lack of affordable preschools in rural areas also restricts women's opportunities to engage in paid employment outside the household, to take part in training or other development projects, and to participate in local decision-making or community events.

### Food security and nutrition

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Uzbekistan has seen positive developments in reducing hunger that are partly attributed to the government's efforts to improve agricultural diversity and nutrition by increasing support to smallholder farmers. Still, Uzbekistan exhibits a 'double burden' in terms of the nutritional profile of the population. Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies continue to be problems for specific populations, particularly women of reproductive age and children. At the same time, rates of overweight and obesity are increasing, with higher rates among women than men. Women and men play different roles in purchasing and preparing food and feeding children, and the level of nutritional knowledge within households is a critical factor in addressing food insecurity. Therefore, measures are needed to ensure that the population, especially women, is supported to increase their consumption of healthy foods, by not only increasing the availability of nutritional foods, but also through gender-specific information and awareness campaigns and ensuring the affordability of healthy food for poor households.

The adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters mean that the agricultural systems of Uzbekistan are vulnerable to failures, which then has a profound impact on food security. Women's role in food security is not limited to the preparation of food, as noted above, but also includes roles in food availability and access (food production and distribution). For this reason, measures for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction should not only consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women and men but also pay particular attention to the positive role that women can play. As already noted, women's contributions to agricultural production are largely informal, and they are underrepresented in relevant institutions (such as farmers' councils or Water Users' Associations). Therefore, positive actions are needed to ensure that women's views and needs are systematically integrated into policies on climate change, as well as on topics such as water resources management, land management and energy efficiency. Training and educational projects on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction must be specifically designed so that information reaches women as well as men.

Social protection can help rural households to overcome the risks of poverty and food insecurity, and well-designed, gender-sensitive social protection schemes are of particular benefit to women in terms of their economic and social empowerment. There are no official statistics about social security or social assistance recipients by sex or by region. Therefore, there is a need for further study to identify whether social protection schemes are reaching the most vulnerable populations, especially women in rural areas who undertake irregular work, women heading households and single mothers, and returned migrants in this area.

### Prevalence of gender stereotypes

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The influence of gender stereotypes intersects with the other topics addressed in this Country Gender Assessment. They are very often responsible for women's lower social status compared with men. Women are strongly associated with motherhood and the household sphere, and they are therefore expected to manage domestic work, even if they are also employed outside the home.

At the household level, women's role in decision-making about the family budget (including the use of income derived from farming) is minimal. Women's lack of agency affects their wellbeing in ways that are not purely economic, such as their educational attainment, control over fertility, health and freedom from domestic violence. Because they are underrepresented in the national institutions with mandates on agriculture or rural development, women have a limited voice in decision-making concerning these topics. Nevertheless, this **Country Gender Assessment also indicates that there are a number of areas in which women are playing a vital role in agricultural production, and these entry points should be further expanded and women's potential enhanced.**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Why is gender relevant to agriculture and rural development?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) promotes gender equality in its work because rural women are key economic agents, on an equal basis with men, who “contribute to the wellbeing of their families and the growth of communities in many ways. They work as entrepreneurs, farm and non-farm labourers, in family businesses, for others and as self-employed” (FAO, 2017f, p. 1). Globally, women make up a large proportion of the agricultural labour force; they form the majority of food producers, and at the same time, they contribute significantly to the care of their households. Yet gender inequalities persist in the form of women’s reduced access to land and productive resources, the unequal burden of unpaid and informal labour, and limited representation in decision-making and leadership. Because of these disadvantages, women’s potential as farmers and entrepreneurs is greatly diminished, and their contributions to the agriculture sector as a whole are not widely recognised.

FAO research and data indicate that the current ‘gender gap’ in agriculture not only reduces women’s contributions to the agricultural sector by diminishing their productivity, but it also affects the wellbeing of families and “imposes a high cost on the economy through productivity losses” (FAO, 2014b, p. 1). Conversely, closing the gender gap has the effect of increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and nutrition insecurity and promoting economic growth.

Rural women represent a quarter of the world’s population and are vital contributors to rural communities. Yet, “rural women continue to face systematic and persistent barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights”, and they disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion and face multiple forms discrimination (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, p. 3). Despite the fact that virtually all nations have undertaken international commitments to eliminate discrimination against women, in many countries, the rights and needs of rural women “remain insufficiently addressed or ignored in laws, national and local policies, budgets, and investment strategies at all levels” (ibid.). Addressing discrimination and social and economic inequalities are fundamental to ensuring the promotion and protection of the human rights of rural women.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrine the principles of gender equality and inclusion as essential for long-term and people-centred development. Many of the SDGs address the situation of rural women, particularly the goals relevant to ending poverty (Goal 1), achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2) and achieving gender equality and empowering women (Goal 5). Thus, FAO follows internationally recognised guidance, that is also directed to national governments, to integrate and mainstream “a gender perspective in all agricultural and rural development policies, strategies, plans (including operational plans) and programmes” (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, p. 10). The objective of such gender mainstreaming is to enable rural women “to act and be visible as stakeholders, decision-makers, and beneficiaries” (ibid.).

## 1.2. FAO in Uzbekistan

The Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan) joined FAO in 2001, and the partnership was strengthened with the opening of a Representation Office and signing of a Host Country Agreement in 2014. The *FAO Country Programming Framework for 2018–2022* identifies key sectoral objectives in agricultural policy and rural development. This includes: intensification of agricultural development; ensuring

food security; building capacity among stakeholders in the processing, transportation, storage and packaging of agricultural products (value chains); improvement of rural livelihoods; combating the negative effects of climate change; and sustainable management of natural resources. (FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, 2018, p. 3).

FAO's technical assistance, as outlined in the CPF for 2018–2022, focuses on three thematic areas. Table 1 illustrates the priority areas and related outcomes.

Priority area	Related outcomes
(1) Strengthening policy and institutional capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and other government institutions	<p>Output 1.1: A new Agricultural Development Strategy is formulated, and sectoral coordination strengthened with FAO's support</p> <p>Output 1.2. Legislation framework on agriculture and natural resources management strengthened to support smallholders including youth and women</p> <p>Output 1.3. The capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and relevant institutions to design and implement development policies are enhanced including SDGs and statistics</p>
(2) Development of agricultural and food value chains and access to markets	<p>Output 2.1. Innovative experiences and successful practices in developing efficient value chains and sustainably increasing productivity are actively promoted with particular focus on smallholders including youth and women</p> <p>Output 2.2. Livelihoods of rural population improved, especially for smallholders, including rural women and youth, through capacity development in income diversification</p>
(3) Strengthening national capacity on sustainable management of natural resources, climate change and biodiversity	<p>Output 3.1. Innovative experiences and successful practices on reduction of the climate change impact on agriculture and forestry are actively promoted.</p> <p>Output 3.2. The Government's capacity in sustainable natural resources management including forestry rehabilitation of degraded land, resource-saving practices and application of innovative approaches is built.</p> <p>Output 3.3. Government capacities strengthened on locust management as well as promotion of integrated pest management (IPM) and animal disease combating (e.g. brucellosis and etc.)</p>

Source: FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, 2018.

The [FAO Policy on Gender Equality](#), [the FAO Environmental and Social Management Guidelines](#), and the [Guidelines on gender mainstreaming and a human rights-based approach](#) will frame the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the country programme. The 2018–2022 CPF made a commitment that the share of women (especially young women) benefiting from FAO programming activities will be not less than the minimum United Nations recommended quota of 30 percent among the beneficiary target groups. (FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, 2018, p. 7). This approach aligned with the government's commitment and attention to ensuring women's equal opportunities to fully participate in both the public life and the economy of the country.

[The FAO Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia sets forth](#) several specific priorities and targets (see FAO, 2016g, p. 3) that are relevant to Uzbekistan and should be given consideration in the implementation of the CPF for 2018–2022:

- **Empower rural women through income diversification and increased participation in decision-making processes.** This priority requires the implementation of specific projects that meet the strategic and practical needs of rural women, improve rural livelihoods and empower rural women economically.
- **Support the generation of gender statistics that should be used when formulating and implementing evidence-based agricultural policies and strategies.** This priority requires strengthening the capacities of national statistical committees to develop, analyse and use sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data and the provision of technical assistance to support in-country data collection.
- **Provide gender-sensitive technical assistance.** This priority can be achieved in several ways, including through awareness-raising and the promotion of policy instruments among stakeholders.

With the formulation and approval of the Country Programming Framework for 2018–2022, the FAO Office in Uzbekistan has the opportunity to ensure that gender considerations are effectively mainstreamed throughout the portfolio, which includes planning, Implementation and monitoring of the outcomes, outputs and activities that will advance the cross-cutting objectives of the *Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan*. Targeted use of baseline and needs assessments prior to implementation, as well as gender-sensitive indicators, reporting and performance evaluation, will not only ensure the effectiveness of FAO’s interventions but will also contribute significantly to the body of knowledge about the status of rural women and gender inequalities in agriculture and rural development in Uzbekistan.

### 1.3. Scope and purpose of the gender assessment

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FAO is mandated to conduct country gender assessments when preparing new Country Programming Frameworks (CPF) and revising existing CPFs under its Gender Equality Policy requirements on gender mainstreaming. FAO must also carry out gender analysis for all strategic objectives at the country level and ensure that gender is taken into consideration in project design, approval and implementation.

This assessment provides recommendations on the development of agriculture and rural communities in Uzbekistan, taking issues such as gender roles and differences between women and men in access to productive resources, inputs and information into consideration. Because FAO can only assist its country partners to achieve their priorities if it also “simultaneously works toward gender equality and supports women’s diverse roles in agriculture and rural development” (FAO, 2013, p. 1), the findings and recommendations of this assessment are aimed primarily at staff of the FAO Representation Office in Uzbekistan in order to inform the development and implementation of the CPF for 2018–2022. A related objective is to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective into programme and project design as well as implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Because there has been limited research conducted on gender issues in agriculture in Uzbekistan, this assessment also serves as an awareness-raising tool for government authorities in ministries and other offices relevant to agriculture and rural development, as well as to food security and nutrition (FSN). This report highlights areas of gender inequality that merit greater attention in terms of further research and data collection as well as in national planning and the implementation of law and policy.

The report may be of use to other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers, alongside diverse professionals in the fields of agriculture and rural development. Because it sheds light on issues that have been the subject of few specialized studies in Uzbekistan, it is hoped that the information in this assessment will be of interest to a general audience. This country gender assessment is the first produced by FAO for Uzbekistan. The report contains several terms relevant to gender and development that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For this reason, a Glossary is included as an annex.

## 1.4. Methodology

The methodology used for this report follows the format recommended by FAO's internal guidance on preparing a country gender assessment (FAO, 2017d). The assessment process consisted of collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, using a review of literature and the compilation of statistics. The literature review focused on materials pertaining to agriculture and rural development broadly, but due to the limited number of gender-sensitive studies conducted on these topics in Uzbekistan, findings were often extracted from more general research and the project documents of international development organisations working in the country, including FAO and other UN agencies, donor organisations, NGOs, think tanks and academic institutions. Periodic reports submitted by the government (for example, on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action and on progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals) as well as recommendations from treaty-monitoring bodies also provided pertinent information about the status of rural women.

To the extent possible, primary data were analysed for this assessment. Priority was given to reviewing statistics produced by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (State Statistics Committee) and, when relevant data were not available, other sources were consulted, primarily those of the World Bank and agencies of the United Nations. In a few cases, the results of small-scale surveys were included in this assessment if they shed light on topics that were not addressed by national or international organisations, such as gender stereotypes.

Lastly, some field work carried out by FAO and other development organisations working in Uzbekistan (especially the Asian Development Bank) provided insights for this assessment. However, such field work was generally limited to small samples and short-term projects, so the findings are not necessarily relevant for the country as a whole.

### 1.4.1. *Limited gender-sensitive information and data*

Limitations on qualitative information about the situation of rural women compared with men and urban women, and about women's role in agriculture in Uzbekistan, did constrain the assessment process. Relevant sex-disaggregated data were generally not available from official sources. Furthermore, many national and international development projects that promote sustainable agricultural practices and improve living conditions in rural areas of Uzbekistan are implemented in a gender-blind manner. They rarely compile baseline data that is disaggregated by sex, do not provide analysis of gender inequalities that could impact on project objectives nor do they include evaluation of any outcomes that have benefitted women or advanced gender equality.

Official sex-disaggregated data are limited in scope and not easily accessible to researchers. This assessment primarily relied on gender statistics that are compiled by the State Statistics Committee in an online database (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2018b). At present, the database includes statistics in eight categories, which only partially reflect the five domains of the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators related to gender equality and women's empowerment and do not cover the breadth of recommended indicators (52 quantitative indicators and 11 qualitative indicators, see UNSD, 2018b). None of the gender statistics in the database correspond to the FAO Core Set of Gender Indicators in Agriculture (18 indicators at the holding / household level, see FAO, 2016a), and very few of those that are collected are also disaggregated by rural and urban location. Several important indicators, such as women's time use, representation in informal work and ownership of agricultural resources are lacking or were last measured more than a decade ago. Under national planning on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the State Statistics Committee has important responsibilities for developing indicators to monitor the implementation of all of the goals, including Goal 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), publishing an annual compilation of data related to the progress made towards the SDGs, and maintaining a web portal dedicated to the national SDGs.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, indicators will be developed that will enhance the body of official gender statistics in the coming years.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these tasks appear to be on hold at present, but a recent draft resolution suggests that the Committee should begin work in January 2019 (see Cabinet of Ministers, 2017 and President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018).

In 2017, the State Statistics Committee published its most recent statistical compilation *Women and Men of Uzbekistan* (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2018d). However, this publication was not accessible online to researchers for this gender assessment. Therefore, this report relies on data from the previous *Women and Men of Uzbekistan* (published in 2012) that cover the 2010–2011 period. Some gender statistics are presented in other government publications, and so where available they are also included in this report. There is an urgent need for dedicated surveys on topics such as living standards in rural households, social welfare and rural women’s representation in agricultural businesses and access to financial and other resources (compared with that of men and urban women).

Reliable socio-economic data from household or farm-based surveys are also lacking. For instance, the most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which can be a useful source of information about the characteristics of rural households, was last conducted in Uzbekistan in 2006.<sup>3</sup> The data are of limited use for understanding conditions in rural Uzbekistan today. Not only does the MICS predate the economic downturn of 2008, but the findings do not reflect the fact that the country has experienced rapid economic growth since then.

In 2015, the State Statistics Committee began preparations for conducting an agriculture, forestry and fisheries census. It approved a methodology for a sample survey of farming enterprises in 2016, with the objective of generating data about indicators such as the size of land areas used for agriculture, number and type of livestock and volume of crop production. Since that time, the State Committee on Statistics has been collecting data on agricultural production, for instance, about agricultural activities, farming activities, and the production of grain, silk cocoons, fruits and vegetables.<sup>4</sup> A review of the reporting templates reveals that there is no field in which to indicate the sex of the respondent, which suggests that sex-disaggregated data cannot be extracted from the surveys. As of 2018, planning of a full agricultural census appears to still be underway (FAO, 2017g).

The State Statistics Committee publishes some statistical data covering indicators for the agrarian sector online, but the focus of these materials is on production and outputs, without people / household-level indicators or sex-disaggregated data. The 2018 statistical collection *Agriculture of Uzbekistan* (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2018a) could not be located in electronic format during this gender assessment process. Thus, it was not possible to determine to what extent the collection includes any sex-disaggregated data or gender statistics. Other official data on small businesses and farm enterprises are not disaggregated by sex, which obscures any differences between women and men.

FAO’s *Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia* highlights the dual problems of insufficient gender statistics and the result that agricultural policies and strategies are, therefore, not usually based on evidence about gender inequalities (FAO, 2016g).

<sup>3</sup> The most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in Uzbekistan, which was limited to health indicators, was conducted in 2002. The only full DHS was carried out in 1996.

<sup>4</sup> For a full list of agriculture reports, with explanations and schedules, see the website of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, available at <http://stat.uz/ru/154-2017/1426-statistika-selskogo-khozyajstva>.





## 2. COUNTRY OVERVIEW

### 2.1. Macro-level view of gender equality

Indices that measure human development and progress toward gender equality indicate that while there have been gains in living standards in Uzbekistan, there are losses that can be attributed to inequality. Uzbekistan has a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.701, a measure used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that takes into consideration three dimensions: a long and healthy life; knowledge; and a decent standard of living (UNDP, 2016, p. 199). This score corresponds to a rank of 105 out of 188 countries and represents a steady improvement in each of the HDI indicators since 2000.

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The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a means of assessing gender differences in how people are faring in Uzbekistan against a global measure comparing the HDI calculated separately for women and men in three dimensions: health; education; and command over economic resources (using the same 0–1.00 scale as for the HDI). The combined GDI value for Uzbekistan is 0.946, with sex-disaggregated values of 0.672 (female) and 0.711 (male); the GDI value places Uzbekistan within the group with high human development and close to the average for the European and Central Asian countries combined. In Uzbekistan, women’s human development is primarily hampered by their average fewer years of schooling and much more restricted access to economic resources.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures the loss in potential human development due to disparities between female and male achievements in three dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment and economic status, calculated as a composite of five indicators). Uzbekistan’s GII value for 2015 was 0.287, representing a 29 percent loss in human development due to gender inequality (and a rank of 57 out of 159 countries). As Table 2 illustrates, positive indicators in Uzbekistan, such as gender parity in literacy rates, are offset by women’s low representation in national political office and in the labour force, decreasing the overall value and ranking. The GII was only introduced in 2010 and thus there is no long-term perspective on progress over time. However, Uzbekistan’s GII value is close to the regional average for Europe and Central Asia (0.279), but it indicates a lower level of gender equality than for the OECD countries combined (higher values indicate greater inequality).

**Table 2: Gender Inequality Index (GII) values for Uzbekistan, compared with regional values (2015)**

	2015 GII value	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100 000 live births)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years)	Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)	Population with some secondary education (% aged 25 years and over)		Labour force participation rate (% aged 15 years and over)	
					F	M	F	M
Uzbekistan	0.287	36	17.7	16.4	99.9	99.9	48.3	76.2
Europe and Central Asia Region	0.279	24	26.6	19.0	78.1	85.7	45.4	70.5
OECD	0.194	15	22.4	27.7	84.2	86.9	51.1	68.6

Source: UNDP, 2016, p. 215, p. 217.

## 2.2. Socio-economic profile

The Republic of Uzbekistan is one of the largest countries in Central Asia in terms of both land mass and population. Uzbekistan’s total territory of 447 400 square kilometres consists primarily of sandy desert, but it also includes broad river valleys, such as the Fergana valley, that contain desirable agricultural land. Total agricultural land occupies 25.2 million hectares (about ten percent of the country’s territory), the majority of which is considered “poor or low-productive pastureland”; only 4.3 million hectares are irrigated cultivatable land (FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, 2014, p. 7). The large desert pastures mainly support sheep breeding. Despite the country’s difficult geographic and climatic conditions, agriculture still plays a vital role in Uzbekistan’s macro economy and sustains many rural households.

Agriculture occupies a less prominent place in the country’s economy than it did in the past, with a greater share of the gross domestic product (GDP) attributable to investment in and expansion of the services sector, followed by industry. Still, agriculture accounts for 19.2 percent of GDP, and the agricultural sector showed positive growth of two percent in 2017 – contributing to 0.4 percent of overall GDP growth (World Bank, 2016, p. 17; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2018c).<sup>5</sup> Despite investment into industry, the sector has not been a significant generator of jobs, and 25 percent of the total employed population works in agriculture (compared with 13 percent in industry and 53 percent in services, which is where job growth has been the most significant; World Bank, 2016, p. 19). Almost half of the population lives in rural areas and engages directly in agriculture-related activities, on which they depend for their livelihoods.

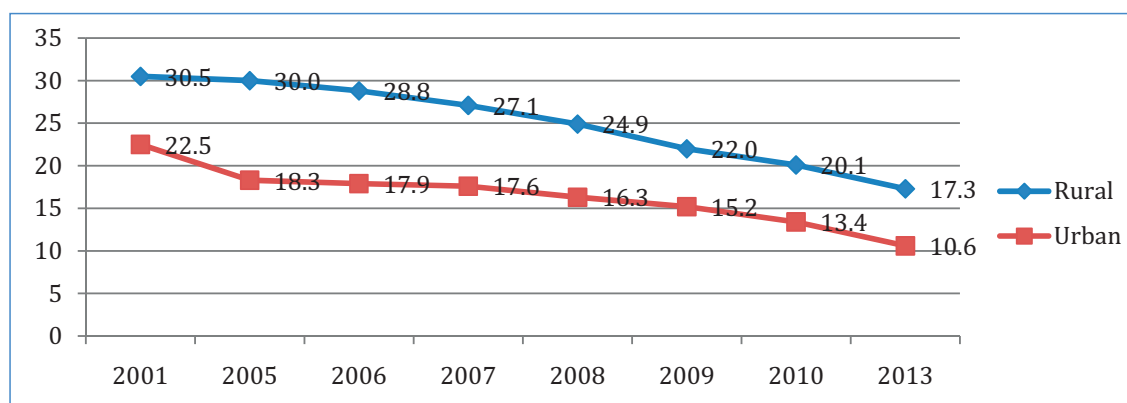
Uzbekistan’s economy has grown rapidly in the past decade, especially in comparison to other countries of the region. Agriculture remains a key economic driver, and the World Bank forecasts an annual growth rate of around 6.5 percent in this sector for 2018–2019 (World Bank, 2017a, p. 85).

Uzbekistan’s economic growth has alleviated absolute poverty for some parts of the population, including for the most vulnerable groups, and resulted in improved living conditions. The official poverty rate declined from 14.1 percent in 2013 to 12.5 percent in 2016 (World Bank, 2017a, p. 85), with an overall reduction of more than half since 2001. These results meant that Uzbekistan met its target under Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals to improve living standards by 2015. Poverty rates have declined in both rural and urban locations (see Figure 1).

<sup>5</sup>

Note that ‘agriculture’ here refers to agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined.

**Figure 1: Poverty levels by consumption expenditure, for rural and urban locations (% of total population)**



Sources: All data were collected by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics and are reproduced in the following publications – 2001 and 2013 data (Center for Economic Research, 2015); data for 2005 to 2010 (ADB, 2012).

Nevertheless, poverty is characteristic for rural populations; in 2015, it was estimated that 70 percent of the country's poor lived in rural communities (IFAD, 2015, p. 2). Out of this population, the majority make their living from agriculture.

Sex-disaggregated absolute poverty rates could not be found for this assessment, but official data indicate that living standards have improved for some groups of women. Namely, from 2007 to 2013, poverty among female-headed households decreased from 1.3 percent to 0.3 percent (Center for Economic Research, 2015, p. 19). It is also worth noting that one of the proposed national tasks for Goal 1 of the SDGs concerns improving poverty monitoring and assessment, with a reference to the gender dimensions of poverty, and so it is likely that additional official data, disaggregated for women and men, will become available.

The main drivers of poverty are as follows: low agricultural productivity; high levels of implicit taxes<sup>6</sup>; high dependency rates within households; regional divergences; limited access to productive assets (such as infrastructure, energy, land, water, and technical and financial services); and the high level of informality in rural labour markets (IFAD, 2015, p. 2). These factors are closely associated with rural populations and have a particularly negative impact on women and young people.

Poverty reduction is attributable to a number of specific initiatives, in addition to rapid economic growth overall, including state investment in social infrastructure projects and increased public spending for the most vulnerable populations, the reduction of regional disparities (which was achieved by increasing rural inhabitants' access to basic social services), employment generation primarily through the development of private entrepreneurship (micro and small businesses) and salary increases. Remittances sent back to Uzbekistan by labour migrants have also helped many families, especially those in rural areas, to remain above the poverty line.

Income distribution has become more equitable while real wages have increased. Between 2001 and 2013, the gross national income (GNI) per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) increased greatly, and in 2016 the World Bank estimated the GNI per capita PPP in Uzbekistan to be equivalent to USD 6 640 (World Bank, 2018). When considering income levels, there are significant gender differences however. Women have not benefitted from wage increases to the same extent as men. The GNI per capita PPP for women in Uzbekistan is only USD 3 891 compared with USD 7 668 for men<sup>7</sup> – a difference of nearly 50 percent (UNDP, 2016, p. 211).

<sup>6</sup> Implicit taxes refer to the indirect costs or losses that result from government policies. Examples in Uzbekistan include losses in soil fertility as a result of mandatory cotton cropping patterns and lower outputs that result from the inefficiency of cotton gins.  
<sup>7</sup> Estimations for 2015.

## 2.3. Political and institutional profile

In the first decade after declaring independence from the Soviet Union, the Republic of Uzbekistan rapidly established the legal and regulatory framework for the advancement of women. Important milestones include the following: establishment of the Women's Committee (1991); adoption of a new Constitution which declares equal rights as a core principle (1992); the participation of an official government delegation and NGOs in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995); a presidential decree on increasing the role of women in public office (1995); the adoption of a national Concept for the Advancement of Women (1996); the development of a national action plan related to actions outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (1998); and the submission of the country's first periodic report to the UN on the issue of discrimination against women (1999).

### 2.3.1. International commitments

Uzbekistan has ratified the core UN treaties that establish protection for human rights and principles of non-discrimination. Most significantly, it acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995 and, to date, has submitted five periodic reports on implementation of the treaty – the most recent in 2015. The CEDAW Committee's general recommendations, for example on the rights of rural women (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016), provide additional guidance on Uzbekistan's obligations under the convention. The government has also ratified a number of treaties that provide additional protections for women in the areas of labour and employment.<sup>8</sup>

Uzbekistan has undertaken commitments to advance the agenda of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (which includes several strategic objectives pertaining to the risk of poverty and social marginalization that women in rural and remote areas face and a recommendation to governments to formulate and implement policies that enhance the access of female agricultural and fisheries producers to a range of productive resources). The country has prepared reports for key international appraisal reviews, most recently in 2014 with a report on 20 years of progress since the adoption of the Platform for Action.

Uzbekistan set three objectives under Goal 3 (on promoting gender equality and empowering women) of the MDGs: to eliminate gender inequality in education; to eliminate gender inequality in employment; and to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in political decision-making. Numerical targets were not included, making it difficult to assess progress. By 2015, it was reported that gender parity had been maintained in primary and secondary school enrolment but not at the tertiary level; the proportion of employed women had increased; and after the introduction of a quota system, the proportion of women in parliament and government had increased, albeit to a greater degree in mid-level positions than in high-level posts.<sup>9</sup>

The government is currently adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to the national context and priorities – a process that entails developing an agenda, goals, targets and indicators to realise each relevant SDG. The process is led by an inter-governmental coordination committee, and the State Statistics Committee has a lead role in the development of indicators for each goal. The coordination committee has formulated draft national SDGs, targets and a large number of indicators, which have been published for public consideration but have not yet been finalised. The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «On the measures of realization of the national sustainable development goals and targets till 2030» endorsed the national objectives for Goal 5. They relate to the following: eliminating discrimination against women and girls, as well as eliminating violence against women and early and forced marriage; recognising and valuing unpaid domestic work; improving social protection; increasing access to reproductive healthcare; and increasing women's participation in leadership at all levels (which itself entails protecting women's rights in the socio-economic sphere and undertaking gender mainstreaming in government decision-making (see also Cabinet of Ministers, 2017 and President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). The same documents also show that the gender dimensions of other SDGs are considered. The suggested national tasks for several other SDGs make specific references to gender issues, for instance: the gender aspects of poverty (Goal 1 on eradicating poverty); the nutritional needs of adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women (Goal 2 on strengthening

<sup>8</sup> For example, International Labour Organization conventions C111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention and C103 Maternity Protection Convention.

<sup>9</sup> Information about women's representation in decision-making positions is included in section 3.3 of this report (see also, Center for Economic Research, 2015).

food security, improving diet and promoting the sustainable development of agriculture); reducing maternal mortality and raising the marital age for girls (Goal 3 on good health and wellbeing); equal access to preschool education and to specialist or professional-level education (Goal 4 on quality education); and special attention to the sanitation and hygiene needs of girls and women (Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation; President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). The government's attention to gender considerations in most of the SDGs, in addition to Goal 5, suggests that forthcoming national indicators will also be gender-sensitive. At present, work on 'nationalizing' the SDGs, such as specifying national indicators, targets and baselines, is ongoing.

### 2.3.2. National machinery for the advancement of women

The Women's Committee of Uzbekistan (WCU) is the primary institution that coordinates women's affairs nationally, regionally and locally. It was created in 1991 and its main function is to develop and implement state policy on women's rights. While the Women's Committee is registered as an NGO, it operates as a quasi-government agency; it is funded from the state budget and is headed by a chairwoman who is also the deputy prime minister responsible for women and family issues (an appointed post reserved for a woman). The chairwomen of Women's Committees at the local level (district or city) likewise hold the post of deputy *hokim* (governor or mayor). In early 2018, the WCU underwent substantial restructuring and modification of its mandate, with a greater emphasis on supporting women while also strengthening the institution of the family (Presidential Decree, 2018b; WCU, 2018a).

The number of full-time employees of the WCU central office in Tashkent increased from 18 to 31. The Women's Committee structure at regional, district and city levels also underwent change. Significantly, within the structure of local Women's Committee offices, a position has been created for a specialist (or two specialists in larger communities) in each *mahalla* (a neighbourhood organisation) with responsibility for working directly with local women and "strengthening the spiritual and moral values of families" (Presidential Decree, 2018b; WCU, 2018a). A newly-created Scientific and practical research centre Oila (Family) under the Cabinet of Ministers, will implement national policy on family issues, and based on the concept of 'Healthy family – healthy society', research and analysis will identify priorities and develop evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening the family institute in the country (Presidential Decree, 2018b; Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2018).

The mandate of the Women's Committee itself has also been modified. While it is still the key state institution responsible for implementing policy on women, protecting women's rights and increasing their role in socio-political activities, the WCU now has an additional focus on identifying women in need of assistance (for example, women with disabilities, unemployed women, girls at risk of early marriage, female offenders and former prisoners). This recent restructuring demonstrates that the state policy focuses on assistance to women through the lens of strengthening family structures, rather than empowering women and increasing their access to the widest possible range of opportunities. While there is still no state policy dedicated to issues affecting rural women specifically, under the recent reforms, the WCU will oversee targeted support that will cover rural women in two key spheres: employment and improved working conditions, and reproductive health. Both of these topics are addressed in further detail in later sections of this report.

The Women's Committee is not granted any particular responsibility for gender mainstreaming within the government. The powers of the WCU are strictly limited to their specific mandate to work directly with women, which calls into question whether the WCU will have any influence over ensuring that general state policies, strategies and programmes effectively address the needs and priorities of the women of the country. However, the Women's Committee has been playing an important role in monitoring national-level implementation of CEDAW as well as reporting on progress under the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs.

Lastly, while not part of the national machinery, because Article 14 of CEDAW addresses rural women, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan is part of an inter-agency group established for the purpose of reporting on and implementing international commitments which would theoretically include those under CEDAW and any national action plans related to the convention. [Note that in February 2018, the former joint Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources was divided to create two separate ministries. At the time of writing this assessment, the functions of the new entities have not been fully delineated, and therefore this report at times refers to roles and responsibilities of the former unified ministry.]

### 2.3.3. National law and policy

The national legislative base for gender equality is established by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>10</sup> and is reflected in more than 80 normative acts that either prohibit discrimination or protect the human rights of women (WCU, 2014, p. 5). For example, the criminal code and the labour code protect against sex-based discrimination. The state has not, however, established either a clear legal definition of sex-based discrimination, nor has it adopted legislation that would incorporate all of the provisions of CEDAW. Similar to initiatives undertaken in other Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union, there have been initiatives in Uzbekistan to introduce anti-discrimination legislation, specifically a draft Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men. The draft law was submitted to the legislative chamber of the national assembly (*Oliy Majlis*) for review more than a decade ago but has yet to be enacted. The CEDAW Committee expressed particular concern over the fact that, “several bills with an important bearing on women’s rights, such as that on equal rights and opportunities for men and women and that on violence in the family, have been pending for many years” (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2015, para. 9). It is not clear what prevents legislative action on the draft equal rights bill, but it could be a lack of political will to address women’s rights through legal change.

As outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, governments are advised to develop national action plans (NAPs) with concrete steps for promoting women’s rights, and this has become a common practice throughout the world. In Uzbekistan, such comprehensive strategic documents take the form of a Concept for the Advancement of Women (1996), a National Action Plan for improving the status of women in Uzbekistan and improving their status in society in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action (1998), and a National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee (2010). While covering a number of priority areas, neither the 1998 nor the 2010 NAPs explicitly mention initiatives directed towards women in agricultural production or rural women generally. Both of the national action plans were intended to be implemented by the WCU, several line ministries, local government bodies, NGOs, the media and with the cooperation of several UN agencies. Many of the actions in these plans were educational in nature. At present, Uzbekistan does not have a national action plan on either gender equality or women’s rights, but in 2017, the government approved a new NAP to implement CEDAW Committee recommendations after the fifth periodic review (in 2015), with the WCU taking on a coordinating role among ministries, regional authorities and international organisations (see WCU, 2017b).<sup>11</sup>

A series of government decrees, resolutions, plans and programmes outline state support for women and girls. Older decrees aimed to enhance the role of women broadly or to increase support for the Women’s Committee (in 2004) while others tended to focus on improving women’s reproductive health.<sup>12</sup> The Elections Act of the Oliy Majlis (2003) paved the way for women’s increased participation in politics. It mandates that the number of women nominated by political parties for parliament should be no less than 30 percent of the total number of candidates. Two state programmes have been dedicated to women: the Year of Women (1999) and the Year of the Healthy Mother and Child (2016). The government has launched several regional programmes to provide employment for women specifically. Some of these policy documents are described in further detail in the relevant sections of this report.

The Welfare Improvement Strategies for 2008–2010 and 2013–2015 are examples of gender mainstreaming in Uzbek national policy. Both strategies state that a “holistic approach” should be taken towards ensuring gender equality with several priority areas highlighted in the most recent strategy including: strengthening the institutional mechanism and other institutions on gender equality; drafting a national action plan; implementing national and regional programmes on socio-economic development that take gender into consideration; applying mandatory gender analysis to all state plans and projects that are considered “socially-significant”; developing gender statistics; and enhancing economic opportunities for women with a particular focus on supporting women’s entrepreneurial activities. The Welfare Improvement Strategy for 2013–2015 drew attention to the situation of rural women and included a priority on the “development and implementation of measures designed to improve working conditions for women, especially in rural areas, and the level of their social security at enterprises, institutions and organizations” (Government of Uzbekistan, 2013, p. 79).

<sup>10</sup> Article 18 guaranteeing equal rights and freedoms and non-discrimination on the basis of sex and Article 46 which states that women and men shall have equal rights.

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, no plan, even in draft form, could be located, and therefore the content could not be described in this report, including whether the NAP includes measures to improve the status of rural women.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the “Programme of measures to further enhance and increase the effectiveness of the work being done to strengthen reproductive health among the populace, give birth to healthy children, and create a physically and spiritually developed generation for the period of 2009–2013”.

The National Development Strategy for 2017–2021 (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017b) outlines five priority areas, one of which (development of the social sphere) includes objectives to increase the social and political activity of women (namely, strengthening their role in government, providing opportunities for employment, professional education and entrepreneurship to women, and improving maternal health) and to improve infrastructure and living conditions with attention to rural areas (such as the construction of affordable housing, the provision of clean drinking water and the rehabilitation of rural roads). While addressing topics of both women’s status and rural development, the strategy neither addresses the intersection of these issues nor does it mainstream gender in other parts of the document.

Other national policies and programmes with a specific focus on improving conditions in rural areas or enhancing the agricultural sector have been gender blind, meaning that they did not include gender analysis and therefore missed opportunities to identify existing gender inequalities, measures to address them, or ways in which the policy may bring particular benefits to women. The fact that several key policies in the agricultural sector did not apply a gender perspective means that the resulting policies do not address important gender gaps, rendering them less effective overall. Below are examples of three such policies and a description of how important gender issues were overlooked.

### Box 1: Examples of gender-blind policies

Example of gender-blind policy	Potentially relevant gender issues
Presidential Decree No. UP-4478, 2012, “On measures on further improvement of farming activities in Uzbekistan”	The decree supports the strengthening of the Council of Farmers and includes measures to, <i>inter alia</i> , introduce more efficient farming practices, expand consulting centres, create agricultural land databases and promote the importance of farming through the media. The decree does not analyse the situation of women farmers, such as their limited access to new technologies or extension services. The decree could have included specific measures to improve the recruitment of women to the Council of Farmers, to disaggregate data by sex in land databases and to highlight the contributions of women farmers to the country’s economy in media campaigns.
Presidential Decree No. PP-1957, 2013, “On additional measures on accelerated development of the service industry in rural areas for 2013–2016”	This decree gives priority to the development of tourism services, including rural guest houses. Hospitality and food services is a growing sector in the Uzbek economy, and it is also a field in which women and men appear to have equal opportunities for employment. <sup>13</sup> With the help of targeted government and private sector initiatives, there is potential for considerable job creation for rural women in this sector. However, the decree itself does not specify any measures to engage women specifically.
Presidential Decree No. PP-3318, 2017, “On organizational measures for the further development of activities of farmers, dehqan farmers and owners of household land plots”	This decree outlines the functions and structure of the Council of Farmers and includes activities such as increasing the legal literacy of heads of farms, promoting advanced agricultural technologies, assisting farmers to upgrade their qualifications, allocating land plots specifically to young people and monitoring the use of agricultural lands. The decree does not include any plans to rectify the fact that there are no official data on women’s representation among farmers (including as dehqan farmers) as members of the Council or otherwise. Furthermore, it does not acknowledge that women frequently lack access to agricultural resources, including information and technologies, and so the Council should plan special measures to target them.

FAO practice has demonstrated that gender-sensitive planning for agricultural and rural development, as well as including measures for women’s empowerment in national programmes, contributes to greater food security and improves the overall performance of the agricultural sector (FAO, 2016g).

<sup>13</sup> Based on the fact that in 2016, women represented slightly more than half of all employees in the combined sector of hospitality and food services (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016a).

## 2.4. Demographic profile

### 2.4.1. Population, sex ratios and household composition

Uzbekistan's population is over 32.1 million and it has been growing steadily over the last decade (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017f).<sup>14</sup> The country is becoming increasingly urbanized, but half of the population still lives in rural areas (49.4 percent or 15.9 million people). From 2007 to 2016, the urban population growth rate increased from 1.1 percent to 2.1 percent (World Bank, 2018). However, two points regarding the fact that the urban population exceeds the rural population should be kept in mind. First, the overall urbanization rate in Uzbekistan is lower than that observed in countries that are also undergoing economic transition. This phenomenon can be partially explained by the fact that the government has “carefully managed” the urbanization process by prioritizing the development of rural areas (UNECE, 2015, p. 26). Second, in 2009, the government reclassified 965 large rural settlements as towns for statistical and administrative purposes which resulted in a rapid jump in the urban population (Center for Economic Research, 2013, p. 21). Thus, while the urban population is growing, a very large proportion of the population resides in rural areas.

Women account for 50 percent of the urban population and 49.6 percent of the rural population (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017f). Anecdotal evidence suggests that labour migration has had an impact on the ratio of women and men in several rural areas of Uzbekistan, leaving some villages comprised mainly of women, children and the elderly; it is said that in other villages, it is primarily women who migrate and leave behind their husbands to care for children and other family members. These phenomena are not reflected in the overall statistics in which regional population data mirrors that of the country as a whole (see Table 3, below). This seeming inconsistency between official figures and observations could be explained by the fact that many people migrate only for seasonal work or they migrate within the country from rural to urban areas, and do not officially register in the new location.

**Table 3: Rural and urban population by sex and region, in thousands of persons (2017)**

	Rural population		Urban population	
	female	male	female	male
Republic of Uzbekistan	7 873.0	7 996.7	8 126.5	8 124.3
Republic of Karakalpakstan	458.6	464.2	447.1	447.6
<b>Region</b>				
Andijan	698.2	712.6	768.2	783.5
Bukhara	578.1	573.4	343.7	348.3
Jizzakh	341.1	348.1	306.2	305.6
Kashkadarya	873.9	888.6	656.1	670.2
Navoi	240.7	241.2	224.2	236.7
Namangan	462.6	473.2	844.9	871.7
Samarkand	1 129.9	1 149.0	689.6	683.2
Surkhandarya	782.5	802.2	437.3	440.3
Syrdarya	227.3	229.9	172.2	173.7
Tashkent	718.4	729.8	695.9	685.2

<sup>14</sup> Using data from January 2017.



Fergana	759.0	783.0	1 012.2	1 010.6
Khorezm	602.7	601.5	286.4	286.1
Tashkent city	--	--	1 242.5	1 181.6

Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017g.

The fertility rate is higher in rural areas than in urban ones. Data from 2016 demonstrate a fertility rate of 2.6 children per woman in rural areas compared with 2.3 for women in urban areas (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date (c)). The sex ratio at birth is not part of official gender statistics, but using the number of female and male births recorded in 2010 (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2012, p. 22), the sex ratio can be calculated as 107 for rural areas (107 male births per 100 female births) and 108 for urban areas. A sex ratio of between 105 and 107 is generally considered to be the naturally occurring range of male births for every 100 female births.

Uzbekistan has a large youth population, and rural residents are slightly younger on average than their urban counterparts. The average age for females in rural areas is 27.5 years (30.7 years in urban areas) and for males it is 26.6 years (29.0 years for urban males; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017b). Drawing upon estimates for 2016, almost a third of the entire population (28 percent) are children under the age of 15 (World Bank, 2017b). This demographic ‘youth bulge’ presents a specific challenge in terms of ensuring that working age people are integrated into the labour market, especially rural youth who have more limited access to educational and training opportunities. The inability of the domestic labour market to fully absorb the young labour force is fuelling migration abroad and has “direct implications for changes in household structure” (IFAD, 2017, p. 1).

Multigenerational households are common, either one married couple with or without children living with other relatives (41 percent of all households) or two or more married couples with or without children living with other relatives (26 percent of households: data from 2010, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2012, p. 61). Just under 20 percent of households would be considered to be ‘nuclear families’ (a married couple living with their dependent children; *ibid.*). The multigenerational and patrilocal family model is traditional in Uzbekistan – albeit a tradition that the Soviet authorities tried to dismantle through dedicated campaigning – and it is also a very efficient model for households that rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The extended family model is more common in rural areas, where it usually consists of three generations: the elder married couple (grandparents), their dependent children and any unmarried daughters, as well as their married sons, their wives and children. The eldest male is usually considered the head of the family. Traditional family roles are favoured by most of the population; 80 percent of survey respondents in Uzbekistan stated that the model in which the woman takes care of the house and children and the man works outside of the home and earns money is preferable (86.2 percent of men and 79.6 percent of women; EBRD, 2016, p. 134). This figure is one of the highest in the transition region that includes Central Asia, Central Europe and the Baltic states.

Single parent families are rare in Uzbekistan, but there are many more mothers raising children alone than there are fathers (1.3 percent of all households are single parent households headed by mothers compared with 0.1 percent headed by single fathers: data from 2010, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2012, p. 61). Data on the number of single mother families, or female-headed households (which could include the wives of labour migrants, single mothers and widows), and their prevalence in urban or rural areas could not be found for this assessment. However, it is reported that female-headed households are increasing (estimated by the World Bank to be 18 percent nationally), particularly in rural areas, and as a consequence, women’s role in agricultural production has also had to expand (IFAD, 2017).

### 2.4.2. Migration

Labour migration is a common feature of rural areas where limited employment and income-generating opportunities are push factors for both women and men. Migration also has antecedents in the agricultural sector reform of the early 2000s that resulted in the liquidation of agricultural cooperatives (*shirkats*) and the creation of individual farming enterprises that required less labour.

After 2003, the reorganisation of *shirkat* farms resulted in annual lay-offs of nearly 100 000 middle-aged workers, and an additional 600 000 to 900 000 people were expected to be released from work in 2005 and 2006 (UNDP, 2005, p. 3). Much of the large surplus labour force were low skilled without the knowledge or funds to start up their own businesses, and thus labour migration became a viable option. Estimations of labour migrants differ by source. Official records place the number of migrants at between 300 000 and 400 000, while independent analysts suggest that the figure could be as high as two to seven million (Abdurazakova, 2013, p. 35). Labour migration is both internal (from rural areas and smaller cities to large urban centres, especially Tashkent and nearby towns) and international (primarily to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, but also to South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey).

Labour migration from Uzbekistan began as a predominantly 'male' form of work, and to a large extent it continues to be, despite perceptions that migration is increasingly becoming 'feminized'. According to estimations based on Russian federal migration service records, 86.6 percent of labour migrants from Uzbekistan are male (Rocheva and Varshaver, 2017, p. 92), and the World Bank's Central Asia's Labour and Skills Survey found that 74.6 percent of Uzbek migrants are from rural areas (Mirkasimov, 2017). In part, this pattern can be attributed to gender neutral factors, such as the type of work that is in demand in foreign labour markets: low-skilled work in fields that are male-dominated, such as construction, transport and oil and gas. It also reflects traditional notions about female mobility, gender roles and the fact that women in Uzbekistan are usually discouraged from migrating for work. For a Central Asian man, migration "is tied to fulfilling a man's ability to perform the roles of a good son, husband, father and neighbour ... whereas staying behind can challenge his masculinity. On the contrary, femininity is often connected with 'staying put'" and migration for women is less socially acceptable (Rocheva and Varshaver, 2017, p. 95). The typical migrant from Uzbekistan is married and has completed at least secondary education. Single men are more common than single women among migrants. However, there is a much larger share of divorced women than divorced men among migrants.

For both sexes, unemployment and dissatisfaction with the low wages available locally are the primary motivations for migration. Other factors specifically push women towards labour migration, such as the loss of their source of income (either after a divorce, the death of the family breadwinner, lay-offs or even voluntary unemployment as a result of sexual harassment; Khajimukhamedov, 2008). Female migrants, more often than male migrants, are in positions of vulnerability with few alternatives to support themselves in Uzbekistan.

There are gender differences in the division of labour between migrants. Most female migrants from rural areas go to Kazakhstan where they tend to undertake seasonal work harvesting crops for three or four months before returning. Women also engage in short cross-border trips for 'shuttle trading'. Women who migrate for longer periods of time usually work in low-skilled jobs as housekeepers and nannies, or in the service sector, in markets, shops and cafes. Because much of the work that female migrants undertake is informal (or illegal in the case of commercial sex work), they are undercounted in official statistics (Abdurazakova, 2013). Men migrating from urban areas are sometimes able to find work in private enterprises or the service sector, while those from rural areas tend to work in construction, generally working in brigades and living in barracks.

The positive results of labour migration include the possibility of learning new skills as well as the ability to send remittance income home, which can then stimulate household consumption and improve quality of life. Money transfers from Russia to Uzbekistan have decreased dramatically after contractions in the Russian economy in recent years, but the World Bank (2018) estimates that personal remittances still accounted for almost five percent of Uzbekistan's GDP in 2015 (after a peak of 11.6 percent in 2013). The drop in remittances has meant a sharp reduction in the disposable income of many households. The Russian Central Bank estimates that in United States dollar terms, remittances to Uzbekistan fell by 14.3 percent in 2016 compared with 2015 (IFPRI, 2017, p. 68).

The costs of labour migration mean the loss of a sizeable proportion of the labour force in the home country. Due to the fact that a large number of migrants undertake work that is in some form irregular in the destination country (it may be seasonal, informal or illegal), they are especially vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and dangerous or poor working conditions. Furthermore, the work history of irregular migrants does not count towards pension earnings in Uzbekistan.

Labour migration results in the phenomena of 'missing men' and women who are 'left behind'. With labour migration being overwhelmingly 'male work', it has created gender imbalances in

many households. Women left behind have increased responsibilities, which can include work on family farms, and if remittances are irregular they may have to find other means to earn income. By some measure, these changes in the family dynamic can empower women to take on new roles. On the other hand, male labour migration can also lead to divorce or abandonment. Some wives of long-term migrants essentially become the heads of households if they are abandoned by their husbands (even when there is no formal divorce, migrants may cease sending remittances or send them infrequently), and these women, who often lack the skills needed for formal employment, are especially vulnerable to poverty and at risk of exploitation by human traffickers.

Female migrant workers face gender-specific risks. For instance, they consistently earn less than male migrants and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The choice to migrate has deeper psychological impacts on women, as there is a degree of stigma associated with women who migrate, especially those who leave families behind or who migrate for work rather than marrying and having children. When women become economic contributors to the family, they become increasingly independent financially and empowered generally. This outcome is not always viewed positively, however, and the 'new' female role can upset the gender balance in conservative or traditional households in which men have the breadwinner role.

### 2.5. Health

Uzbekistan had an extensive network of health facilities during the Soviet period, but they were poorly maintained, even in terms of basic infrastructure. In rural areas in particular, 27 percent of hospitals did not have sewerage and 17 percent did not have running water; "health personnel were inadequately trained and poorly paid, with physicians receiving about 70% of the average salary of non-farm workers" (Ahmedov et al., 2014, p. 11). For several decades, the government has undertaken healthcare system reform with broad objectives to improve efficiency and universal access. Particular attention has been paid to improving primary care in rural areas.

Primary care in rural areas is provided by a physician working from a local medical station, replacing the previously-used *feldsher* (midwifery post). Rural residents can access a package of primary health services free of charge, and secondary outpatient care is provided by district hospitals. In order to address the shortage of general practitioners and the much lower ratio of medical specialists per population, physicians have been incentivised to practice in rural primary care centres by 25 percent pay increases (Ahmedov et al., 2014, p. 56). Standards were developed for the renovation of rural health facilities and to ensure that they have "adequate architectural design, reliable water and electricity supply, sewage removal, heating, and telephone communications" (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2014, p. 16). An important change to the healthcare system was the introduction of a policy that gives citizens the right to choose their provider, including the option to use private care. Experts point out that choices about healthcare providers are often limited by geographical access and availability of specialists, therefore rural residents generally only have access to public healthcare providers (Ahmedov et al., 2014).

According to data from the Institute of Health and Medical Statistics under the Ministry of Health, the number of rural residents accessing healthcare has increased. In 2010, each rural resident averaged 9.3 visits to outpatient health facilities per year, compared with only 7.6 in 2006. Likewise, the percentage of the total rural population who visited general practitioners increased from 22.2 percent in 2003 to 58.8 percent in 2010 (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2014).

While reforms aim to improve health indicators for the whole population, considerable attention has been devoted to reproductive health, the protection of motherhood and children's health. Reducing maternal mortality was a core objective of MDG 5 and many state programmes have been directed towards increasing women's access to high-quality reproductive healthcare. National targets were divided into sub-indicators on prenatal care among women, especially women suffering from anaemia, and a decrease in the number of abortions as a measure of the accessibility of family planning services. According to Ministry of Health estimates, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) declined from 33.1 per 100 000 live births in 2000 to 17.4 per 100 000 live births in 2016 (United Nations in Uzbekistan and Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016, p. 13; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, no date (b)). The World Health Organization (WHO), in contrast,

calculated that the MMR was 36 per 100 000 live births in 2015 (WHO et al., no date). In addition, there are regional differences in maternal outcomes. Most obstetric complications and maternal deaths occur among rural women who are less likely to have delivered with a skilled birth attendant (UNFPA, 2014). This finding suggests that ensuring consistent and high-quality reproductive health services throughout the country is still a challenge.

The use of both contraceptives and antenatal care has increased, with extensive coverage of both urban and rural areas. In 2015, 49 percent of rural women and 45 percent of urban women were reported to be using intrauterine devices (Center for Economic Research 2015, pp. 56–57). Integrating antenatal care into the primary healthcare system has resulted in increased coverage of rural areas. In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers decree “On additional measures for strengthening the reproductive health of mothers and children in rural areas of the Republic” (2010), all pregnant women living in rural areas are entitled to receive a special multivitamin complex free of charge. From 2009 to 2013, this programme covered more than 1.5 million pregnant women. The recent national programme Year of the Healthy Mother and Child (2016) allocated over UZS 7.4 trillion for a wide range of projects that included strengthening rural healthcare facilities to provide care for mothers and children. The recent restructuring of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan also highlighted shortcomings in the provision of reproductive healthcare in rural areas in particular, and a system of “women’s consultations” are to be created in clinics and rural medical points (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018b). This service is for adolescent girls and women of reproductive age and includes counselling on family planning and contraception, obstetric and gynaecological care, and preventing maternal morbidity and mortality.

Of note, in agrarian economies where attention has been paid to increasing women’s economic empowerment and income-earning opportunities, fertility rates have naturally decreased while also bringing about demographic and economic benefits for the country as a whole (Buvinić et al., 2013).

The health system overall is oriented towards treatment and gives less attention to the prevention of the major causes of death from non-communicable diseases. The gap in life expectancy between women and men suggests that gendered influences on mortality are not being fully addressed.

The average life expectancy at birth in Uzbekistan is 69.4 years, around three years lower than the average for the Europe and Central Asia region combined, but on a par with that of neighbouring Central Asian countries and consistent with countries of medium human development (UNDP, 2016, pp. 198–201). Women’s average life expectancy is longer than men’s, with a difference of between five and seven years (figures vary depending on the source of the data. WHO estimates suggest a shorter life expectancy for both women and men than national data). Both female and male rural residents have shorter life expectancies than urban residents, and the gender gap in life expectancy is slightly greater for the rural population. Data compiled by the UN indicate a shorter life expectancy for both women and men, as well as a larger gender gap (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Life expectancy at birth, by sex and location**

Life expectancy at birth (years)					
Rural population		Urban population		Total population	
female	male	female	male	female	male
74.9	71.1	77.1	71.8	74.0	68.5

Sources: Data disaggregated for the rural and urban populations, 2016 (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, no date (a)); data for the total population, 2015 (UN Population Division, World Bank, 2018) .

The primary causes of death for women and men are non-communicable diseases: circulatory system diseases and cancer. The government recognises the preventability of non-communicable diseases and focuses on four key influences: tobacco, alcohol, nutrition and physical activity (United Nations in Uzbekistan and Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date, p. 28). Several of these risk factors have gender dimensions that correlate to men’s shorter life expectancy. Among adults (age 18 to 64 years), the prevalence of tobacco smoking is 26.8 percent for adult males and 1.4 percent among adult females; for young people (age 13 to 15 years), males smoke cigarettes more often than females (a prevalence of 1.0 percent for males and 0.4 percent for females, WHO, 2017, p. 2).

Male alcohol consumption per capita is higher than female alcohol consumption (13.1 litres for males age 15 years and above, compared with 9 litres for females), and the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking (defined as consuming at least 60 grams or more of pure alcohol on at least one occasion in the last 30 days) is 20.4 percent for the male population (and a third of all male drinkers) and 0.4 percent for the female population (2.6 percent of all female drinkers, WHO, 2014). The consequences of alcohol abuse are serious in terms of men’s much higher mortality rates from accidents (including road traffic accidents) and liver cirrhosis. Data and information are lacking about the prevalence of tobacco or alcohol consumption in rural areas compared with urban locations.

The National Public Health Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2010–2020 includes targets for reducing male smoking prevalence (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2010). The Concept and Action Plan on Healthy Nutrition of the Population for 2015–2020 aims to reduce tobacco and unhealthy alcohol consumption generally and pays specific attention to the nutrition of pregnant women. It is not clear, however, whether there are also initiatives to address other specific health needs of the male population (as is the case for women’s reproductive health).

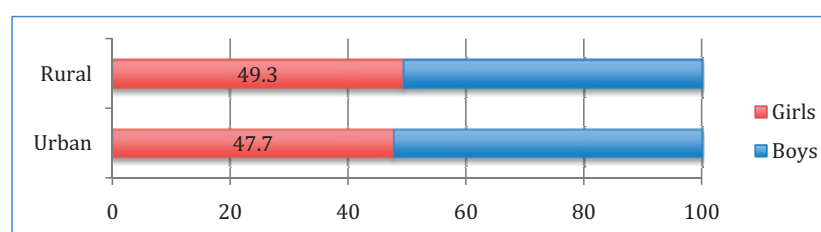
Of particular concern is the mortality rate of the working-age population (16–59 years for men and 16–54 years for women), which is especially high for men. In 2016, the male mortality rate for this age group was 306.0 per 100 000 population, compared with the female rate of 143.4 per 100 000 (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016b). The burden of non-communicable diseases is serious in terms of socio-economic development because such diseases can “result in reduced income, early retirement, decreased productivity and employee turnover, with further implications for social protection costs” (United Nations in Uzbekistan and Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date, p. 28). Extending high quality prevention and treatment health services to the rural population is a necessity.

### 2.6. Education

The compulsory educational system in Uzbekistan consists of grades 1 to 11, followed by specialized secondary education provided by vocational colleges, but the system as a whole also encompasses pre-primary schools and tertiary level education. The introduction of 12 years of compulsory education is credited with helping girls to remain in school for longer and to reduce the number of early marriages (Center for Economic Research, 2015). The educational system in Uzbekistan has many positive indicators, including the fact that there is gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment, and literacy levels are high for women and men in both rural and urban areas. However, there are also gender inequalities in education in the form of girls’ lower attendance and completion rates at secondary level and the fact that female enrolment rates in tertiary education have been declining.

There is gender parity in enrolment in primary and secondary education. During the 2016–2017 academic year, girls made up 49.3 percent of all pupils in rural schools and 47.7 percent of pupils in urban schools (data only available for class groups 1 to 9), as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Female and male enrolment in class groups 1 to 9, disaggregated by location (2016–2017 academic year), (%)**

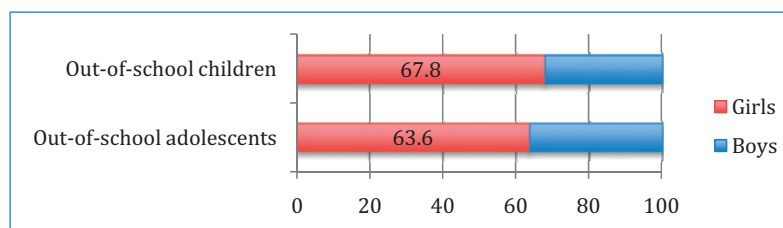


Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016e.

While educational enrolment is an important indicator, it provides incomplete information about the level of education that girls and boys actually obtain. Data on educational participation present a different picture. While there appears to be an overall small number of children out of school at the

primary and secondary levels,<sup>15</sup> girls are more likely to be out of school across these age groups. Around two-thirds of out-of-school children (primary school age) and adolescents (lower secondary school age) are female.

**Figure 3: Out-of-school children and adolescents, disaggregated by sex (2016), (%)**

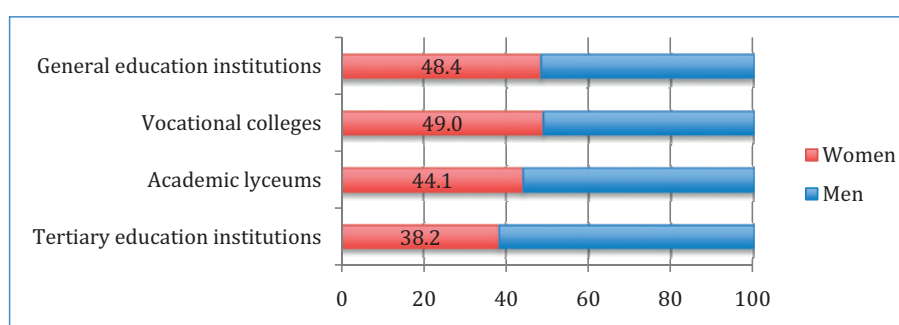


Source: UNESCO, 2018.

Patterns of girls' attendance rates vary insignificantly between rural and urban areas, but household income plays a role. The larger percentage of girls who are out of school tends to signify that families place greater importance on the education of boys in households where financial resources are constrained. Early marriage may also play a role in the drop out of girls, and this practice is thought to be more prevalent in rural areas. Another common reason that girls are taken out of school is to help with domestic work, which can include looking after younger siblings, performing chores at home and also working on family farms. It is reported that *mahalla* committees play a role in counselling families about the importance of girls continuing their education and receiving vocational training, and the state provides some non-monetary assistance (for example, free sportswear for girls from low-income families) and scholarships that address some of the factors that push girls to drop out of school (Center for Economic Research, 2015). It does not appear that there have been any official programmes to either identify the reasons why more girls are out of school or to address gender stereotypes that may contribute to this phenomenon.

Gender disparities become more pronounced when the type of secondary and higher education institution and academic subjects are considered. Young women more often pursue vocational and job skills training after grade 9 than an academic education, which also reflects the fact that they are less likely to continue their education at universities or institutes after completing secondary education.

**Figure 4: Female and male enrolment in specialized secondary and tertiary education institutions (2016–2017 academic year), (%)**



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016f.

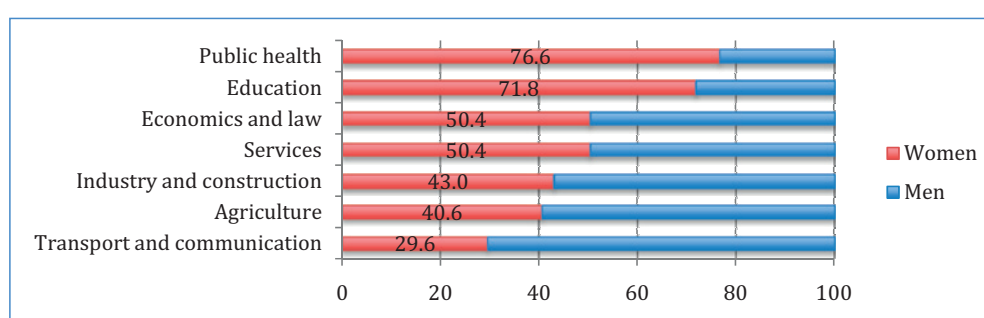
Factors that impede girls from continuing to study past the secondary level include increasing competition in admission to tertiary education as well as prevailing social norms. Educational reform has resulted in a system that is currently more oriented to meeting the needs of the labour market than in the past, and enrolment in tertiary education has declined overall. However, young women have

<sup>15</sup> Data from the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicate that less than 10 percent of girls and boys are out of school (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014).

been particularly affected as they tend to leave college at age 18 or 19 because they are considered at that point to have gained a “‘profession’ that does not require them to continue in education” (Equal Rights in Central Asia, 2018, no page number). Women face pressures to marry and become occupied with family life at this age rather than pursue further education. Most higher education institutions are located in Tashkent and other large cities, and this situation is an impediment to girls who would be required to travel long distances or live in dormitories. Rural families are often reluctant to allow young women to study far from home. Correspondence and distance learning courses can be especially helpful in ensuring that rural women have access to varied educational opportunities.

Segregation in academic subjects occurs at the specialized secondary level, with female trainees channelled toward fields that are considered ‘appropriate’ and traditional for women, such as healthcare and teaching. These particular fields are low growth areas in the labour market as they tend to lead to state jobs. Young women are underrepresented in the “rapidly developing and better-paid sectors of telecommunications, construction and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)” (United Nations in Uzbekistan and Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date, p. 10). Note that women make up less than half of students in fields of study relating to agriculture and forestry, despite the fact that they have a much higher representation as agricultural workers. The gender imbalances in academic subjects leads to occupational segregation in the labour market.

**Figure 5: Distribution of female and male students of vocational educational institutions, by specialization (2014–2015 academic year), (%)**



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2014.

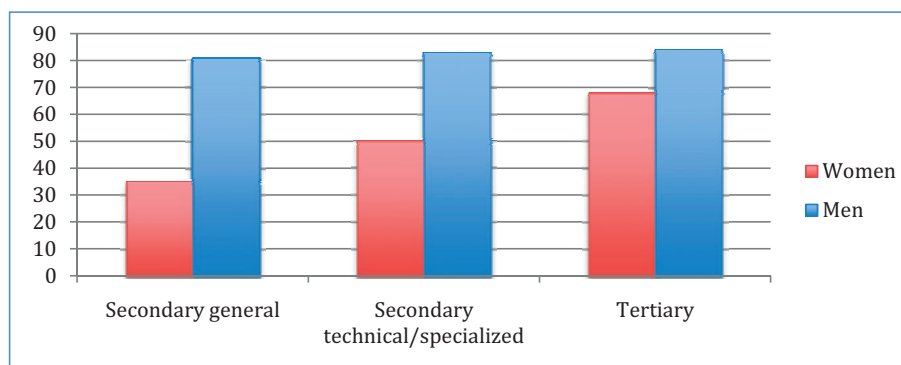
Young women are influenced by the attitudes of their family and community about the professions that are open to them, which tend to be those that are viewed as useful to a woman’s future family life, such as nurse, teacher or seamstress. Rural girls are even more limited in their choice of academic subject due to the fact that while pedagogical and medical colleges are prevalent in all regions of the country, other specialized professional courses do not exist in each district or region (UNDP Uzbekistan Country Office and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, no date).

### Box 2: State prize for girls and women for academic achievement

Each year, the Women’s Committee awards a state prize (the Zulfia prize) for talented girls and young women between the ages of 14 and 30, for academic achievement in literature, art, science, culture, education and sport. Twenty-eight recipients are chosen every year, representing two from each region, Tashkent and Karakalpakstan. Since 1999, when the national Zulfia prize was created, 255 girls and women have received prizes and state scholarships, which allow girls in secondary and vocational education to be admitted to a bachelor’s degree programme and female bachelor’s degree students to attend master’s degree programmes (WCU, 2018b). The age limit of 30 years means that the prize can also support women in postgraduate or scientific research. The Zulfia prize is not intended as a means of promoting non-traditional fields of study for women, but past prize winners have included female graduate students in agriculture (grain management), economics, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and chemistry (ADB, 2014c, p. 33).

Completion of technical secondary education or tertiary education is generally correlated with employment after graduation, but this connection seems less important for men than for women. Figure 6 below shows similar employment rates of around 80 percent for men with either some form of secondary or tertiary education, but a considerably lower employment rate for women with only a general secondary education level.

**Figure 6: Employment rate (%) correlated with level of education, for women and men**



Source: Data from Central Asia's Labour and Skills Survey (World Bank, 2016, p. 34).

Men have significantly high employment rates overall, such that the advantages of higher education are not immediately apparent for this group. For women, on the other hand, opportunities for employment increase markedly with their educational attainment. Women with tertiary education are employed at much higher rates (68 percent) than those who have only general secondary education (35 percent; World Bank, 2016, p. 34). On average, employees with tertiary education earn 55 percent higher wages than similar employees who have secondary education (ibid.). It is vital to remove the barriers to women entering and completing tertiary education as a means of improving their access to the labour market, and this is particularly important for young women from rural areas.



# 3. GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILY FARMING

## 3.1. Rural labour

The International Labour Organization estimates that the female labour force participation rate (age 15 and above) for Uzbekistan is 48.5 percent and the male labour force participation rate is 76.6 percent.<sup>16</sup> The labour force participation rate for men is lower than that of middle income countries and on a par with that of developing countries in Europe and Central Asia. The lower female labour force participation rate is typical because women are more likely to take time out of the workforce to raise children, and the rate for Uzbekistan is on a par with that of middle income and developing countries in Europe and Central Asia. However, the disparity in the female employment rate for the 24–35 age group in Uzbekistan compared with OECD countries is almost 20 percentage points (Ajwad et al., 2014, p. 7), indicating that women take almost exclusive responsibility for unpaid care work. Women's underrepresentation in formal employment translates to the loss of a key economic resource. If the average female employment rate in Uzbekistan equalled that of the OECD countries, it would mean 1.03 million more women would be contributing to the national economy; if the female employment rate were equivalent to that of Russia, there would be 1.6 million additional female workers in Uzbekistan (ibid.).

The labour market of Uzbekistan exhibits both horizontal and vertical segregation, and women tend to be concentrated in public service (primarily, education, healthcare and social security) and almost absent from sectors that correlate with higher pay (construction, transport, communications and other technical fields). Such occupational segregation on gender lines is an indicator that women have more restricted opportunities in the labour market than men, even though employment rates may not show this tendency. It is important to understand that female-dominated occupations tend to occupy a narrower spectrum; they are also generally labour intensive, are paid at lower rates, have fewer career prospects and receive less social recognition. Unfortunately, such labour market segregation is not widely recognised in many countries, even those in which the gender gap in educational attainment is narrow, such as Uzbekistan. Some countries, on the other hand, have taken measures to address the persistence of low-level female-dominated occupations, such as proactively encouraging women (and men) to enter non-traditional professions and to improve work and family life balance.

In Uzbekistan, there is a considerable gender wage gap which is one of the results of occupational segregation. Women earn only an estimated 60 percent to 53 percent of what men earn (the World Bank has calculated that from 2012 to 2013, women's average monthly wages ranged from UZS 300 000 to UZS 320 000 per month, compared with men's wages of UZS 500 000 to UZS 600 000; Swinkels et al., 2016a, p. 15).<sup>17</sup> The gender wage gap not only indicates that women face unequal remuneration in the labour market but also correlates with a gender pension gap. The gender wage gap is not unique to Uzbekistan and, on average the gap between the hourly earnings of women and men for the UNECE region is 18 percent (UNECE, 2018); it is 14 percent for the OECD countries, with considerable variation by national economy (OECD, 2018). The countries that have made the most progress in closing the gender wage gap have used varying methods such as setting a minimum living wage, legally requiring transparency in remuneration, introducing family-friendly work policies, providing accessible and quality child and elderly care and adopting quotas for women in leadership positions in the private sector (for example, corporate boards).

The male unemployment rate in Uzbekistan is only marginally higher than the female rate (9 percent of the male labour force is estimated to be unemployed compared with 8.7 percent of the female labour force). However, both the absolute rates and the gender gap are greater among young people, where the female unemployment rate (ages 15 to 24) is 19.4 percent and the male

<sup>16</sup> Modelled ILO estimate for 2017 in ILOSTAT database (ILO, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> The average wages exclude the Tashkent region.

unemployment rate for the same age group is 17.1 percent.<sup>18</sup> High numbers of discouraged workers (defined as people who are not in the labour force, and even though they are available to work, they do not seek employment because they believe they will not find work) can be found in specific age groups, which also differ by sex. For men, labour market discouragement peaks at the age of 20 to 24 years and again between the ages of 55 and 59 years, while the highest overall numbers of discouraged workers are found among young women (age 20 to 24 years), with a small increase for women age 30 to 34 years (Ajwad et al., 2014, p. 8). In general, there is no strong second peak for women as they near retirement age,<sup>19</sup> most likely because they take on care roles for grandchildren and other family members.

Of course, these figures apply to the country as a whole and do not provide a clear picture of how employment and unemployment patterns in rural locations differ from those in urban areas. Rural labour includes both agricultural and non-farm work as well as a number of informal, unpaid and seasonal working arrangements. Rural women are more likely to be unemployed (including 'voluntarily unemployed' or discouraged workers) because they are caring for children or are housewives (in 2010, of all women who were unemployed due to childcare, 57.3 percent were in rural areas, and of all unemployed housewives, 74 percent were in rural locations; UNDP Uzbekistan Country Office and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, no date, p. 14). Rural women who are categorised as unemployed 'housewives', are, in fact, making contributions through casual, informal and part-time / seasonal work or unpaid employment in family farms and household plots. One of the critical challenges facing Uzbekistan today is the high but underreported level of unemployment in rural areas, which is especially characteristic for women and young people.

### 3.1.1. Agricultural work

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries is the largest employer for both women and men (around a quarter of employed women and nearly a third of men work in this combined sector), and out of all the formal agriculture, forestry and fisheries workers in the country, 43.7 percent are female (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016a). Notably, the proportion of women working in agriculture has decreased from 32.0 percent in 2005 to 26.3 percent in 2016, and it appears that more women have taken up work in small private businesses (trade, catering, sales).<sup>20</sup> This change could be a reflection of consistent efforts by the government to promote women's entrepreneurial activity, including in rural areas. Other sources place the proportion of women working in agriculture as higher and find a larger gender gap; one survey found that 35 percent of working age women work in agriculture, compared with 19 percent of working age men (ILO, 2017, pp. 29–30).

In Uzbekistan, as in many countries, farming is typically considered to be a 'male' profession, due to the fact that most farms and holdings are registered in men's names and so they are the officially-recognised head. But as this assessment shows, women in Uzbekistan also own farms, run farms as businesses and work on farms, all topics which are discussed in more detail in later sections of this report. The significance of the stereotype that 'farmers are men' is that women who engage in farming are often overlooked both in state policy and development programmes. Since the privatization of state agricultural enterprises, the accepted farming model became one in which small independent farms are managed by men, while unpaid family members provide most of the labour (see for example, Kandiyoti, 2002). According to Central Asia's Labour and Skills Survey (2013), more than half of individuals working in agriculture are unpaid (World Bank, 2016, p. 10). There are no precise or sex-disaggregated data on this point, but women play a significant role as unpaid farm labourers. There have been trade union-led initiatives to formalise the labour of farm workers and to provide them with employment records (Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, para 252).

The government has reported on efforts to increase the employment of rural women who are classified as housewives (for example, in 2013, in Andijan Region, 26 448 'homemakers' were provided with jobs out of 41 027 who wanted to work; Government of Uzbekistan, 2014), but there is limited information about the type of employment they are offered (whether in agriculture or other sectors), their wages

<sup>18</sup> All data for 2016, based on modelled ILO estimates (The World Bank, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> The retirement age for women is 55 years and 60 years for men.

<sup>20</sup> 2005 data from State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2007, p. 105; 2015 data from State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2015.

## 3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

or for how long they have remained employed. The World Bank (2016, p. 10) points out that projects to bring jobs to rural areas have mainly been in public works, infrastructure improvement, services and micro enterprises, and that at least one-third of the jobs created have not been sustained over time.

Much of agricultural labour is not mechanised and can be characterised as heavy physical and repetitive work. As an illustration, Asian silk-producing countries have bred mulberry trees with leaves that can be harvested by machine, while in Uzbekistan this task is performed by hand. The World Bank (2016, p. 10) has determined that only 41 percent of agricultural workers learn new skills each week, an indication that agricultural jobs are not high value-adding. There is also a gendered division of labour, with men performing most of the work that requires machinery or technology (such as ploughing land) and women carrying out manual labour, such as weeding, thinning plants or sowing seeds. Some tasks on family farms or plots are performed jointly, of course, such as fertilizing or harvesting fruit and vegetables or fodder for animals.

### 3.1.2. Rural off-farm work

In rural areas, formal non-agricultural employment opportunities are mainly limited to public sector jobs, with some private sector work in agro-processing and services (financial services, transportation retail and wholesale trade).

An overall increase in agricultural output and promotion of diverse horticulture crops and harvest processing has contributed to the growth of agro-processing, which accounts for a significant proportion of the non-farm economy in rural Uzbekistan. This sector consists mainly of large processing plants, and there are a few small agro-processors in rural areas. Household-level agro-processing tends to be an informal activity and “production is for local market with sales in fresh markets or to small local retailers. Little or no produce from these sources is sold to larger national retailers, partly because of producers’ inability to meet volume requirements and because informality means that they do not have access to bar codes or tax registration” (UNDP, 2010, p. 6). Nevertheless, agro-processing has the potential to provide jobs to rural women, and it is especially important to ensure that women have opportunities for decent work. Women tend to have skills and knowledge from home-based agro-processing, but they lack formal vocational training and access to technologies and other resources that would support them to become business leaders in this field.

Rural households employ diverse livelihood strategies and often combine agricultural work with other small-scale income-generating activities and self-employment, such as handicrafts, catering or micro business. While labour migration has become a viable alternative for men, women to a much greater extent must find alternative ways to earn incomes locally. Note that this report has a dedicated section on rural women’s engagement in entrepreneurial activities (see section 4.8).

In Uzbekistan, home-based work is promoted as a way in which women can combine income-earning with domestic chores and childcare. By encouraging employers to create jobs under this arrangement, the government prioritises providing work for the rural population and women in particular. It was reported that “in more than 1 200 makhallyas [sic] in 200 regions and cities of the republic, actions have been taken that have resulted in some 2 000 women and girls becoming involved in home-based work” and in 2014, private enterprises created 45 000 jobs for home-based workers, 70 percent of whom were women (Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, paras. 206–207). The fact that home-based work is considered formal employment is significant, as this work provides women with employment histories and access to unemployment and pension benefits. It is not clear, however, whether female workers are eligible for paid leave for illness, pregnancy or childcare, nor is there qualitative information about the conditions in which they work or the types of jobs they are performing. Home-based work is a category that is distinct from individual and family businesses, private farms, and handicrafts, although it does seem to include the processing of agricultural products. Providing poor rural households with cows is an example of an initiative that is included as a type of home-based job creation (World Bank, 2016).

Handicraft production is a particular form of work undertaken by rural households, and it can have a formal or informal character. Typically, women are engaged in handicrafts when there is a lack of formal employment. Men tend to combine formal employment with handicraft making (such as ceramics). As is the case with other rural activities, quite a strict division of labour can be observed. When women produce handicrafts (such as embroidery, sewing or knitting), they tend to make

decisions about the purchase and sale of raw materials (but may rely on a male relative for help in negotiations), while men are usually responsible for transportation and assistance with sales (FAO, 2016b).

One of the priority areas of the restructured Women's Committee is to provide targeted support for women's employment, which includes both job creation and improving working conditions (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018b). The WCU will pay particular attention to young women in rural areas as well as introducing women to entrepreneurship, family business and handicrafts, and thus it can be assumed that rural women will benefit particularly from future programmes and initiatives.

### 3.1.3. Informal and temporary working arrangements

According to Central Asia's Labour and Skills Survey, the informal sector in Uzbekistan accounted for 54 percent of total employment in 2013, while official figures place the estimate at 38 percent (or 4.3 million people; World Bank, 2016, p. 9; Centre for Economic Research and UNDP, 2011, p. 31). Informal employment is neither limited to rural areas nor to agriculture. However, by some estimates, informality is highest in the agricultural sector (almost 80 percent of all workers in this sector are engaged informally; Ajwad et al., 2014, p. 13), which is explained by the large number of unpaid family workers, temporary and seasonal workers and self-employed people in micro businesses, all of whom work without labour contracts. Survey results suggest that men in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in the informal sector, although in 2009, women constituted 43.9 percent of informal workers (Center for Economic Research and UNDP, 2011, p. 31). The growth of a young labour force which is outpacing job creation, as well as corruption, are two factors spurring an increase in the number of women employed in the informal sector (Uzbek Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, 2015). Informal employment has negative consequences for women because the work does not contribute to their pensions, they are not eligible for employment-based benefits, such as maternity leave, and they are vulnerable to discriminatory and abusive practices.

It is not uncommon for women who do not formally work in agriculture to nevertheless take part in agricultural work on a temporary basis or outside of their regular employment, usually as seasonal workers.

Seasonal agricultural work (especially harvesting cotton) involves temporary jobs that are primarily undertaken by women who seek cash income (women represented almost three-quarters of cotton pickers in 2014 and 2015; ILO, 2017, p. 33). Seasonal workers include women who are otherwise economically inactive (they are housewives and responsible for working on family farms or retired), women who work exclusively in the public sector, students and the unemployed. The majority of seasonal workers are volunteers, and women work as individuals and in brigades (some of which are self-organised and others that are negotiated between *mahalla* representatives and farmers). Women's self-organised brigades are relatively new, but they have advantages in that women can collectively "command higher wages and better conditions," and families are more likely to agree to women's participation because working "alone alongside men from outside their family or kinship circle" is seen as inappropriate (ibid., p. 29). Seasonal labourers work an average of around 30 days, the majority are paid in cash, and very few have written contracts or even written consent. Apparently, the government has begun to incentivise farmers to conclude contracts with workers and to formalise working arrangements by reducing mandatory social payments from 30 percent to 15 percent (ibid., p. 53). Payment varies by the amount of work and time during the harvest season, but on average, cotton pickers earn UZS 220–300 per kilogram (sometimes with additional in-kind payments), which amounts to an average of UZS 14 800 per day at the peak time (and UZS 6 300 later in the season; ibid., p. 46, p. 53). Although seasonal work is an important means by which women with few other job options can contribute to the household income, it is not secure work and offers few labour protections.

While women have always had an important role in cotton harvesting, there is an increasing trend for rural women, including girls who have just completed school, women with young children and elderly women, to undertake other forms of day labour as *mardikors* (casual workers that are typically men). Such women are recruited individually or in small groups on the day of work, mainly to work on private plots and farms (weeding, digging, harvesting fruit and vegetables, cleaning cattle sheds and milking cows, for instance) as well as other unskilled labour. They typically receive low payment in cash, and the work is informal. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is some preference for women as *mardikor* workers because they are seen as more conscientious but will also accept lower payment than men (Eurasianet, 2017).

## 3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

Data about rural women's access to social benefits are not available, but one survey conducted among rural women found that more than half (52 percent) had experience of applying for "social or financial aid". Most of the respondents (58.4 percent) turned to the *mahalla* committee in their community, with others approaching banks for loans (13.9 percent) or the *hokimiyat* (9.6 percent; Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, para. 240).

### 3.2. Land ownership and farm structures

Access to land and land ownership have particular meanings in Uzbekistan because all land is state property. Individuals are granted land use rights under long-term leaseholds. 'Ownership' is conveyed by registering the title or property rights.

Property registers and cadastre systems should contain sex-disaggregated data<sup>21</sup> about land ownership in Uzbekistan, including on the number of land owners and sizes of land plots. However, gender statistics on this topic are not generated nor are the data disseminated or otherwise made available to researchers. This is also an area in which further training and education are needed both to improve the understanding of cadastre / registry personnel on the importance of such data for generating information about social and gender issues related to land tenure, and to inform the public about the possibility of women registering land and property in their names or of co-registration processes.

When Uzbekistan became independent, women did not gain land rights to the same extent as men. Furthermore, even though women have equal rights to own and use land under the law, leasehold contracts and titles to household plots are generally held by the head of household, typically the eldest man. Thus, women have access to land as a member of the household, but they are rarely the registered lease holder (FAO, 2018c).

There are several overlapping reasons for women's limited land ownership. Families are patrilineal, and land rights generally pass to sons; and the youngest son inherits the family house and cares for his elderly parents. According to custom, women live with their husband's family when they marry, and they "tend to concede their rights [to inherited land] to their brothers in order to avoid conflicts and not lose the support of the extended family" (FAO, 2018c, no page number). Marital property generally stays in the husband's family, and women may not be able to assert their rights to the land in the case of divorce. Furthermore, when marriages are not formalised (for example, if only a religious ceremony is performed), women do not obtain any legal rights to marital property. Women are often unaware of their land and property rights, especially given the strong tradition of male land ownership. Additionally, women may be criticised if they attempt to use the legal system to protect their property rights during family disputes. It is notable that among the individual requests for assistance that women sent to the WCU in 2017 (third quarter), 13 percent concerned issues of housing and land plots (see WCU, 2017a).

Women's limited land ownership, in light of the significant role that they play in cultivating the land, points to stark gender inequalities. Improving women's access to land is not merely a matter of fairness, but land rights and access to other productive resources such as water, livestock, agricultural equipment, seeds, and information and knowledge, are critical for women's economic independence. Globally, it has been observed that there is a positive correlation between women's secure land rights and ownership of a larger share of intra-household resources and women's autonomy and greater participation in household decision-making (Buvinić et al., 2013).

#### 3.2.1. Farm ownership and management

The post-independence process of restructuring the agricultural sector and transferring state enterprises to private farms both increased the number of rural households that are engaged in agriculture and introduced crop diversification. There are three types of formal farm structures in Uzbekistan: *shirkat* farms, private farm enterprises, and *dehkan* farms.

<sup>21</sup> The collection of sex-disaggregated data through the digital real property register is one component of a 2016–2021 World Bank project in Uzbekistan on the modernization of real property registration and cadastre data development.

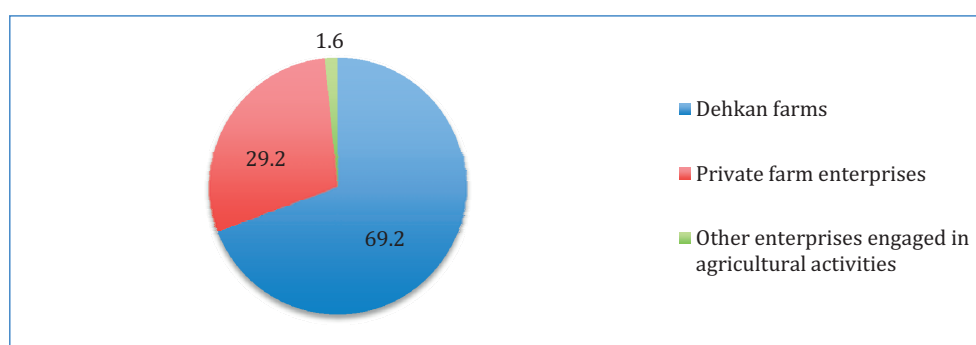
Starting in the 1990s, state and collective farms were reorganised into producer cooperatives (*shirkat*) “with members receiving a share of the land and other assets” (UNDP, 2010, p. 4). Subsequently, *shirkats* have been transformed into private farms which have 50-year leaseholds. *Shirkats* are no longer prominent, and in 2017, there were only 104 such farms operating (in the karakul sheep sector; IFAD, 2017, p. 3).

Private farm enterprises are independent legal entities that use the land under 49-year leases (leasehold farms). Private farm enterprises “produce all of the country’s cotton and most of its wheat” and are subject to state orders for these crops that are based on their land allocation, thus operating in a quasi-private manner where these crops are concerned. Increasingly, private farm enterprises are producing fruit and other products (IFAD, 2017, p. 3). The law defines the founder of the farm as its head (the farmer), who represents the legal entity in any transactions (Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 662-II). There are currently 132 356 private farm enterprises in operation (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017e).

Agricultural land is also organised as *dehkan* (household / smallholder) farms which consist of small land plots (*dehkan* farms are on average 0.17 hectares and cannot exceed 0.35 hectares if they are irrigated or one hectare if not irrigated [rain fed or pasture land]; UNDP, 2010, p. 4). *Dehkan* farmers can choose which crops or livestock to produce and sell. The law defines *dehkan* farms as those which are based on household labour (and do not use permanent hired labour). Members of *dehkan* farms consist of the head of the household, his / her spouse, and children and other relatives who are of working age; the head of the household is thus the head of a *dehkan* farm (but it can be another family member who has lifetime rights to the land plot; Articles 3–4, Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 604-I). Rights to the use of *dehkan* farm land can be transmitted as inheritance.

*Dehkan* farming is part-commercial and part-subsistence. While they occupy only 13 percent of irrigated arable land, *dehkan* farms are the main food producers for the country. They are responsible for almost 70 percent of the country’s agricultural output (almost all of its meat and milk, most of its eggs, and a large proportion of its fruit and vegetables, see Figure 7 below). The number of *dehkan* farms is increasing, and there are presently over 4.7 million such farms (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017a).

**Figure 7: Distribution of agricultural production by type of farm enterprise (2017), (%)**



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017a.

In Uzbekistan, the ‘typical farmer’ is a well-educated man with an average age of 46 (43.8 percent of surveyed farmers have higher education and 34.4 percent have secondary vocational education).<sup>22</sup> Women farmers are older than their male counterparts. Their average age varies from 45 to 70 years, but similarly they tend to have professional and technical agricultural education (Alimdjanova, 2008, p. 8). Many female farmers have extensive experience from previous work as collective farm managers. The educational attainment of female and male farmers is a positive indicator that both women and men are in a position to benefit from improved access to training, extension services and new technologies if they are made equally accessible. The reasons that farming does not attract younger women in rural

<sup>22</sup> Data from a 2007 survey conducted in eight regions (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, UNDP and MASHAV, 2010, p. 48).

### 3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

areas are not entirely clear but could stem from gender stereotypes or a lack of specialized knowledge and education.

Identifying how women and men are represented among formal farm owners and managers is complicated by both limited data and inconsistent methodologies. According to government statistics, for example, between 2008 and 2013, the proportion of women heading farms increased minimally, but overall women did not even reach ten percent of all farm heads (see Table 5, below). Note that no metadata were available, but the figures cited below most likely refer to female heads of private farm enterprises;<sup>23</sup> it is not specified whether they also include *dehkan* farms or female farm managers in the overall number.

**Table 5: Comparisons of data on female heads of farms (2008 and 2013)**

Year	Total farms registered	Total farms headed by women	Proportion of farms headed by women (%)
2008	235 000	17 000	7.2
2013	69 800	6 200	8.9

Sources: 2008 data: Government of Uzbekistan, 2008, para. 574; 2013 data: Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, para. 249.

Other sources present differing data about women's representation in farming. The results of a research project on female farmers, conducted in 2013,<sup>24</sup> indicate that for Uzbekistan as a whole, women made up only four percent of farmers. This figure ranges from as high as almost 18 percent in Khorezm Region to as low as two percent in Namangan (see Table 6, below). Note that as appears to be the case with the data presented in Table 5, the figures do not include women who head *dehkan* farms, of which there may be a larger number.

**Table 6: Data on female heads of farms, by region (2013)**

	Total number of private farm enterprises	Total number of female farmers	Proportion of female farmers (%)
Republic of Uzbekistan	66 134	2 710	4.1
Republic of Karakalpakstan	3 354	229	6.8
Region			
Andijan	6 175	152	2.5
Bukhara	3 953	91	2.3
Jizzakh	4 735	182	3.8
Kashkadarya	7 139	304	4.3
Navoi	1 801	47	2.6
Namangan	4 515	94	2.1
Samarkand	7 723	224	2.9
Surkhandarya	4 951	141	2.8
Syrdarya	3 319	98	2.9

<sup>23</sup> The government report uses the non-specific term “фермерские хозяйства”, meaning “farms”.

<sup>24</sup> The programme, “Establishment of extension information and advisory services to support women in agriculture through training, leadership development, capacity building, exchange of experience and promotion of export-oriented products”, conducted by the Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, included a survey of 458 female farmers.

**Table 6: Data on female heads of farms, by region (2013)**

	Total number of private farm enterprises	Total number of female farmers	Proportion of female farmers (%)
Tashkent	6 051	139	2.3
Fergana	7 737	180	2.3
Khorezm	4 681	829	17.7

Source: Mamarasulov et al., 2013.

The majority of farmers are both the registered owners and managers of their farms, but 10.5 percent of farmers are not the formal owners, and their land plots are registered to other family members. Among farmers in this arrangement, women make up a large share (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, UNDP and MASHAV, 2010, p. 48). Consequently, while a woman may manage a farm de facto, legally the enterprise is registered in the name of a male relative, and she may not be counted as the farm head for statistical purposes.

Generally, the privatization processes left women with a much smaller share of former state assets than men, including farm structures. During the first waves of privatization, *dehkan* farms were not family farms but were speciality farms (for example, dairy farms, orchards or vineyards) that were split from a former collective farm; *dehkan* farms were formed when a private farmer purchased the assets of the collective farm brigade. Although women constituted a large number of collective farm workers, the criteria for purchase exhibited elements of gender bias, because women often lacked the financial means to purchase the assets or obtain loans. Having a certain number of sons in the household was also part of the application process (Koopman, 1998). The result of a privatization process that ignored women’s previous contributions to the agricultural sector is the small number of registered female farm owners today.

While they play a very significant role as labourers on *dehkan* farms, women have much less control over and access to critical assets, such as arable land and technology. For the Central Asian region generally, women’s unequal access to assets translates directly into lower earnings and restrictions on their abilities to undertake entrepreneurial activities and leads to underperformance of the agricultural sector (FAO, 2016g). The corollary is equally important: when such inequalities are addressed, not only do rural women themselves benefit but they become a “driving force against hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty” (FAO, 2018b).

In addition to formal farm structures, rural households undertake farming activities on individual household plots (‘kitchen gardens’ or *tomorka*). The State Statistics Committee defines these household plots as personal subsidiary farming (non-entrepreneurial activities for the production of agricultural products, mainly for household consumption) within its methodology for generating statistical data on agricultural activities. A review of publicly-available statistics did not reveal any data about subsidiary farming, but such plots generally provide a substantial proportion of rural households’ food and income. Female and male family members undertake work on the plots, but in households in which the men are labour migrants, the work for women is more intensive.

### 3.3. Status of rural women: gender roles, agency and empowerment

Women and men have different roles in agricultural production and, indeed, in society as a whole. Uzbek society adheres to quite strict gender roles that, in themselves, stem from stereotypes about what is expected for women and men. There are strong preferences for a patriarchal family model in which the husband plays the dominant role and is responsible for providing for the family and the



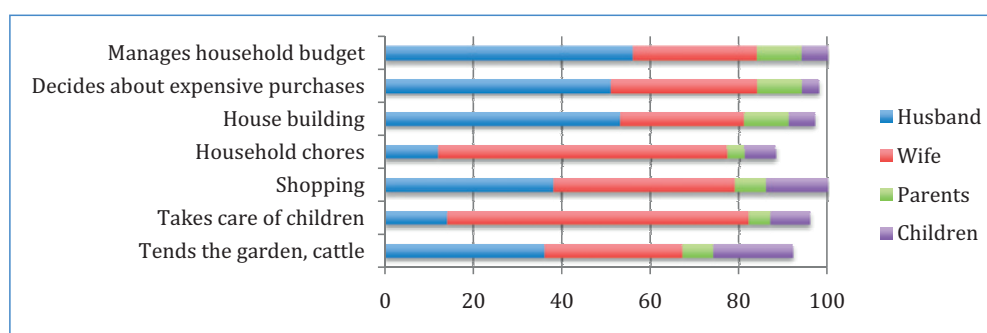
### 3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

wife manages the household sphere.<sup>25</sup> Women place more significance on motherhood than having a professional life. In a 2015 public opinion poll, women were asked which of their roles and functions they considered to be the most important, and a large majority named being a mother (80 percent of rural women and 78 percent of urban women) as their most important role, compared with only ten percent who identified being a professional (Social Center «Ijtimoiy Fikr», 2015, p. 6).

Because women are associated with managing the domestic sphere, they are expected to take on these roles even when they are also employed outside the home. In an attitudinal survey, 94 percent of women and 90 percent of men in Uzbekistan responded positively that “a woman should do household chores even if her husband is not working” (EBRD, 2016, p. 134). Of women and men surveyed in two Western European comparator countries, just over ten percent gave the same answer (ibid.). For rural women, housework also encompasses a variety of agricultural tasks. Male participants in focus group discussions confirmed that women are expected to keep up with housework even when they are also occupied with farming activities; and, in fact, some men observed that they would be embarrassed to help their wives with housework and would face ridicule from *mahalla* members for taking on ‘female’ duties (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date). The negative impact of such rigid gender roles, in addition to restricting women’s time, is to reinforce norms that women do not have the same abilities and competencies as men in the areas of public life, including formal employment and political office.

Assessing rural women’s status, empowerment and participation in decision-making in the household, about agricultural practices, or in community councils is a complex question. Family dynamics are an important predictor of women’s decision-making in the household. In traditional and multi-generational households, younger family members usually defer to the decisions of the head of household, typically the eldest man in the family. When gender roles are adhered to strictly, the choices and opportunities of young female members may be very limited, for instance whether she is permitted to work outside of the home. But younger unmarried males may also be expected to conform to the head of household’s decisions, especially on questions about labour migration. Women’s agency is also dependent on the types of decisions being made in the household; women are more likely to make independent decisions on children’s upbringing than on household expenses, for example. Figure 9 illustrates how decision-making and roles are typically distributed among family members. Here, the husband refers to the head of the household.

**Figure 8: Distribution of decisions and responsibilities in the family**  
(% of surveyed households)



Source: Institute for Social Research under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNFPA, 2010, p. 18.

Surveys about the types of decisions that women and men make concerning farming practices, as well as how income derived from agricultural production is used in the household, are very useful sources of information about the level of women’s empowerment. For instance, the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (a tool used globally to measure women’s empowerment and inclusion levels in the agricultural sector) includes survey questions for women about their participation in productive decision-making such as: “How much input did you have in making decisions about: food crop farming, cash crop farming, livestock raising, fish culture?; To what extent do you feel you can make your own personal decisions regarding these aspects of household life if you want/ed to?” (see IFPRI, 2015). Small-scale surveys on the kinds of decisions made primarily by women and by men

<sup>25</sup> This family model is favoured by around half of survey respondents (Institute for Social Research under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNFPA, 2010, p. 11).

(for example, on initiating new agricultural activities, land use or marketing agricultural products) have been conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.<sup>26</sup> If similar surveys were to be conducted in Uzbekistan, they would greatly enhance the understanding of the gendered patterns of decision-making in agriculture.

Information from rural focus group discussions, carried out for FAO by the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, provides some information about decision-making concerning household farm management. Focus group participants stated that a husband and wife should jointly make decisions on some aspects of farming, such as the types of fruit and vegetables to plant, allocation of land to specific crops and what to sell at market (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date). However, men primarily make the decisions about how profits from farming are used. Of the female participants, 65 percent stated that their husbands mainly make decisions about income distribution, often with the participation of his parents (*ibid.*). In some families, the mother-in-law (wife or mother of the head of household) plays the main role in intra-household income distribution. But when a woman is the household head, if she is divorced or widowed, her adult sons generally take on the decision-making role or other relatives are consulted. Only around five to seven percent of female focus group participants said that they make independent decisions about spending farming income. When they are both employed, men make decisions about the income they earn while women's incomes are usually considered part of the family budget (FAO, 2017c).

The sale of surplus agricultural products (such as eggs, milk and other dairy products, fruit and vegetables) is an important additional source of income for rural households, and young and married women are becoming more actively involved in selling such products in local markets and stores. Women's engagement in this type of small-scale trade may not be traditional or the norm, however, focus group participants report that this is a survival mechanism for rural households and, therefore, it is viewed positively (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date). Women tend to decide independently how to use the funds that they receive from these informal sales.

Women's decision-making concerning intra-household resources and their autonomy impacts on women's wellbeing in ways that are not purely economic, such as their educational attainment, control over fertility, health and freedom from domestic violence. Research in Uzbekistan does not point to any differences in the prevalence of domestic violence between rural and urban areas. However, studies do show that one of the most common causes of domestic violence is the perception that women are not conforming to their subordinate role in the family. According to one survey, 20 percent of respondents attributed domestic violence to women's "independent decision-making", followed by their "negligence in household duties" (19 percent; Institute for Social Research under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNFPA, 2010, pp. 23–24). The same research found that women's financial dependence is a factor that causes them to remain in abusive relationships (14 percent of respondents who had experienced domestic violence cited this as a reason for not applying for assistance; *ibid.*, p. 42). In 2017 (third quarter only), almost a third (29.2 percent) of all requests for assistance from women sent to the WCU concerned "family conflicts" (WCU, 2017a). This figure is a slight increase from 20.6 percent in 2013 (Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, para 62).

### 3.3.1. *Women's role in formal decision-making: associations and political office*

Information about women's membership in farmers' associations and cooperatives is incomplete. The Council of Farmers, Dehkan Farmers and Owners of Household Land Plots of Uzbekistan (the Council of Farmers), with regional and district representation, is the main public institution representing farmers.<sup>27</sup> No information was available for this report on the total number of members of either the Council of Farmers for Uzbekistan or for Karakalpakstan, nor about the representation of women among members of either council. The Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan (*Tadbirkor Ayol*) reports that its support centre for women farmers (part of the former Association of Farm Enterprises which the council replaced in 2012) was coordinating 5 450 farms headed by women out of a total of 80 628 farming units (6.8 percent; Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2012, para. 402). It is not clear whether this figure represents the total number of farms headed by women or only those that were also members of the association. Further data is needed about women's representation in the Councils of Farmers, disaggregated by region and by membership status (specifically whether they

<sup>26</sup> Both surveys were conducted by the NGO Women Engage for a Common Future (see FAO, 2016e, p. 48 and FAO, 2016f, p. 39).

<sup>27</sup> There is an analogous Council for the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

### 3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

occupy decision-making positions within the councils). As of July 2018, membership of the Council of Farmers has become mandatory for farmers and *dehkan* farmers. This regulation has the potential to generate administrative data about farmers generally, and if the membership registration data are also disaggregated by sex, this will provide very important information about the share of women owners and managers of farming enterprises.

Research for this assessment uncovered references to two donor-led projects that aimed to establish organisations for women farmers in Uzbekistan: an association of women farmers and “Women Farmers Social Enterprises”. No further information was found on the status or membership numbers of either of these organisations.

At the political level, women are scarcely represented in national institutions concerned with agriculture or rural development. In the formerly combined Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, for example, there are no women in leadership positions.<sup>28</sup> Of the 11 members of the parliamentary Committee on Agrarian and Water Management, one is a woman, and there is one woman among the ten members of the Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection. One parliamentary committee is chaired by a female MP – the Committee on Labour and Social Issues.<sup>29</sup>

Women constitute around 18 percent of decision-makers in legislative bodies (the *Oliy Majlis*, *Zhogorku Kenesh* [Karakalpakstan], and province, district, and municipal *kengashes* [councils] of people’s deputies; Government of Uzbekistan, 2014, para. 126). The introduction of a quota system to the electoral process for the *Oliy Majlis* has had the positive effect of increasing the number of women within political parties but has not yet translated to 30 percent representation in office – the proportion that is recommended by the UN as the critical mass necessary to have influence over decision-making. The proportion of women in national government office decreases with the level of authority. For instance, women occupy only around 11 percent of high-level positions (ministers, deputy ministers, and heads of the provincial government bodies) compared with 31.2 percent of mid-level posts (heads of departments).<sup>30</sup>

There are no female governors (*hokim*) at the regional level, but 14 administrations have female deputy *hokim* / representatives of the Women’s Committee. In 168 districts (*raion*) and 26 municipal administrations / *hokimiyat*, women have the analogous deputy mayor post (17.1 percent of all local elected and appointed posts; WCU, 2014a, p. 30). Local bodies of citizen self-governance, *mahallas*, are organised in villages, settlements, and neighbourhoods of towns and cities. They play an important role in improving social conditions in the community and addressing domestic issues. The *mahalla* is run by a committee of citizens with an elected chairperson (*aksakal*). Out of 10 126 *mahallas*, women chair 1 131 committees (11.2 percent; ADB, 2014c, p. 25). When the *mahalla* chairperson and their advisors are combined, the total proportion of women in these roles increases to 13.4 percent (WCU, 2014a, p. 30).

Achieving gender balance in all levels of government office would improve the legitimacy of the institutions; and increasing female representation would also make them more accessible to women who represent half of all constituents. Increasing rural women’s representation and leadership in governance and raising their capacity in rural development-related policies is required to ensure that they can “meaningfully participate in decision-making and in shaping laws, policies and programmes”, especially those that impact on their communities and livelihoods (FAO, 2017e, no page number).

<sup>28</sup> See the website of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources available at <http://www.agro.uz/ru/about/management/>.

<sup>29</sup> See the website of the *Oliy Majlis* available at <http://parliament.gov.uz/ru/structure/committee/>.

<sup>30</sup> Using data from 2013 (Center for Economic Research, 2015, p. 39).



# 4. GENDER ISSUES IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

### 4.1. Crop production and horticulture

Most of the arable land in Uzbekistan is planted with grain or cotton. However, increasingly, horticulture (fruit and vegetables) is recognised as “among the most profitable activities on both *dehkan* and private farms... over the last ten years, the incomes those activities generate comprised a growing share of national GDP” (Larson et al., 2015, p. 8). There are growing domestic and export markets for horticulture products, and crop diversity is positively correlated with dietary diversity and food security.

When preparing this assessment, no official data were found that compared the farming practices of women and men on the subject of crop or horticulture harvests or yields. One study on the potential for shifting from a monoculture cropping system to horticulture products notes that “indirect evidence and logic” suggest that policies to support *dehkan* farmers have also benefitted “women and the poor”. However, this supposition cannot be verified because baseline data as well as “good survey data on households and farms is lacking or unavailable” (Larson et al., 2015, p. 69).

Information from focus group discussions with female farmers indicate that in addition to cotton and wheat – products which they sell to the government – women cultivate a wide variety of crops, including vegetables, grapes, corn and orchard fruits (Alimdjanova, 2008). Some of the specific difficulties highlighted by women farmers engaged in horticulture, include: the low quality of seed selection; decreasing crop capacity (due to land deterioration and insufficient water supply); a lack of access to good quality machinery that negatively impacts on crop yields; and limits on crop rotation practices (due to state orders for cotton and wheat; *ibid.*). While it is most likely that male farmers also experience these particular difficulties, women tend to have much more limited access to the kinds of agricultural inputs that can help them to farm more efficiently, such as extension services, and to the capital needed to purchase or lease machinery.

Women in rural areas express an interest in developing the capacity to process vegetables, fruit and grapes locally, through mini-factories for example. There is potential in rural areas to use products from *dehkan* farms to make jams, juices, fruit purees for children, marinades and pickles, but processing plants are not sufficient at present (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, no date). Many women already have experience in the area of food processing, but their capacities are limited to home-based production and they lack access to large urban markets. Dedicated research is needed on how women and men are represented along value chains dealing with horticulture, as well as any impediments they face. Likewise, Nurbekov et al. (2018) identified potential income-generating opportunities for women in organic crops, including fibres (cotton, silk), fruit, vegetable and herb processing, in addition to wild harvesting of non-wood forest products. Because the country is at an early stage in developing organic agriculture, this is also a critical time for identifying prospects for women and assessing ways of addressing their needs (technology, training and so forth) so that they can take advantage of any new opportunities.

Women play a key role in tending kitchen gardens, and it has been estimated that such gardens “contribute to more than 80 percent of agricultural production (excluding crops such as cotton, wheat, rice) and ensure households’ food security in the rural and urban areas” (Mukhamedova, 2015, p. 7). Women’s labour in kitchen gardens, as well as in family orchards, provides a critical safety net for rural households, but these contributions are not considered to be a formal part of agricultural production (meaning they are not captured in official productivity or labour statistics). The informality of women’s contributions may also mean that rural advisory services and other educational programmes that are aimed at people who farm as a business, fail to reach women.

### 4.2. Livestock

Livestock production is a growing sector. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, almost 95 percent of all livestock is reared in private smallholdings and private commercial farms (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Farmers' Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017). Over the past five years, all types of livestock production have increased, including cattle, sheep and goats, and poultry. Farms that engage in livestock breeding tend to have better developed infrastructure (including gas, water and electricity supply) and access to a greater variety of machinery and production equipment (for example, tractors, combine harvesters, ploughs, power generators, refrigerators and greenhouses) than crop producing farms (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNDP, 2010).

No statistics are available about gender differences in livestock production on farms managed by women and men. Such data, along with information about whether female farmers have equal access to veterinary and extension services or breeding programmes, is important to identify opportunities to further support female farmers.

Outside of farming as a formal occupation, most rural households keep livestock. Following the gendered division of labour, men have greater involvement in the sale, slaughter and breeding of livestock. Women usually graze and feed livestock, particularly when grazing areas are near the home, and they are responsible for milking animals and preparing dairy products, as well as the informal sale of excess products (for example, milk or eggs).

*Dehkan* farms that sell milk or meat mainly sell directly to neighbours and acquaintances, and far fewer rely on market sales or intermediaries (UNDP, 2008). The reliance on local sales suggests that *dehkan* farmers encounter difficulties with transport and wholesale marketing and are, therefore, unable to reach urban consumers. It is important to consider ways to facilitate access to market for female farmers and for women who produce and sell agricultural products related to livestock, and additionally ensure that they have agency to make independent decisions about how the income will be used.

### 4.3. Fisheries and aquaculture

Although Uzbekistan is a land-locked country with limited water resources, the fisheries sector (which consists of both the inland capture fisheries and aquaculture sectors) has the potential to improve the rural economy. While fish capture was once mainly limited to the Aral Sea (a landlocked lake), extensive irrigation projects increased the sea's salinity and depleted the fish population, and fish capture activities were then transferred to reservoirs and lakes. During the Soviet period, efforts were made to develop aquaculture because fish capture was insufficient to meet local demand. Today, aquaculture is a fast-growing sector, and three large-scale fish farms account for most of the total production (Karimov, 2015). However, the sector has seen little modernization since the Soviet period, many specialists have left the field for more profitable work, and when the sector was privatized the number of employees was reduced by around half. There has been limited support for or investment in aquaculture, but the government has taken steps to develop the sector as a means of providing both entrepreneurial opportunities and high-quality food for the population. In 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources reported that in the previous year, fish farmers had received loans from commercial banks totalling UZS 8 billion and the yield from fish farms had increased by 40 percent (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2011).

In order to promote women's access to this profitable business and encourage their participation in aquaculture, all gender-based inequalities or barriers that are present in the fisheries sector should be identified. Unfortunately, this process is made more difficult because there are virtually no data on the roles of women and men working in fisheries or aquaculture. The limited data that are available suggest that the majority of fish farm employees are male. According to 2008–2009 statistics, more than 2 000 people were directly employed on fish farms, and of these, 1 693 were men (Karimov, 2015). An additional 2 000 were employed in support services, such as transport, wholesale retail, and supplying ice.

Women are more likely to be engaged in retail trade than any other part of the aquaculture value chain. A 2009 study found that most aquaculture harvests are transferred to one wholesale market in the Tashkent region, from which fish are supplied to around ten ‘green markets’ in the capital. In one green market alone, there were between 25 and 30 women selling fish (Karimov et al., 2009, p. 39). At the time, very few female entrepreneurs in aquaculture had approached the Business Women’s Association of Uzbekistan for assistance, but the association, as well as banks, expressed their willingness to support women to start businesses in this field (by providing training on marketing, processing and microfinance, for example). Additionally, the Conception on Aquaculture and Capture Fisheries Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2008 to 2016 to be implemented by the Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries (within the formerly joint Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources) includes measures aimed at women, specifically to elaborate a programme for the “development of profitable, small technologies of production, processing and marketing of fish” and involve women in such activities (Karimov et al., 2009, p. 111). No information was found during research for this assessment to confirm the extent to which women have been engaged in programmes to develop their skills related to aquaculture businesses since 2009.

The low level of women engaged in the fisheries sector, 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 in Uzbekistan. A lack of research on fish value chains also means that the potential economic benefit to women and men from increased investment in the fisheries sector is not known.

### 4.4. Sericulture

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Sericulture (silk worm breeding) is an ancient tradition in Uzbekistan, and the country is one of the world leaders in the production of raw silk, most of which is exported. Sericulture has been promoted as a key rural enterprise and a means to alleviate poverty, mainly in the Fergana Valley. In an arrangement similar to that of the cotton industry, the silk production sector is managed by *Uzbekipaksanoat*, an association created in 2017 that unites five regional companies and has the status of a ministry. Sericulture is also addressed by a national programme on the comprehensive development of the silk sector for 2017–2021.

Small-scale farms engage in sericulture on a contractual basis and fulfil state orders. In fact, almost all silkworm breeding in Uzbekistan is carried out within individual farms. *Dehkan* farmers often have to hire additional workers when they undertake sericulture, as caring for the silk worms is labour intensive and also additional to other types of crop production. It has been suggested that this arrangement can be unprofitable for farmers, especially those who cannot meet the quota for silk cocoon production relying only on family labour. Those farming enterprises that are members of the *Uzbekipaksanoat* association may benefit from investment, training and new technologies that could make sericulture more efficient and profitable in the coming years. A particularly positive development is the recognition that the labour performed by seasonal workers in silk production counts toward their employment history and, thus, their pensions (Presidential Decree, 2018a). This provision, which should help to formalise the type of labour that rural women often undertake, has the potential to improve women’s long-term financial stability.

The government also supports sericulture as a form of home-based work by providing tax exemptions and limited social payments for silkworm cocoon producers. This form of home-based work is seen as especially suitable for rural women because it does not require extensive equipment. The nature of silk worm breeding (requiring a constant supply of mulberry leaves during certain stages, as well as special conditions of cleanliness, temperature and humidity) begs the question of whether it is, in fact, an appropriate type of home-based work. Qualitative studies of the experiences of *dehkan* farmers, and rural women, working in sericulture would be useful to shed more light on the topic in order to identify areas for improvement.

### 4.5. Forestry

Uzbekistan has a relatively small area of forest. The state forest stock represents 22 percent of the country's total area and included in this is 3.3 million hectares of covered forest (or 7.5 percent of the total area of the country). Almost all of Uzbekistan's forests (86 percent) are situated in the desert zone (FAO, 2014a, p. 5). Nevertheless, forests are important to mitigate the impacts of environmental change and natural disasters, and they are key to the livelihoods of many rural families.

Women are almost absent from formal employment related to forestry and forest management. Forestry work is considered a 'masculine' field. At present, there are 785 women, or about 10 percent of the staff of the Goskomles<sup>31</sup>. Among the heads of the 55 state-funded forestry enterprises (leskhoz) in Uzbekistan, only one has a female manager (FAO, 2017c). According to data submitted to the FAO forest resources assessment in 2014, women accounted for around four percent of the total staff working in public forest institutions (FAO, 2014a, p. 74). Women tend to work as secretaries and cleaners; the profession of forester is not considered appropriate for women as it entails irregular working hours, overnight and overtime duties and is seen as hazardous.

Women's minimal role in forestry as a form of employment should not imply that they are not engaged in forest use and management in other ways. In households near forests, men tend to be engaged in the collection of firewood and non-timber forest products (including medicinal herbs, seedlings and some fruits) and cattle grazing, while women are more likely to use forest land to gather non-timber forest products. Women process non-timber forest products, spending time that is additional to their household duties, and men usually are the ones to sell such products.

The use of forest land is regulated by tickets for grazing that are purchased annually or for several months. Men form the majority of ticket holders, and women rarely enter into formal negotiations with forest enterprises (FAO, 2017c). It is not clear to what extent women who do not have a male breadwinner in the family would have access to use of forest land. Focus group discussions related to the forestry sector identified the need to engage with women in order to ensure that they have a voice in forest use and management and also to build on their capacities and skills to become more effective in income-earning activities (ibid.).

### 4.6. Agricultural extension services, training and information

Agricultural advisory and consultative services are provided primarily by governmental institutions, coordinated by the (formerly combined) Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources. Extension service providers include councils of farmers, agro-firms, water users' associations, vocational and research institutes and others (Kazbekov and Qureshi, 2011). In parallel, several international development organisations arrange training for farmers, usually led by local experts. Despite the range of services and training courses, farmers' needs are still not met, and there is particularly high demand for extension services among farmers who produce fruit and vegetables (in contrast to those who are involved in the production of state-ordered crops who have fewer incentives to adapt new practices and technologies; ibid.).

Women's ability to access extension services and other educational opportunities can be constrained by stereotypes about the types of agricultural activities that women and men are expected to undertake. There are no official data about female or male farmers' use of extension services. But information from international development organisations that support training for farmers in Uzbekistan indicates that unless women are a specific target group, they are underrepresented among participants when topics concern farming technologies. For instance, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) provided training to 1 322 people on "crop rotation and technologies" in 2013; eight percent of the trainees were women (IFAD, 2017, p. iv). Under a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project that aimed to increase employment and income in several agricultural value chains, women were the only participants

<sup>31</sup> According to the Decree of the President of 11 May 2017, a State Committee on Forestry of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Goskomles) was set to act as the main policy institution in this sector.



## 4. Gender issues in agriculture and rural livelihoods

in training on household processing (food safety and hygiene practices), but they were virtually absent from training on winter preparation of irrigation and drainage systems, winter grape best practices, and intensive orchard practices and pruning (Development Alternatives Inc. and USAID, 2014, p. 13, p. 19). In contrast, a 2013 programme to expressly provide extension information and advisory services to female farmers combined educational courses on technological innovations with more general training on leadership and entrepreneurship skills (AgroWeb Uzbekistan, no date). Several initiatives have been launched to support women farmers, but they appear to have a greater focus on business skills (accounting, business planning and taxation) rather than extension services (UzDaily, 2012).

Because it is not known how participants were recruited for the training mentioned above or whether there was more gender-balanced participation in other sessions, the data should not be used to make definitive conclusions. The findings suggest that increased attention should be given to ensuring that there are no barriers that prevent female farmers, and other women engaged in agriculture, from gaining beneficial information. Barriers could include women's more limited mobility and time constraints, the failure to recognise women as farmers when they are not the formal heads of farming enterprises, gender stereotypes about women's role in agricultural production, and outreach that does not communicate directly with potential female beneficiaries.

The increase in online advice for farmers is also a positive development. For instance, Tashkent State Agrarian University hosts two informational portals that are linked to Information and Consultation Centres of the university. The websites<sup>32</sup> compile scientific research, contact information for agricultural and other organisations, recommendations for farmers and events announcements. The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources also provides advice and recommendations for farmers on its website.<sup>33</sup>

It should be noted that rural women entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan have very limited access to computers and the Internet and tend not to use Internet-enabled mobile phones (ADB, 2014b). Female entrepreneurs only make limited use of ICTs for their businesses, and those in rural areas lack access to and ownership of devices that would enable them to connect to online resources, suggesting that digital resources aimed at farmers may not be reaching an important target group.

### 4.7. Access to irrigation and other agricultural inputs

Water resources are intensely important for Uzbek farmers who depend on irrigation for their crops and also for flushing salt from the land. There are very important gender issues connected to the topic of irrigation, not only for farmers but also for rural residents who use water for kitchen gardens and other small land plots.

Irrigation is traditionally a male responsibility, and men usually take part in negotiations concerning water use and undertake the task of irrigating household plots. It is not culturally acceptable for a woman to serve as a *mirab* (the manager of agricultural water who is responsible for the operation of water canals). In rural areas, local irrigation issues are under the purview of water users' associations (WUAs), which are independent institutions consisting of a chairperson, a board and a management committee. Case studies from various regions in Uzbekistan confirm that some Water Users' Associations have no female members or women are represented in only very small numbers (ADB, 2014c).

Given the high level of male outmigration, women are having to take on more responsibility for water management and irrigation, but they also face specific difficulties. Priority is given to irrigating large leasehold farms that produce cotton and wheat, and conflicts can arise over the unauthorized watering of kitchen gardens and *dehkan* farms, both types of farming where women are more often engaged. Women are generally not in a position or empowered to protect their own interests due to their lack of representation in Water Users' Associations and common social practices. Furthermore, commercial farmers generally only permit *dehkan* farmers and

<sup>32</sup> Available at <http://www.agrowebcee.net/awuz/home/> (with information in the Russian and English languages) and <http://www.agriculture.uz> (with information in Uzbek, Russian and English).

<sup>33</sup> Available at <http://www.agro.uz/ru/services/recommendations/>.

households with kitchen gardens / *tomorka* to water their plots at night, and women report that it is very difficult to obtain access to water intakes and gateways that are located far from the house (Swinkels et al., 2016b). Households that irrigate their land plots in this way are also expected to contribute to routine canal maintenance, and women face problems making repairs themselves or arranging repairs of canals and other irrigation infrastructure. As a result, the “social cost incurred to obtain irrigation water is higher for women than for men” (ibid., p. 60).

In the absence of agricultural census data that are disaggregated by sex, it is difficult to determine the extent to which women and men have access to other resources such as farm equipment and machinery, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and veterinary services. One study of 35 female farmers found that only five owned their own machinery (in this case, tillage tractors, tractor-cultivators and grain harvesters); the other farmers hired machinery under machine tractor fleet schemes or from private owners (Alimdjanova, 2008, p. 11). The farmers observed that renting machinery from machine tractor fleets was more affordable for them than renting from private owners, but that they also experienced frequent breakdowns and had difficulty obtaining spare parts – issues which contributed to lower crop yields. It is not clear if this pattern is indicative for female farmers on the whole, but given that women in general have lower economic status, and even as farm owners and managers have fewer resources (such as collateral to secure business loans and personal networks) at their disposal, it can be assumed that their access to productive assets and inputs needed for farming is severely restricted.

### 4.8. Entrepreneurship and access to markets

The restructuring of state-run farms made it necessary to expand other forms of employment, and government promotion of small businesses and private enterprises has become the primary method of job creation in Uzbekistan. Businesses operating in the field of agriculture tend to be smaller in scale (compared with industry, trade and transportation, for instance). While the share of small business has increased in every industry, the transition from state-owned to private agricultural enterprises has been especially thorough. From 2000 to 2016, the proportion of small businesses and private entrepreneurs engaged in agriculture, out of the total number of agricultural enterprises, increased from 73.6 percent to 98.2 percent of the sector (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017d).

Official registration records indicate that agricultural businesses tend to be small enterprises (and more often, micro enterprises) or family businesses, rather than large-scale enterprises.

**Table 7: Number of legal enterprises and proportion operating in the agricultural sector (2017)**

Type of enterprise	Total number	Proportion of total enterprises engaged in agriculture, forestry or fishing
Legal enterprises	268 406	6.8%
Large commercial enterprises	2 302	4.4%
Small business entities	218 170	8.3% (January 2017 data)
Small business entities	229 400	– (July 2017 data)
including:		0.2% (small enterprises)
		8.8% (micro enterprises)
Family enterprises	8 689	13.6%

## 4. Gender issues in agriculture and rural livelihoods

Notes on Table 7: All data refer to legally registered and operating enterprises. With the exception of, possibly, family enterprises, neither private farm enterprises nor *dehkan* farms are included in these figures. The category of small business entities includes: small businesses, micro enterprises and individual entrepreneurs / sole proprietors. Sources: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017c; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2017d.

Rural areas also support businesses that are not in the agricultural sector, but national enterprise statistics are not disaggregated by rural and urban location. In fact, there are no estimates on the size of the non-farm rural economy and its contribution to GDP. A UNDP report (2010, p. 6) notes that, “The rural non-farm economy in Uzbekistan is dominated by agro-processing and services”, which encompass both large former state enterprises as well as household-level enterprises that operate informally (without registration), primarily for the local market.

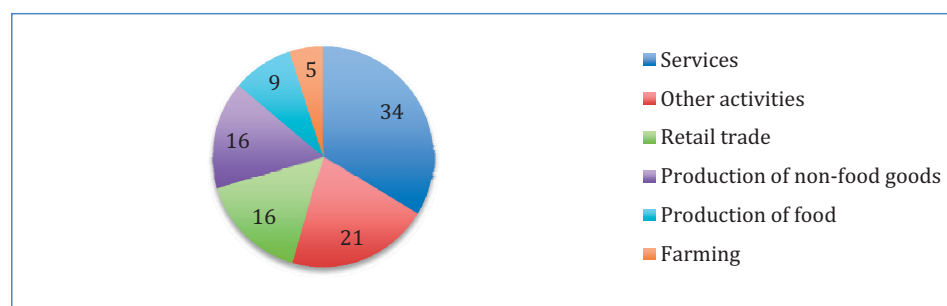
Furthermore, business registration data on micro and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not sex-disaggregated; and only data about individual female and male entrepreneurs can be analysed. In 2011, out of 161 000 individual entrepreneurs registered with the State Tax Committee, 61 700 (38.3 percent) were women (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2012, p. 185). With the recent introduction of a gender marker on the online business registration system, the tracking of new businesses led by women has become possible. In early 2017, women represented 33.6 percent of the total number of newly-registered business entities (individual entrepreneurs, joint or independent legal entities; UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub Gender Team, 2018, p. 2). The data do not indicate the proportion of entrepreneurs that are in rural locations, however.

Estimations on women’s engagement at either the micro or SME level (and not as sole proprietors) suggest that around a quarter of private enterprises are ‘women’s businesses’, but the number of such businesses varies by source. For instance, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan estimates that only ten percent of all businesses are led by women (which may refer to either ownership or management and enterprises of any size; UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub Gender Team, 2018, p. 2).

Surveys offer information about the markets in which female entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan are most active. According to a 2013 sociological survey of “businessmen [sic]” in Uzbekistan, women represented an average of 21 percent of entrepreneurs across all sectors of the economy, but for farming in particular, men predominated and women accounted for only ten percent of entrepreneurs – the smallest proportion of women in any sector after transport (Center for Economic Research & UNDP, 2014, p. 6).

Looking only at female entrepreneurs, most women’s businesses provide services (typically in the areas of education or health), and the smallest number (only five percent in one survey) are engaged in farming (see Figure 9, below).

**Figure 9: Distribution of women’s businesses by sector (%)**



Source: Business Forum of Uzbekistan, 2014, p. 8.

The business activities of rural women entrepreneurs differ from the national profile, and this is an indication of their more limited options. According to one survey, half of rural women entrepreneurs (50.5 percent) work at home (in handicraft production and baking and producing confectionary), followed by 41.9 percent who are involved in other forms of production, trade or services (Alimdjanova, 2009, p. 27). As expected, rural business women are more likely to have farming enterprises than figures for the general population of female entrepreneurs (7.6 percent of the female entrepreneurs in rural areas; *ibid.*). Most of the enterprises that rural women start and operate could be characterised

as micro-enterprises, cottage industries or home-based production. The development of women's entrepreneurship is attributable to state programmes on female employment that have promoted work that is compatible with women's domestic responsibilities, hence such businesses are often individual enterprises or could even be considered self-employment (ADB, 2014c).

Women's businesses may be small sized due to limited growth opportunities in the sectors in which they operate but female entrepreneurs also face specific barriers. Foremost, women lack access to start-up capital and other financial assets (credit and loans). Out of surveyed women in business, 67 percent relied on their husbands or other family members to provide start-up capital (Business Forum of Uzbekistan, 2014). Female entrepreneurs also have limited access to the training, knowledge and skills needed to start and run a business successfully, as well as technology and equipment. Women in rural areas are especially disadvantaged by the limited local opportunities for business education. They also face greater constraints on their time (due to underdeveloped infrastructure and the unequal division of domestic labour) and so may not be able to deal with the bureaucracy of registering a business.

### 4.9. Access to finance

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The availability of finance is critically important for individuals starting and expanding a business, and access to credit (meaning, access to affordable loans) is a concern for farmers generally as well as for female entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan. Among women in business, a minority turn to banks to borrow start-up capital (only 33 percent of entrepreneurs in one survey; Business Forum of Uzbekistan, 2014). Female farmers have even less access to capital. Only three percent of women who head multi-sector farms and participated in focus groups had received loans for the construction of farm buildings or storage facilities (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, no date). While there are no direct barriers to women accessing rural finance, they face particular constraints due to their status and prevailing gender norms. These include the following:

- Typically, women are not the registered owners of land or other property and so they lack the collateral needed for loans.
- Women tend to have more limited knowledge about how to complete loan applications and other financial documents, and about business planning.
- Women experience more constraints on their time due to household chores, and thus they may not have the capacity to navigate loan application processes. Women who are engaged in agricultural production, either as farmers or informally, face severe time limitations during the harvest season.
- Interest rates are high, especially for women whose businesses tend to be micro and small in scale.
- Women farmers perceive not being able to repay loans as a high risk, due to the fact that they mainly cultivate crops that require several years of production before becoming profitable.

As is the case for all members of society, gender norms have an influence on the behaviours of female and male entrepreneurs. According to one set of survey respondents, women tend to deliberate about applying for finance for a long period because they do not want to risk defaulting on a loan. In contrast, men make such decisions more quickly. Female farmers also report that if they were unable to repay a loan, they would face condemnation from their husbands, families and the community, and would be blamed for poor business management (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, no date). Men are socialised to take on risk, even in a business setting, but societal expectations for women cause them to fear the shame that they could bring to their families, which, in turn, prevents them from accessing finance even when it is available.

## 4. Gender issues in agriculture and rural livelihoods

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Microfinance programmes have been effective in increasing women's access to credit. In 2010, for example, out of all recipients of micro-lending through banks, women represented more than half (54.5 percent) but in the past, women have represented up to 80 percent of microcredit recipients (most likely, a reflection of programmes that were accessible only to women; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2012, p. 187). In some instances, microfinance can be a useful tool for improving female entrepreneurship, especially for rural women who have limited access to the banking system. However, there have not been sufficient tracking studies in Uzbekistan to identify whether most female microfinance recipients are entrepreneurs, or the impact such loans have had on expanding their businesses.



# 5. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL WOMEN

### 5.1. Housing conditions

Rural households are larger than urban ones (4.9 to 6 people in rural households compared with 3.8 people in Tashkent; UNECE, 2015, p. 41). Living space per person is lower in rural areas, however (14.5 square metres in rural areas and 16 square metres in urban areas; Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2014, p. 9). Rural housing typically consists of a separate house in which several family generations live together, with an attached plot of land.

Because many rural houses are self-built using traditional materials, they often fail to meet modern construction standards and lack important amenities. Table 8, below, compares the infrastructure and utilities in rural and urban housing.

Proportion of households equipped with:		
	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Water supply	50.3	82.8
Sewerage	8.9	53.9
Heating	25.8	59.0
Hot water	5.5	45.5
Baths	3.3	43.4
Natural gas	72.1	87.5
Fixed telephone line	14.0	57.0

Note on Table 8: All data are from 2013 with the exception of data about baths (from 2011) and telephone lines (from 2010). Sources: UNECE, 2015, p. 42; World Bank, 2016, p. 3.

All rural household members are affected by a lack of comforts that are associated with urban life. Women, however, experience these deprivations to a greater degree because they spend a much larger share of their time at home and must adopt various coping mechanisms to overcome problems like inadequate heating and unreliable energy and water supplies (domestic energy sources and access to safe drinking water and sanitation in rural areas are explored in more detail in sections 5.2 and 5.3).

Despite urbanisation, there is an increasing demand for improved housing in rural areas, especially among young families who desire to live separately from their parents and other family members. The government has invested in improving rural infrastructure (such as roads, gas and water pipelines and electricity networks) and increasing housing stock in order to enhance the overall living standards of the rural population. Under the Year of Rural Development, a programme was elaborated for the construction of model detached housing in rural areas for 2009–2013, that was then extended to 2016. Since the programme's inception, new residential estates have been built in rural areas in all regions of the country. The project plans for houses to be provided with electrical energy, gas, hot and cold water, heating, telephone and Internet access. Some of the constructed residences include gas boilers and outside toilets, but the design can also accommodate houses with on-site water supply, sewerage and electricity connections (UNECE, 2015).

The housing programme aims to assist the rural population as a whole, but particular beneficiaries include socially vulnerable families (families with children and single mothers), public sector workers (such as teachers and doctors) and private entrepreneurs / small business owners who are expected to create jobs in rural areas (UNECE, 2015). Theoretically, the rural housing programme could bring particular benefits to women as they fit into several of these priority categories. However, it is not clear how many more rural women have become homeowners since the inception of the programme nor the extent to which women (especially female heads of households) have been able to access loan or mortgage programmes for rural residents.

### 5.2. Energy sources

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Access to electricity is nearly universal through the national grid, but many regions experience interruptions in service, fluctuations in the current and low voltage. Surveys conducted within Asian Development Bank projects in Uzbekistan, for instance, revealed much lower satisfaction with the electricity supply in rural regions. Out of all rural households included in one survey, 81 percent experienced daily interruptions in electricity, which generally lasted for around one hour but often for more than five hours (ADB, 2014c, p. 45).

Because of the unreliability of the electricity supply, rural households rely on other energy sources for cooking and heating, mainly firewood due to the unavailability of natural gas. The lack of a consistent electricity supply also means that rural homes have fewer appliances and labour-saving technologies, such as electrical water pumps, sewing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, irons and washing machines. According to one survey, 97 percent of rural women reported that they wash laundry by hand due to problems with the electricity and water supplies, and in order to economise because they consider the electricity tariffs to be high (ADB, 2014c, pp. 47–48). Energy deficiencies affect the quality of life of entire rural households, but they also add significantly to the time that women spend on daily tasks, such as collecting firewood, heating water for laundry and bathing, preserving food where refrigeration is unavailable, and performing household chores manually. The time and energy burden on women in underserved rural households limits the time that they have for other pursuits, such as education and training, income-generating activities, community activities and leisure.

### 5.3. Safe drinking water and sanitation

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Access to drinking water has improved in the past decade, reaching 75.8 percent of the rural population in 2011 (compared with 82.6 percent of the urban population; Government of Uzbekistan, 2013, p. 20), but the reliability and safety of the water supply remains an issue. In rural areas, only about a quarter of households have water piped into the premises, and even these households experience deficiencies with the service, “often aggravated by low water pressure, concentrated domestic demand during peak hours, and limited water schedules” (ADB, 2014a, p. 3). Almost all rural households with a water connection nevertheless rely on outside taps (97 percent of rural households included in a World Bank survey), and they often use water pumps located in the yard (27 percent) or collect water from rivers, lakes and ponds (26 percent; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and World Bank, 2015, p. 26). Rural households that do not have piped water usually do not have access to the public standpipes that are found in regional centres; instead they use water pumps in the yard, followed by open water sources. The most recently available data from a WHO and UNICEF joint monitoring programme indicate that a relatively large proportion of rural residents rely on unimproved sources of water (see Table 9, below).



## 5. Rural infrastructure and its impact on rural women

**Table 9: Estimated drinking water coverage for rural and urban households (2010)**

	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Drinking water piped into premises	26	85
Other improved source of water	55	13
Other unimproved source	14	1
Surface water	5	1

Source: WHO and UNICEF, 2015.

Insufficient safe drinking water affects the lives of all household members, in terms of health and personal hygiene, but the situation also impacts on women and men differently. Due to the gendered division of labour, women are the major users of household water (which they use in preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning, laundering, bathing children, and also for household garden plots and tending livestock). They are, therefore, most often responsible for collecting and purchasing water for household use, storing it, and treating water for drinking.

In the majority of rural households without piped water, adult females (59 percent of households) collect water, while adult men take on this responsibility in 35 percent of rural households, usually when the water source is further from the home (UNICEF and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2007, p. 96). It is uncommon for children to collect water, although girls perform this task slightly more often than boys. Water collection is time-consuming, and women perform this task two to three times a day, waiting for up to an hour at times of the day when water is in demand and carrying heavy loads. While water collection usually takes about two to three hours per day, in some areas, “the average time amounts to 3.6–5.3 person-days a month” (ADB, 2014a, p. 6). In addition to the time spent managing the household water supply, the repetitive task of moving heavy containers has health consequences, and many rural women report lower back pain from lifting and carrying water containers (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and World Bank, 2015).

Sanitation facilities in rural households almost always consist of pit latrines (latrines that are covered by a roof and door and located in private yards separated from living areas) rather than septic tanks. Lack of connection to a central water supply means that rural housing stock rarely has sewer connections (see Table 10, below). Other estimates indicate that five percent of the rural population has access to local sewer systems (UNECE, 2015, p.4).

**Table 10: Proportion of rural and urban households using improved sanitation facilities (2015)**

	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Latrines	100	55
Septic tanks	0	1
Sewer connections	0	45

Source: WHO and UNICEF, 2017, p. 93.

Rural women tend to express dissatisfaction with the lack of sewer connections and use of latrines. In one survey, a fifth of women reported that they feel unsafe with this arrangement, especially because latrines are usually about 30–60 metres from the house, but may be located as far as 500 metres from some households (International Bank for Reconstruction and World Bank, 2015, p. 58).

Water shortages, unsafe drinking water (water from unimproved and open sources that has not been treated by boiling or other methods) and a lack of indoor water supply (for washing hands and bathing) can make it difficult to maintain good hygiene practices. A survey carried out in Fergana found that when household water is limited, women and girls bathe less frequently, while men and boys are able to bathe in rivers and canals because they do not face the same social restrictions (ADB, 2014c). When proper hygiene cannot be maintained, there is a greater chance that waterborne diarrhoeal illnesses will be spread in rural households, and young children are particularly susceptible. Because women usually care for family members who are ill, poorly maintained sanitation facilities can result in an increase in their household responsibilities and require them to take time out of paid employment.

### 5.4. Rural transport

According to the Rural Access Index, 57 percent of rural residents in Uzbekistan do not have access to rural transport (defined as living within two kilometres of the nearest all-season road), a figure that translates to 9.4 million people (World Bank Group, 2010).<sup>34</sup> Geographical isolation contributes to poverty and it also impedes progress toward specific development goals, such as the reduction of maternal mortality and improving girls' access to education. The Welfare Improvement Strategy for 2013–2015 addressed the expansion of passenger transportation routes yearly in rural areas (Government of Uzbekistan, 2013). The National Development Strategy for 2017–2021 further envisions the modernization of road transport, with attention to improving transport infrastructure and equipment, increasing passenger safety, reducing harmful emissions, and re/constructing bus stations.

There are no gender-specific data about transport use in Uzbekistan. Welfare assessments indicate that private car ownership has increased in both urban and rural areas, and around a quarter of rural households own cars or another type of vehicle (ADB, 2014c, p. 53). While there are no formal prohibitions on women driving, according to social norms prevalent in rural areas, driving is usually considered to be a 'male' occupation. Thus, women tend to rely on another person to drive them (which can include family members, taxis or private minibuses), use public transport or travel on foot.

There has been very limited research into gender differences in how rural women and men use transport, and thus information is lacking about the types of transportation women and men use (if any), the frequency, distance and time of day that they travel, their level of satisfaction with public transport and perceptions of safety, as well as whether women and girls experience any social or cultural constraints on unaccompanied travel.

Limited long-distance transport, as well as the high cost of travel, have been identified as factors that impede girls living in remote rural areas from continuing their education in specialized secondary and vocational institutions (Government of Uzbekistan, 2007). Women's lack of mobility due to poor transport options can also impact on their ability to travel to local markets to sell agricultural products and home-produced goods.

### 5.5. Social infrastructure and protection

Social protection is a priority area for the Government of Uzbekistan and many policies have been adopted to support vulnerable groups. Increasingly, official policy is also recognising that women and girls are often in particularly vulnerable situations, given prevalent gender inequalities, as evidenced in the proposed national tasks under several of the SDGs.

The provision of social protection can help rural households to overcome the risks of poverty and food insecurity, and well-designed, gender-sensitive social protection schemes are of particular benefit to women in terms of their economic and social empowerment (see generally, FAO, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Using World Bank Rural Access Index data, last calculated in 2010. Note that in 2015, the World Bank piloted a new methodology for calculating the Rural Access Index, based on GIS data, that has not yet been applied to Uzbekistan.

There are limited data available about social protection schemes in Uzbekistan and no official statistics about social security or social assistance recipients by geographic location. An unofficial estimate suggests that over 40 percent of urban and rural households receive some form of social assistance (meaning, payments to low-income households, maternity benefits or child benefits, for example; FAO REU, 2016, p. 32). Some forms of social assistance (such as those mentioned above aimed at increasing girls' school attendance) respond to specific needs and gender imbalances.

Social security (pensions) makes up the largest proportion of total social protection programmes. Women represent around two-thirds of those receiving retirement pensions in Uzbekistan (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016d). Women are far more likely to take time out of work for childcare, and while this leave is usually counted towards working time in terms of pension accrual, it is paid at a lower rate than a salary. Self-employment and informal sector work do not count towards a pension; nor does the work of migrants abroad. On average, women live longer than men yet receive smaller pensions on reaching retirement age. This situation puts older women at greater risk of poverty than older men. Furthermore, because pensioners usually live in extended families, children and other family members benefit from the income as well, and thus pensions also play a role in reducing household poverty.

Women, and rural women in particular, are in socially vulnerable positions due to a confluence of factors: their engagement in informal employment, as well as temporary, seasonal and low wage employment; gender segregation of the labour market along with gender wage and pension gaps; a lack of affordable childcare (a topic that is discussed below) that results in high numbers of non-working mothers; limitations on maternity leave; and women's more limited access to higher education (especially rural women). Furthermore, social protection schemes must take into consideration the complex needs of a specific group of women 'left behind' by migrant husbands. These are women, often single mothers, who are managing households and are also at risk of impoverishment, marginalisation and social exclusion.

The challenge for Uzbekistan is twofold: to ensure that gaps in the social protection net are closed overall, and also to increase social protection for particularly vulnerable women, which includes those living in rural households. Sustainable approaches to social protection for vulnerable rural households, and women within those households, should ideally go beyond cash payments to raise incomes. Social protection schemes should also aim to mitigate gender inequalities.

### 5.5.1. *Childcare and preschool education*

Limited access to affordable childcare and preschool education for rural households not only impacts on children's readiness for school but also restricts the opportunities that women with young children have to engage in paid employment outside the home, to take part in training or other development projects, and to participate in local decision-making and community events. Women's time outside of work while caring for children also decreases their competitiveness when they are able to return to employment. The opposite is also true – the provision of preschool education has been shown to have a positive effect on increasing the labour supply without impacting on overall fertility rates in countries in which women have traditionally had low rates of labour market participation (Buvinić et al., 2013).

In Uzbekistan, only around one in every four children receives some form of early childhood education before they enter school (UNICEF, 2017).<sup>35</sup> Kindergartens and preschool institutions are concentrated in cities and larger towns. While such childcare options would have been connected to state-run enterprises in the past, the privatization of collective farms meant that many preschool institutions were liquidated. The number of urban children in preschools is more than double that of rural children (data for 2016; State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2016c). Rural households are also less able to afford fee-based and privately-run preschools.

Improving the preschool system is a priority area for the government, as evidenced by the creation of the Ministry for Preschool Education in 2017 and a national initiative, "On measures to further improve the system of preschool education for 2017–2021". The national plan includes objectives to construct new preschools in rural settlements and to reduce the amount that rural households pay for preschool education to 30 percent (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016).

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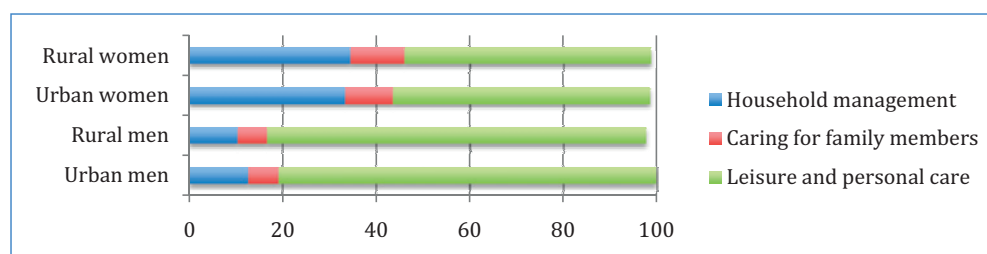
In 2015, the national coverage for preschool educational institutions (for children ages two to seven years) was 26.5 percent.

## 5.6. Time use

Time use surveys are a means of calculating women's and men's participation in unpaid work and informal labour and can also be used to generate information about the quantity and type of labour in household agricultural production. Time use data are among the recommended indicators to measure progress towards Goal 5 of the SDGs and the UN has produced methodological guidance on conducting such surveys.

In Uzbekistan, rural women devote considerably more time to unpaid domestic labour than men. Of the economically active population, rural women spend 45.9 percent of their free time on unpaid domestic labour compared with 16.6 percent of rural men's free time (State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2007, p. 129). As Figure 10 indicates, this pattern is typical for women in urban areas as well, but rural women devote a greater proportion of their time to domestic chores than either rural men or urban women.

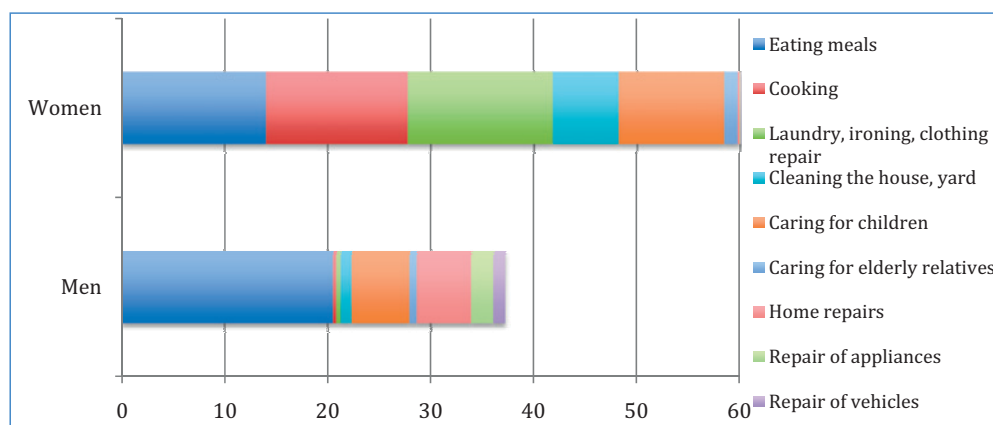
**Figure 10: Distribution of free time use by economically active women and men, by location, 2006 (%)**



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2007, p. 129.

The most recent time use survey concerning women and men that was available for this gender assessment was conducted in 2006 with 2 500 households. It illustrates the gendered division of labour, with rural women undertaking a more diverse number of chores, but ones that centre around cooking, cleaning and caring for family members. Men's household chores consist mainly of repair work. Figure 11, below, shows the differences in how women and men use their free time on various household tasks. Time spent on leisure activities (for example, watching television, hobbies, sports and receiving guests), educational courses and religious activities are excluded from the overall figure.

**Figure 11: Distribution of free time use by rural women and men, 2006 (%)**



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, 2007, p. 132.

## 5. Rural infrastructure and its impact on rural women

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The figures above show patterns of free time use, and so they do not present a full picture of the time that rural women devote to housework or to activities related to family farming. Rural women who participated in focus group discussions in 2016 in Tashkent and Samarkand regions, including female farmers, described their summer work day as beginning at 04.00 hours and continuing until the evening, during which time they tend livestock, milk cows and bake bread in addition to the kinds of domestic responsibilities listed in Figure 11. Among rural focus group participants, women indicated that they spend around 60 percent of their time on housework, whereas men spend around 10 percent (Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, no date). In another project, female focus group participants in Bukhara, Jizzakh, and Samarkand estimated that they spend roughly 14 hours per day on household tasks and an additional one to two hours a day with their children, helping them with homework or handicrafts (ADB, 2014c, p. 10). As noted in section 5, interruptions in the water and energy supply can add even more time to a rural woman's unpaid work day. The time poverty that rural women experience prevents them from realising their full potential, including the opportunity to develop agricultural enterprises or other entrepreneurial activities that would generate income.



# 6. FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

According to estimates by the International Food Policy Research Institute, Uzbekistan has reduced its Global Hunger Index score from 21.8 in 2000 (considered “severe”) to 13.1 in 2016 (considered “moderate”; IFPRI, 2017, p. 99). Positive developments in reducing hunger can be partly attributed to the government’s efforts to improve agricultural diversity and nutrition by increasing support to smallholder farmers. Additionally, Uzbekistan has adopted a national programme and action plan on healthy nutrition for 2015–2020 that highlights the need to improve logistics for the delivery of agricultural and livestock produce “from field to producer” and “from producer to consumer”, as well as promote the processing of agricultural fruits and vegetables and meat and dairy products (Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2015).

Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies continue to present problems for specific populations, particularly women of reproductive age and children. FAO reports undernourishment to be a “significant problem” in Uzbekistan based on the prevalence of stunting and wasting in children under the age of five – problems that are correlated with chronic poverty (FAO, 2017a, pp. 15–16). Anaemia is more prevalent among low-income families and in rural areas, as are vitamin A and iodine deficiencies (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2010, p. 6). Specific micronutrient deficiencies among children, namely deficiencies in vitamin A (53 percent of children age 0–5 years), zinc (24 percent), and iron (anaemia, affecting 44 percent of children age 0–5 years; FAO, 2017a, p. 17) are the result of dietary problems that can be attributed to a combination of socio-economic factors and maternal education / practices (such as improper breastfeeding). Estimates of anaemia among women vary from as high as 65 percent of non-pregnant women of reproductive age to around half of pregnant women (ADB, 2010, p. 2), and just over a third of women of reproductive age overall (36 percent; Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd., 2017, p. 1). The higher anaemia rate among non-pregnant women could indicate that women’s health programmes target women when they are pregnant but are less effective at addressing their nutritional needs at other times. According to FAO (2017a, p. 22) estimates, the burden of child and maternal malnutrition-related risks is comparable to those due to high BMI, and tobacco or alcohol consumption in terms of potential years of life lost.

Uzbekistan exhibits a ‘double burden’: some of the population suffers from insufficient calorific intake, while at the same time, rates of overweight and obesity are increasing. There is a higher prevalence of overweight than obesity, but females show slightly higher rates overall (51 percent of adult females are overweight compared with 47 percent of males, and 19 percent of females are obese compared with 13 percent of males; Development Initiatives Poverty Research, 2017, p. 1). Thirteen percent of children under five are considered overweight. Uzbekistan’s national programme on healthy nutrition includes educational programmes that could address risks for overweight and obesity (for example, excessive consumption of high fat and energy-dense foods).

It will be critical to ensure that the population, especially women, is supported to increase their consumption of healthy foods, through disseminating information, increasing the availability of nutritional foods, and assuring their affordability for poor households. The level of nutritional knowledge within households is also a critical factor, as women and men play different roles in purchasing and preparing food and feeding children. Studies of the nutritional knowledge of women and men have not been conducted in Uzbekistan but would be very useful in the development of targeted messages about both malnutrition and the risks of overweight and obesity. In addition, the diversification of agricultural production “could further national nutrition goals by providing greater diversity and more nutritious foods” (IFPRI, 2017, p. 68).

## 6.1. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk management

The agricultural systems of Uzbekistan are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (such as increased temperatures, extreme weather conditions, water shortages and outbreaks of pests), and the country is also prone to natural disasters, some of which are exacerbated by climate change (landslides, dust storms, droughts, floods and earthquakes, for example). On the one hand, climate change threatens agricultural production and food security, but it can also potentially create opportunities in the agricultural sector; for instance, elevated temperatures can potentially lengthen growing seasons and increase food production (Sutton et al., 2013).

The importance of proactively developing measures to ensure the sustainability of agriculture in the face of climate change cannot be overstated. It is not within the scope of this assessment to discuss the complex measures that are required to increase resilience to climate change and management of disaster risks. However, it is important to note that all measures for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be guided by principles of gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender considerations, specifically understanding the specific roles that women and men play, as well as their unique needs and vulnerabilities that result from gender imbalances, must be incorporated into adaptation and mitigation strategies. In brief, the following issues are specific to Uzbekistan and require greater consideration in the context of climate change adaptation:

- Women represent a small proportion of land and farm owners and thus their role in food security is often overlooked. In fact, women play a “pivotal role” in all three components of food security – “food availability (production), food access (distribution) and food utilization” (Global Gender and Climate Alliance, 2017, p. 3).
- Female farmers and rural women who manage kitchen gardens have limited access to and control over key resources and inputs that are needed to adapt to climate change (for example, new seed hybrids, improved animal breeds and equipment that would allow for more efficient use of resources, for example, drip irrigation systems).
- Due to their low representation in relevant associations (including farmers' councils and Water Users' Associations) and their time poverty, female farmers and rural women have limited access to new technologies, extension services and climate information that would help them specifically to adopt new practices.
- Women's views and needs (gender perspectives) are not systematically integrated into policies, programmes or projects on topics such as water resources management, land management and energy efficiency. Sex-disaggregated data on key indications relating to agriculture and food security are absent and therefore not part of policy-making.

Uzbekistan's climate change action plan (the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2017) mentions increasing the participation of women and gender equity only in the context of adaptation measures aimed at the social sector. National commitments under the SDGs on modernizing and developing agriculture speak to mitigating the negative impacts of climate change but make no references as to how these objectives intersect with others on enhancing the socio-political role of women nor do they specify a role for women in particular. A cursory literature review of research and programming on the topic of climate change adaptation in Uzbekistan found that gender has been considered in a small number of projects (specifically, projects on non-conventional crops, crop diversification and biodiversity conservation that targeted female farmers through rural women's learning alliances).<sup>36</sup> However, climate change study is continuing to develop, and this is a field where national and local research centres can undertake specific projects that will contribute to the overall understanding of how gender and climate change intersect and where programming can be most effective at engaging with women.

<sup>36</sup>

These particular projects were conducted by the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture for Central Asia and Caucasus.



## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are primarily addressed to FAO in the context of developing a Country Programming Framework for 2018–2021 that acknowledges and aims to address the most critical gender inequalities in agriculture and rural development. Additional recommendations are provided to policy-makers, with a particular focus on the state structures that are concerned with the agricultural and rural development sectors and relevant to food security and nutrition, as well as improving the status of women in Uzbekistan.

### 7.1. What FAO can do

Recommendations concern the following five areas.

1. In developing the CPF for 2018–2021:
  - Priority areas, targets, outcomes, outputs and activities to be formulated within the framework of the new CPF related to agriculture and rural livelihoods should take gender inequalities and gaps into account and address them wherever possible, as part of broader commitments made by the Government towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and pro-people and pro-poor development.
  - The CPF should include a priority, and related outputs, in order to assist the Government of Uzbekistan to implement gender-sensitive agricultural policies towards achieving positive development in agriculture and rural development that is both sustainable and people-centred.
2. Priority areas for working with the state institutions of Uzbekistan should include:
  - Raising awareness in and building the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources and other key institutions to meet international commitments on gender mainstreaming in the formulation of state policy on agriculture, rural development, food security, and so forth.
  - Providing capacity-building to the State Statistics Committee on the production and dissemination of gender statistics, increasing the use of gender-specific indicators in data collections that are currently gender neutral (for example, the agricultural census, enterprise surveys), and adding indicators relevant to agriculture and rural development to existing collections of gender statistics (such as the Gender Statistics of Uzbekistan database and *Women and Men of the Republic of Uzbekistan* publications).
3. The knowledge base on the intersections of gender, agriculture and rural development requires improvement by conducting gender-sensitive research, particularly on the following topics:
  - Value chain analysis in the horticulture, crop production, livestock, sericulture, forestry and fisheries sectors to inform programming and policy-making. Specific attention can also be dedicated to opportunities for women along value chains in the developing area of organic farming.
  - Assessments by sector of the type of knowledge, skills, resources and support women would need in order to improve their productivity and income-generating capacity, including in vegetable and fruit production, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, sericulture and forestry (non-wood forest products). Recommendations should also be generated on how women can expand their businesses and marketing activities.

- Needs assessments (and baseline data) about women farm owners and managers (including of *dehkan* farms), covering topics such as the constraints that they face and the characteristics of their farming enterprises compared with male-headed or managed farms.
  - Thematic research of the vulnerabilities and endowments of rural female-headed households and of women ‘left behind’ by migrant family members, including information relevant to food insecurity.
4. Programming under the CPF for 2018–2021 should prioritise the following:
- Addressing the high level of informality in the agricultural sector and implementing programmes to increase rural women’s opportunities for decent work, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant government agencies, at the regional and local levels.
  - Supporting the development of off-farm employment for women that is not based in the home; in parallel, identifying and implementing measures to alleviate the burden of household work on women, which should include efforts to engage men in household responsibilities.
  - Developing a programme on increasing extension / advisory service providers’ capacities to provide services that are relevant to women and meet their needs in the following sectors: vegetable and fruit production, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, sericulture and forestry (non-wood forest products).
  - Within agricultural development projects, conducting activities that target women farmers and entrepreneurs that will enable them to grow and diversify their existing businesses in rural areas, through training, mentoring and other forms of support.
  - Working with farmer’s councils to develop gender-sensitive approaches and to be proactive in recruiting more women as members (not limited to formal heads of farms).
  - Working with Water Users’ Associations to increase the formal representation of women as members and decision-makers. Providing capacity-building for rural women on technical issues concerning water management.
  - Including healthy nutrition and lifestyle messages and information, targeting women and men separately, within rural development projects.
  - Developing training and educational campaigns directed at women that improve their capacities to adapt to climate change, taking into consideration their roles as food producers and farmers.
  - In cooperation with state agencies, designing and implementing advocacy campaigns to raise the profile of rural women, dispel gender stereotypes and promote the benefits of gender equality for the household and the country as a whole.
5. Strategies for mainstreaming gender in programming should:
- Take into account the existing gender imbalances that impact on project implementation, and design interventions that reach women directly.
  - Identify the factors that impede rural women from taking part in development projects (training, extension services, community meetings, and so on) and ensure that any barriers to women’s meaningful participation are removed.
  - Specifically, when designing and implementing activities, consider the impact of domestic work on women’s participation and take steps to ensure that female beneficiaries can take part (for example, considering the time of day and season when activities are conducted, encouraging a more equitable distribution of household tasks, and so forth).

- Work directly with male leaders and stakeholders in the spheres of agricultural reform and rural development to foster gender sensitivity and an understanding of Uzbekistan's gender equality commitments.

### 7.2. What the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources and other government bodies can do

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Recommendations concern the following three areas.

1. The implementation of international commitments, national laws and policies on gender equality:
  - National policies and strategies for agriculture and rural development, including food security and nutrition, should be inclusive and gender-responsive in order to be efficient and effective. They should be based on evidence and internationally-recognised best practices.
  - Accountability mechanisms should be introduced to ensure that commitments on women's rights and gender equality made by the government nationally and internationally are implemented.
  - When drafting national action plans and programmes relevant to the agricultural and rural development sectors, and to food security and nutrition, gender-sensitive needs assessments should be conducted using participatory approaches that include the views and perspectives of female stakeholders. Action plans and programmes should include targets, indicators and a dedicated budget for gender-specific interventions.
2. Improving the evidence base for gender-sensitive policy-making by:
  - Conducting gender-sensitive, thematic research on topics that are relevant to agricultural development; engaging with organisations that have the capacity for such research, including the Women's Committee, think tanks and civil society organisations to develop a research programme.
  - Developing and maintaining sex-disaggregated registries with data on land ownership / leasing rights, farm registration and enterprise ownership, and ensuring that data can also be disaggregated by rural location.
  - Revising indicators used for the agricultural census and other relevant data collections (for instance, *Women and Men in the Republic of Uzbekistan* compilations) to enhance the production, analysis, dissemination and use of gender statistics. Additionally, selecting indicators for the SDGs, especially Goal 5, that measure improvements in the status of rural women and progress towards targets on ensuring equal ownership and control over agricultural and natural resources.
  - Conducting specialized surveys on topics such as: farming enterprises / practices (for example, size, crop / number of livestock, harvest, yield, profits, number of employees, unpaid and irregular work, and so on); private enterprise (for example, location of business [rural or urban area], size of business, sector, number of employees, and so on); and value chains in the agricultural sector, in which data are disaggregated by sex.
3. Programmatic priorities should:
  - Invest in the creation of decent jobs in rural areas that are accessible to women and men (especially young people); and ensure access to vocational education that will provide skills that match the needs of the local labour market.

- Address the high level of informality in the agricultural sector and implement programmes to support rural women to find decent work, including through initiatives to decrease the burden of domestic responsibilities (for example, increasing free childcare, improving rural infrastructure and addressing gender stereotypes).
- Identify the key barriers to women working in agriculture in accessing extension services and other forms of training. Adopt a broader range of methods to deliver agricultural education that ensure women can participate. Develop and deliver rural advisory services, and other relevant training, that are accessible to rural women and men equally and which cover subjects that address their respective roles and needs.
- Support the Farmers' Councils (Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan) to conduct gender audits of their membership and operations policies and develop gender-sensitive approaches to recruiting and retaining women as members (not limited to formal heads of farms).
- Develop and implement programmes that focus on promoting entrepreneurship among rural women, that address both supporting start-ups in diverse growth sectors and supporting existing entrepreneurs at the micro and small levels to grow their businesses, increase turnover, hire additional staff and so on.
- Work with the private sector to develop financial products that meet the needs of female entrepreneurs in rural areas, in addition to microfinance. In parallel, provide women with business skills training, mentoring and other relevant forms of support.
- Support awareness-raising among the staff of relevant line ministries and encourage the study of advanced international practices in developing sustainable food systems, eliminating poverty and achieving food security through sustainable natural resource management, which are people-centred and socially inclusive.
- Take proactive measures to ensure that rural women are able to meaningfully participate in activities, for example, to build their capacities, increase their knowledge and participate in local decision-making.
- Ensure that the male leaders and male stakeholders in government institutions responsible for agricultural reform and rural development participate in activities to increase gender sensitivity and understanding of Uzbekistan's commitments on gender equality.

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Konventsii OON o likvidatsii vseh form diskriminatsii v otnoshenii zhenshchin (14 dekabrya pri podderzhe PROON i Posolstva Velikobritanii v Uzbekistane v gostinice «CityPalace» sostoyalsya kruglyy stol po osuschestvleniyu Konvencii OON o likvidatsii vseh form diskriminatsii v otnoshenii zhenshchin) [On December 14, with the support of UNDP and the British Embassy in Uzbekistan a round table on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was hosted in the CityPalace Hotel]. In: *Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan* [online]. [Cited 17 August 2018]. <http://wcu.uz/o-skripte/89-14-dekabrya-tg-v-gostinice-citypalace-sostoyalsya-kruglyy-stol-po-osuschestvleniyu-konvencii-oon-o-likvidatsii-vseh-form-diskriminatsii-v-otnoshenii-zhenshchin.html>

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## GLOSSARY

Most of the following terms that are used in this Country Gender Assessment are defined in FAO documents and can be accessed from the FAO Term Portal (FAO, 2018a). Where FAO definitions are not available, those from other institutions are provided and noted below.

**Empowerment of women [and / or girls]** concerns women and girls gaining power and control over their own lives. Empowerment is defined by its core 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.\*

**Female-headed household** is a household in which adult males either are not present (owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage, widowhood) or do not contribute to the household income (owing to illness, alcoholism, drug addiction and so forth).\*

**Gender** refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relations between women and men. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in roles and responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken and access to and control over resources, as well as in decision-making opportunities. These differences and inequalities between the sexes are shaped by the history of social relations and change over time and across cultures.\*\*

**Gender analysis** is the study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are in a specific context.\*

**Gender-blind.** An approach / strategy / programme etc. is considered gender-blind when the gender dimension is not considered, although there is clear scope for such consideration. This is often as a result of lack of training in, knowledge of and sensitisation to gender issues, leading to an incomplete picture of the situation to address and, consequently, to failure.\*

**Gender division of labour** describes the way that work is divided between women and men according to their gender roles and the socio-economic and cultural context. This division does not necessarily concern only paid employment, but can be analysed by differentiating between productive and reproductive tasks as well as community-based activities: who does what, when, how, for how long, and so on. The tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to women and men in their daily lives may, in their turn, determine certain patterns in the labour market.\*\*\*

**Gender equality** is the state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.\*

**Gender gap** is the gap that women face in access to resources, assets, services, education and employment opportunities, as a result of gender discrimination.\*

**Gender mainstreaming** is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.\*

**Gender segregation [labour market segregation / occupational segregation by sex]** refers to a situation in which women and men are concentrated in different types of jobs and at different levels of activity and employment, with women being confined to a narrower range of occupations (**horizontal segregation**) than men, and to the lower grades / hierarchical positions of work (**vertical segregation**). Such segregation occurs wherever there are barriers to free competition between workers and / or firms which restrict certain workers' access to highly paid, secure employment.\*\*\*

\* FAO, 2018a.

\*\* UNSD, 2018a.

\*\*\* ILO, 2007; 2014; 2015.

**Gender statistics** are statistics that reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life. Gender statistics are defined by the sum of the following characteristics: (a) data are collected and presented disaggregated by sex as a primary and overall classification; (b) data reflect gender issues; (c) data are based on concepts and definitions that adequately reflect the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives; and (d) data collection methods take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may induce gender biases.\*\*

**Gender wage / pay gap** measures the difference between male and female average earnings as a percentage of the male earnings. Overall, features such as differences in educational levels, qualifications, work experience, occupational category and hours worked account for the ‘explained’ part of the gender pay gap. The remaining and more significant part, the ‘unexplained’ portion of the pay gap, is attributable to the discrimination – conscious or unconscious – that is pervasive in workplaces.\*\*\*

**Informal economy** refers to any economic activity that is neither taxed nor monitored by a government, and is not included in that government’s GNP. Informal economy workers can include wage workers, own-account workers and unpaid contributing family members. Work in the informal economy is characterised by small or undefined work places, poor working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance and training. Informal employment is not covered under legislation, and largely uncovered under social protection.\*\*\*

**National machinery [for the advancement of women]** is the central policy-coordinating unit inside government that has the primary task of supporting government-wide mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas (UN Women, 1995, para. 201).

**Sex** refers to individual biological differences between women and men that are fixed and unchangeable. Unlike gender, sex differences do not vary across culture or over time. Sex (female or male) is recorded during data collection in censuses, surveys or administrative records.\*\*

**Sex-disaggregated data** are data separated by sex in order to allow differential impacts on women and men to be measured. Sex-disaggregated data is quantitative statistical information on differences and inequalities between women and men.\*

**Time-use survey** is a statistical survey that aims to report data on how, on average, people spend their time. Among other things, time-use surveys can reveal the amount of unpaid household work, and voluntary work performed beyond paid work. They can also better capture women’s informal productive work, which is often undertaken within the home.\*\*\*

**Unpaid care work** refers to all of the work that is undertaken to maintain the wellbeing of household members, such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children, or elderly and sick family members. Much unpaid work is unrecognised, both statistically and economically. Poor working women are typically engaged in long hours of unpaid work. Unpaid care work is also called reproductive work.\*\*\*

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\* FAO, 2018a.

\*\* UNSD, 2018a.

\*\*\* ILO, 2007; 2014; 2015.





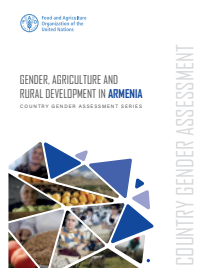
Other FAO Country Gender Assessments in this series:  
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COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

### [Albania: Gender, agriculture and rural development \(Country Gender Assessment Series\)](#)

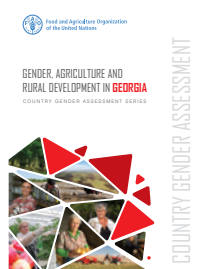
In aiming for better informed, targeted and gender sensitive actions in agriculture and rural development for Albania, this Gender Assessment points out some of the major gender inequalities that need to be considered by policy makers and project managers according to available data, and identifies further research needs. 48 pp.



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

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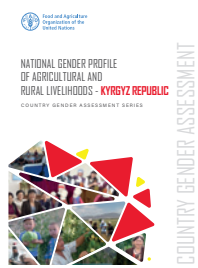
The Country Gender Assessment for Armenia aims to enable better informed, targeted and gender sensitive actions in agriculture and rural development. It discusses some of the major gender inequalities that need to be considered by policy makers and project managers according to available data, and identifies further research needs. 56 pp.



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

### [Georgia: Gender, agriculture and rural development \(Country Gender Assessment Series\)](#)

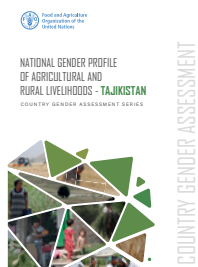
The report argues that the gender gap in the county still persists, mostly in rural areas, where the role of women is hardly recognized, and calls for inclusive rural development strategies to challenge structural social barriers that limit women's economic empowerment. 84 pp.



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

### [Kyrgyz Republic: National gender profile of agricultural and rural livelihoods \(Country Gender Assessment Series\)](#)

In aiming for better informed, targeted and gender sensitive actions in agriculture and rural development for the Kyrgyz Republic, this National Gender Profile points out some of the major gender inequalities that need to be considered by policy makers and project managers according to available data, and identifies further research needs. 65 pp.



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

### [Tajikistan: National gender profile of agricultural and rural livelihoods \(Country Gender Assessment Series\)](#)

In aiming for better informed, targeted and gender sensitive actions in agriculture and rural development for Tajikistan, this National Gender Profile points out some of the major gender inequalities that need to be considered by policy makers and project managers according to available data, and identifies further research needs. 56 pp.



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

### [Turkey: National gender profile of agricultural and rural livelihoods \(Country Gender Assessment Series\)](#)

This National Gender Profile 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. The overall objectives of the project were to assist beneficiary countries in developing gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated datasets on the agricultural and rural sector, to assess the current status of the rural population – both women and men – and to ensure informed and evidence-based policy development. 72 pp.



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