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WOMEN IN THE FOREST SECTOR OF KAZAKHSTAN



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Nur-Sultan, 2020



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The publication "Women in the Forest Sector of Kazakhstan" was prepared in the framework of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Project, and focuses on the role of women in the development of the forest sector in Kazakhstan. The publication presents data on socio-demographic aspects, regarding the promotion of women's opportunities and strengthening the family in the formation and conservation of forest resources.

BIOFIN aims to support the project's participating countries in developing a holistic picture of biodiversity conservation trends at the national level, identifying biodiversity funding gaps, and mobilizing resources through new financial solutions.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Development Programme.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BIOFIN

The Biodiversity Finance Initiative

UN

The United Nations

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme

RK

Republic of Kazakhstan

SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals

NGO

Non-governmental organization

FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises

MEGNR

Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources



The UN Secretary-General highlights the leading role of women because of their unique ability to act as a “driving force in the search for solutions” when they are empowered¹.

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights are an integral part of the fundamental human rights guaranteed in numerous international treaties, resolutions, declarations, platforms and programs of action in the field of human rights and gender equality.

Environmental and gender equality issues are considered through the prism of equal access and control of women and men over natural resources and benefits of development, as well as equal access to decision-making and representation in the natural resource and environmental management.

The relationship between gender and the environment should be considered in terms of human rights to live in a safe environment and in terms of sustainable development.

The relationship between gender and the environment is a very important element confirmed by many international treaties. First of all, this is due to the fact that there is an unprecedented need to ensure that women live in the safe environment and enjoy equal rights together with men, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” (article 25, paragraph 1)².

Equal access to the use and management of natural resources for men and women also contributes to the improvement of the environment, as it creates more favorable conditions for the effective functioning of the economy, public welfare and empowerment of women. Women's close connection with natural resources can contribute to the preservation of the environment and the successful and sustainable spread of climate change adaptation.

¹<https://www.un.org/ru/climatechange/women-agents-change.shtml>

²https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/declarations/declhr.shtml

Special attention to women is due to the fact that in many countries women still have limited access to natural resources, such as land, clean water, various fuels for heating and cooking, etc. Natural resource collection (wood, livestock feed, water), being a heavy burden, negatively affects women's health and economic productivity, as well as reduces their availability for education and development, social and economic activities, participation in decision-making. Women's access to land resources is limited due to the lack of guaranteed rights to own and lease land, which is associated with women's traditional roles in the family and society. This further restricts women's access to markets, capital, education and technology.

At the same time, women play a crucial role in providing living resources at all stages of the life cycle. Accordingly, policies and programs of development should be gender-sensitive.

This publication describes the role of gender issues in the development of the forest sector in Kazakhstan. It presents data on socio-demographic aspects related to the promotion of women's opportunities and strengthening the family in the use and conservation of forest resources.

The publication was developed in the framework of the project "Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN)," which is implemented in Kazakhstan by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with the financial support from the Government of Switzerland, the Government of Germany and the European Union.

BIOFIN provides countries with a methodology that shows innovative steps to measure current biodiversity expenditures, assess financial needs, identify the most appropriate financial solutions, and provide recommendations for implementing these solutions aimed to achieve national biodiversity goals. The introduction of new financial solutions is based on changing existing and preparing new legal norms, testing, studying other countries' experience,

approaches, increasing the capacity of industry experts, and providing extensive public awareness on problems and opportunities of financing the biodiversity. The implementation of financial solutions provide for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women based on the relevancy and resources of the project.

FORESTS

Forests are the lungs of our planet, which provide critical habitat for terrestrial species of animals, plants, and insects. They absorb carbon, purify the air that we breathe, conserve soil, water, and prevent flooding. They have great economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic value for the entire Earth' population.



Forests are a source of livelihood for about **1.6 billion** people around the world.



Forests are home to more than **80%** of terrestrial animals and plants, and cover **31%** of the world's total land area.



Urban forests can cool the air to **8°C** reducing the need for air conditioning by **30%**.



Europe's **400 billion** trees currently absorb almost **9%** of the continent's greenhouse gas emissions.



From 2010 up to 2015, about **3.3 million** hectares of forest land were lost. This affected the lives of rural women who were dependent on these resources (SDG 15).

In Kazakhstan, forests cover just over 4.5% of the country's territory. Coniferous and deciduous forests of the country mainly grow in the Altai, in the Northern and Western Tien Shan, in the deltas of the large rivers Ile, Karatal, Syr Darya, Shu. Saxaul forests are common on the sandy masses, and floodplain forests - in the river valleys.

2,5 mln

More than 2.5 million people live in the forest territories of Kazakhstan and are direct consumers of forest goods.

51,4%

Young and medium-aged forests of Kazakhstan deposit 51.4% of carbon from the total amount of deposit.

5%

5% expansion of forest cover increases forest carbon absorption by 2.9 million tons of co₂-eq. annually

Forests can rightfully be considered a primary favorable condition for mankind's existence, as they provide a system for maintaining people's lives, including the socio-economic development of society. Therefore, the main task is to preserve and increase this green cover.

At the same time, men and women enjoy forest benefits in different ways and affect them in different ways, due to different roles in the family and society. Thus, recent studies³ confirm the increasing role of women in the conservation, development, and restoration of forest resources. It is therefore essential to ensure that women participate fully in forest management on an equal basis with men.

Given that forests make a significant contribution to human development by providing vital resources, identifying and addressing the needs of women and men is crucial for the successful implementation of reforestation, afforestation and agroforestry policies. In this context, an important prerequisite and focus on ensuring equal opportunities for women along with men is the transformative gender approach applied to the role of women as the important agents of development.

³Luque, V. (2013) *Guidance Note on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in UNDP-UNEP PEI Work, PEI, Nairobi; UN-REDD METHODOLOGICAL BRIEF ON GENDER, January 2017. UN-REDD PROGRAMME TECHNICAL RESOURCE SERIES; Background Analytical Study Forests, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and employment José J. Campos Arce, March 2019. Background study prepared for the fourteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests*
<https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UNFF14-BkgdStudy-SDG8-March2019.pdf>

INTERACTION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE USE OF FOREST SOURCES

In the survey conducted in 2018 as part of the implementation of the UNDP projects in the field of biodiversity, both women and some men recognized the fact that the female population, especially in rural areas, has quite a lot of experience and knowledge in the field of conservation and reproduction of forest resources. This is especially true for medicinal plants and food products. Respondents noted that the experience and knowledge of women can be useful in the country's forestry management.

On average, women's knowledge is more often associated with the immediate needs in household management, food and water provision, and cooking. Traditionally, women's areas are considered to be taking care of the health of their loved ones, as well as ensuring that the crops grown are multifunctional and can be used for various purposes. As for men, they on average are more concerned about possibilities to use ready products for commercial purposes.

Meanwhile, due to the number of sociocultural factors, men and women, on average, tend to focus on different forest products, and their knowledge largely reflects the differences between the so-called female and male household duties and responsibilities within communities.

The survey showed that women have the necessary knowledge and skills critical for finding solutions to local problems related to the environment's condition and the sustainable use of natural resources, including in the context of climate change.

According to international standards, changes in the natural environment affect women, girls, men, and boys in different ways, and often entail more serious risks, burdens and consequences for women and girls⁴. Women and girls,

⁴See Commission on the Status of Women, resolutions 56/2 and 58/2 on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters, adopted by consensus in March 2012 and March 2014

as traditional producers of agricultural food products, collectors of water and fuel, as well as care and treatment providers, are closely connected to natural resources. This makes them more vulnerable to natural disasters and deteriorating environmental conditions.

Studies⁵ indicate that women suffer more than men from environmental pollution, such as the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and other environmental types of pollution. This is because women and men have different physiological susceptibilities, as well as different roles in the family and society, which can involve interactions with chemicals, pesticides, and other substances. At the same time, gender involves many other factors, such as geographic location, behavioral patterns, age, nutritional status, socio-economic status, biological effects, and / or exposure to certain chemicals.

All these factors, first of all, directly affect the lives of rural women, having a negative impact on their health. For example, household use of solid fuels also causes indoor air pollution, and consequently serious health problems, especially in women and children. The collection of resources (wood, livestock feed, water), which is the heavy burden, negatively affects women's health and their economic productivity, as well as reduces their availability for education and development, social, economic and managerial activities.

At the same time, it should be taken into account that both women and men make up heterogeneous groups. Crisis situations exacerbate existing gender inequalities and complicate the impact of cross-cutting forms of discrimination, in particular against women living in poverty, those pertaining to indigenous peoples, ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minorities, women with disabilities, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and migrants, rural women, unmarried women, adolescent girls and older women, who often suffer more than men or women from other categories of the population⁶.

⁵UNEP/EA.4/21 (2019) «Глобальная перспектива в области химических веществ – II»: резюме для директивных органов. Доклад Директора-исполнителя
<https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/k1900125.pdf>

Ostojic, N., 2016. UNDP "Health Risks and Impacts of Hazardous Chemicals in Products on Women and Children"; Women and Chemicals. The impact of hazardous chemicals on women. ©2016 WECF
Claman, Paul, 2004. "Men at risk: occupation and male infertility". *Sexuality, Reproduction and Menopause*, 2(1), 19-26. doi:10.1016/j.sram.2004.02.005

⁶See, for example, general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights

As part of the survey of men and women on the impact of ecosystem degradation consequences conducted in 2019 in the framework of the UNDP Biodiversity Projects in Kazakhstan, it was found:

As a result of the survey of women and men, certain gender differences were identified. Thus, 35% of women believe that compared to men the threat to women's health is many times higher due to the loss of biodiversity. Among male respondents, only 11% have the same opinion. 9% of women and 8% of men recognized that the loss of biodiversity is detrimental to the male population's health.

Women explained their position by the following factors: high workload due to a large amount of household work, including cooking, cleaning, washing, as well as caring for children and other relatives, deprives them of time to take care of themselves and their health. Thus, the major women's life purpose is children, spouse and his relatives.

Women also recognized many challenges they face in society, including in the family and in professional life. However, the most important factor is the influence of gender stereotypes like the man is the breadwinner, the holder of power and control, and the woman is responsible for internal order, domestic life, and the well-being of her spouse and children.

Men who participated in the survey admitted that their health problems are directly related to difficult working conditions in the forest sector, as well as constant stress and concern for the financial well-being of their families. In such situations, men feel like victims of unfavorable circumstances.



FORESTRY

is an area that has traditionally been dominated by men due to difficult working conditions. Therefore it is because of prevailing stereotypes, women are poorly involved in professions that are traditionally considered male: forest inspectors, directors of nature reserves and national parks, and others.

Forestry is an area that has traditionally been dominated by men due to difficult working conditions. Therefore it is because of prevailing stereotypes, women are poorly involved in professions that are traditionally considered male: forest inspectors, directors of nature reserves and national parks, and others.

Women recognize that in difficult economic conditions, which include low financial income of their spouses, as well as insufficient employment opportunities for women, can lead to gender-based violence in conditions of inappropriate functionality of social protection mechanisms, and in situations related to biodiversity degradation and decrease in vital resources.

Both men and women pointed to the fact that biodiversity degradation leads to decrease in vital resources, including worsening food security. Accordingly, this has a negative impact on women, who are responsible for providing themselves and their relatives with food, water and other basic necessities. Thus, situations related to disasters, depletion and destruction of natural resources can be the main factors affecting and exacerbating gender-sensitive issues.

It is likely that because of the ideas of many women about the need to be a "good housewife," "good mother" and "take care of loved ones" that the average work of one woman brings four times more profit from developing forests than the work of one man⁷.

It is important to remember that equal access to the use and management of natural resources for men and women is essential for the following reasons:

- It contributes to the improvement of the environment.
- It creates more favorable conditions for the effective functioning of the economy, social well-being, and women's empowerment.

Women's close connection with natural resources can contribute to the preservation of the environment and the successful and sustainable spread of climate change adaptation.

⁷Shanley, S., & Gaia, G. R. (2001). *Equitable Ecology: Collaborative Learning for Local Benefit in Amazonia. Agriculture Systems*, 73, 83-97.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-521X\(01\)00101-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-521X(01)00101-9)

Women's access to resources as women's economic empowerment

As part of discussions and interviews with the participants of the International Conference "Gender and Biodiversity," which was held on November 21-22, 2019 in Almaty, the following was found:

- *There are significant differences in responses of men and women: men are more confident about the influence of women on decision-making, financing and use of natural resources at the community level.*
- *Regarding access to biodiversity resources, the majority of women and men agreed that men have more access, power and control over natural resources.*
- *The majority of men and some women pointed out that the main reason why an insignificant number of women are involved in the environmental field is difficult working conditions.*
- *Despite existing positive examples of active participation of women in various positions in the nature protection field, such as nature reserve directors, forest inspectors, reserve security heads, their number is still insufficient.*
- *Despite positive facts of women's participation in the forest sector, there are persistent stereotypes about their involvement in the traditional sphere of men's activities*



Special attention should be paid to the situation of women - members of the families where men officially work as foresters, inspectors, especially in remote cordons. Many of these women fall into the group of socially vulnerable segments of the population due to low or practically no opportunities to get a job without certain work experience, social and health insurance, with a meager social pension and complete dependence on their husbands-breadwinners. Therefore, as a rule, opportunities for development in personal, and especially in professional areas, are extremely limited.

Despite the fact that women also work in the forest sector, there is the following gender segregation:

- Women are mostly employed in the human resources department, in accounting, in tourism departments.
- Men are represented as managers, foresters, inspectors, guides, drivers.

Taking into account that among the arguments against the active involvement of women in the forest sector, protectionist ideas prevail, which are associated not only with gender stereotypes, but also with difficult working conditions in the forest sector, so it becomes necessary to take measures to improve working conditions (provision of mobile trailers, mobile medical services), as well as measures for special social protection, and so on.

The women's vulnerability and their exposure to particular risks in the context of loss not only of forest resources, but of natural resources in general, have a social, economic, and cultural nature. Well-developed initiatives to reduce the risk of forest resources degradation and loss, based on the active involvement of women, can contribute to the empowerment and improvement of their lives. At the same time, they can also contribute to solving sustainable development goals.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need to change the approach and attitude towards women and girls as passive and vulnerable groups of the population in need of protection. On the one hand, they are most vulnerable in the context of stereotypical patterns of relationships, on the other - they have invaluable knowledge of adaptation and survival in difficult natural conditions, as well as disaster risk reduction and coping with their consequences. As a result, there is a need to introduce the transformative gender approach, that is to consider women as the agents of change and active participants in development processes.

Women and men have different knowledge and understanding in terms of the use of forest resources, taking into account their cultural beliefs and traditional knowledge that affect the forest resource management and biodiversity conservation. Therefore, women and men often tend to use forest products differently depending on their social roles (at home and in society).

Taking into account women's responsibilities to meet household food and fuel needs, the decrease in forest resources enhances the burden on women. Women's active participation in forest management can improve forest policy and planning by making them more responsible for the food security of local communities. On a larger scale, gender-balanced policies in the forest sector catalyze national development and play a vital role in reducing poverty and negative impacts of climate change.

The forest sector creates great opportunities for women in terms of production or management. In Kazakhstan, the role of women-foresters, women-wives of forestry workers, will be particularly expressed if additional incentive measures will be taken:

- Implementation of comprehensive work to promote the women's participation in the determination, development, implementation and monitoring of policies and plans

related to forest biodiversity management at different levels.

- In the context of international and domestic commitments, it is necessary to ensure conditions for equal access of men and women to financial resources in areas related to biodiversity.
- There is a need for better coordination among various sectors involved in addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, disaster risks reduction, climate change, gender equality, health, education, social protection, agriculture, environmental protection, rural and urban planning, etc. This can be achieved by integrating a gender perspective into national and sectoral biodiversity/environmental strategies and plans.
- There is a need to assess gender factors in the development, implementation and monitoring of plans and policies in all areas related to forestry and biodiversity, as well as to develop gender-disaggregated statistics.
- Strengthening national institutions, civil society organizations and women's organizations on gender issues and women's rights, and providing them with sufficient resources, qualified personnel and authority to perform management, advisory and monitoring functions in relation to strategies for the conservation and prevention of biological resources degradation, as well as for the implementation of these strategies.
- In order to develop the women's capacity to participate actively in government bodies at all levels and within local communities, especially in decision-making processes regarding the financing of biodiversity programs, it is necessary to develop a women's leadership program.
- Strengthening the capacity of women's NGOs, which in turn can develop women's leadership and women's entrepreneurship programs in the field of biodiversity.
- Providing support for the active involvement of the representatives of women's NGOs and action groups in the development and establishment of formal and informal partnerships, ensuring gender-balanced participation

using gender-sensitive communication approaches.

- Ensuring equal representation of women in biodiversity conservation forums and mechanisms at the community, local, national, regional and international levels, so that women can participate and exert their influence in the formulation and implementation of policies, legislation, and plans related to biodiversity conservation, including forest resources.

According to research studies of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2013), gender-balanced forest communities are more effective in performing all their functions such as plant protection, forest regeneration, biodiversity maintenance, and forest management distribution, than predominantly male communities.

- Allocation of special budgetary assignments at the national and local levels to respond to specific needs of men and women in the infrastructure and services sector in the context of afforestation, reforestation, natural regeneration through auxiliary means, agroforestry and ecological agriculture.
- Strengthening the state support for afforestation and expanding private forest resources based on gender issues.

Such measures as the creation of incentives, in particular for women-entrepreneurs, for the establishment and maintenance of private forests, as well as the development of private nurseries, will help to meet the need for planting materials in the forestry and for forest reproduction, afforestation and greening of settlements. The examples of this include community support (through asset transfer programs designed for women, and services such as loans, subsidies, mortgages, etc.) aimed at sustainable management (production, management, storage, sale) of forest products and timber, and community forest tourism.

- Improving working conditions in cordons, forestries, nature reserves and national parks, therefore creating more attractive conditions for women in this sector.
- Ensuring that women have access, if necessary, to obtain-

ing certificates of knowledge in the forest sector, which can contribute to the implementation of projects for the restoration of forest pastures and reforestation.

Due to the growing numbers of men migrating from rural areas in search of work, women are forced to manage their family's livelihood independently in addition to household chores. Accordingly, not only women have to expand their participation in the affairs of local communities, but also they need additional knowledge and financial support for the development of forest-related entrepreneurship.

- Development of programs for economic support for small and medium-sized businesses related to the collection and processing of berries, mushrooms, medicinal herbs using new technologies of drying and processing, packaging and their promotion in dried forms or in the form of jams to the market (for example, via the Internet). Through these programs, women will not only be able to develop and enrich their traditional knowledge of forest resources, but also improve their economic well-being.

According to international studies, women compared to men on average are capable of identifying a greater number of plant species (trees, shrubs, herbs, vegetables, etc.) and used plant parts (fruits, leaves, bark, seeds, roots).

This topic is relevant for wives of foresters, wives of inspectors on distant cordons, who are officially unemployed. This activity can be based on micro-credits or micro-grants, including a wide range of services: creation of hand-made wood forgeries, national costumes, paintings with beads, wood carving, drying / harvesting of forest products, etc., including selling products via the Internet.

- It is recommended to work on increasing the economic accessibility of educational services, forest science achievements and advisory services based on gender specifics for men and women. Special attention should be paid to subsidizing the forest production management systems taking into account gender aspects.

- It is necessary to create qualified advisory services that know gender specifics for local authorities responsible for

forests, meadows and pastures, water bodies and rivers; for foresters, farmers, and cadastral services.

- For forest-related projects, it is recommended to conduct training on nursery cultivation and forest management, or on building capacity and expansion of women's access to markets in the forest and non-wood forest product chains. For both women and men, as members of the household, it is important to provide technical advice on forests, which is mostly provided to the male population.

- It is necessary to develop and disseminate information among men and women on sustainable forest management benefits, establishment of private nurseries and forest plantations with a focus on socially vulnerable groups.

- In order to explore new opportunities for the development and implementation of forest projects, it is recommended to organize an exchange of experience between the regions of the republic and other countries. At least 30% of women should be represented in such groups. Civil servants, private entrepreneurs, and representatives of civil society should be included in joint groups.

- An important aspect is the support and encouragement of women's organizations interested in the development of various types of forest management on their rental territories. The microgrant program provides an opportunity to support various environmental initiatives, such as planting forest belts on degraded land. When allocating grants, it is important to take into account gender aspects – at least 30% of grants should be given to women.

- Given the socio-economic benefits of tourism and its significant impact on forest ecosystems, a more careful approach to this issue shall be considered. When improving tourism infrastructure, gender aspects have to be taken into account.

- Providing support for the development of “medical tourism,” which promotes beekeeping, especially in forests. For example, in the “api sauna” one can “lie down” on bees, breathe honey, “listen” to bees, try natural honey and honeycombs, and so on. These procedures help in

treating various diseases of the nervous system, respiratory tract, etc. This form of business could be successfully developed by women living near forests.

- It is important to work on classifying values and assessing benefits of their dissemination based on gender issues. This work should also address the selection of costs and benefits of natural resources, which therefore will be evaluated based on biodiversity conservation priorities and gender issues.

GENDER ANALYSIS AND STATISTICS IN KAZAKHSTAN

In recent years, in the context of international commitments, Kazakhstan has made significant progress in promoting gender equality. At this stage, the country has a specific legislative and regulatory framework that contains the Law “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women,” the Law “On Prevention of Domestic Violence,” as well as the Concept on Gender and Family Policy of Kazakhstan, which was adopted in 2016. However despite the increase in the number of women holding decision-making positions, their representation in the political and economic spheres remains low.



While maintaining a relatively good position in the area of economic participation and opportunities (37th place in 2020 vs 32 in 2018), Kazakhstan has lost its positions in the field of education (from 30th place in 2018 to 63rd - in 2020), health and survival (from 1st place in 2016 to 42nd - in 2018, and to 74th - in 2020), and in the area of the political participation (from 77th place in 2016 to 94th place - in 2018, and to 106th - in 2020).

⁹http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

¹⁰World Economic Forum, the Global Gender Gap Report 2018 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

¹¹World Economic Forum, the Global Gender Gap Report 2016 http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/?doing_wp_cron=1546986070.5060999393463134765625#economy=KAZ

At the same time, despite the large number of women represented in the field of employment and education, Kazakhstan's society is subject to the traditional attitude to the role of women and men. The division of responsibilities within families remains strict, and women experience a double burden of domestic work and employment in the labour market¹².

The Republic of Kazakhstan has joined the main international instruments in the field of biodiversity, bringing national legislation in line with them. The country has established structures for forestry, fishing, hunting, and other farms that address biodiversity issues, as well as equal rights for men and women to access biological resources at the legislative level. Thus, Kazakhstan intends to become an example for other countries in the Asian region in implementing international requirements for the conservation of biodiversity. The most important condition in this paragraph is the systematic integration of gender perspectives into the development, implementation and monitoring of environmental projects, so that all parties - women and men - can participate, make decisions and gain benefits.

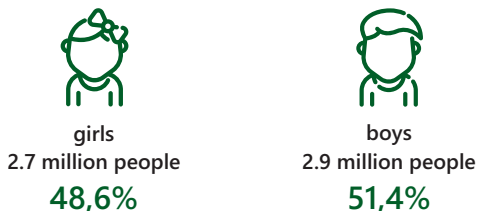
DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

The territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan is 2.7 million square kilometers, and by its area is one of the ten largest countries in the world. The population of the country at the beginning of 2017 was 17.9 million people, including:



¹² <https://www.zakon.kz/4872564-gendernoe-issledovanie-kak-v-kazahstane.html>

children under the age of 18 make up 5.6 million people, including



a proportion of older people aged 65 and over was **7,2%**¹³

Thus, Kazakhstan has already crossed the threshold of 7% of older people and can be classified as the country with an aging population. Life expectancy at 60 years of age among the population is 17.53%, among women - 19.62% as of 2018.

According to the 2009 census, the average family size was 3.5 persons. 72% of children under the age of 18 live with both parents, 15% – only with the mother, 6% – only with the father, 6% - without parents. 1.2 million households (29%) have among other family members people aged 60 years and older, 395 thousand households (9.5%) consist only of people aged 60 years and older. More than 545 thousand people live in these households, of which 191 thousand are men (35%) and 354 thousand are women (65%)¹⁴.

¹³The fifth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women / CEDAW report/C/ KAZ/5, 2018 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/CEDAW_C_KAZ_5_7362_R.pdf

¹⁴The fifth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women / CEDAW report/C/ KAZ/5, 2018

During the inter-census period from 1999 to 2009, the following demographic changes were revealed: the country's birth rate has increased, mortality decreased, life expectancy increased, there was a positive change of migration. As a result, the population of Kazakhstan has increased by more than 1 million people.

The average life expectancy among the female population over the past few years was 72-73 years, which is a visible progress compared to the last ten years¹⁵.

EDUCATION

According to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, all residents have the right to education regardless of gender, ethnicity, and social status. However, despite the efforts of the Government, there is a gender gap at various levels of the education system.

Data on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and higher education (Gender Parity Index¹⁶) indicate that girls are at disadvantage in technical and vocational education¹⁷.

In 2010, Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Declaration, having become the 47th member of the European Higher Education Area and the first Central Asian State recognized as a full member of the European educational area. After joining the Bologna Process, the system of higher education in Kazakhstan underwent major changes - the three-level education system - bachelor-master-doctor PhD was introduced.

57,3%

Among university graduates, 57.3% are young women and girls¹⁸

30%

Among students of the specialty "Forest Resources and Forestry" women make up about 30% (Table 1)

¹⁵The fifth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women / CEDAW report/C/ KAZ/5, 2018

¹⁶A gender parity index equal to one indicates gender equality. An indicator with a value less than 1 indicates inequality in favor of boys, that is, girls are disadvantaged. An indicator higher than 1 indicates inequality in favor of girls, meaning that boys are disadvantaged.

¹⁷https://gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=38&slug=-32&cat_id=8&lang=ru

¹⁸Fifth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women / CEDAW Report CEDAW / C / KAZ / 5, 2018

Table 1. Distribution of students by forest resources specialty at the beginning of 2018/2019 academic year, the Republic of Kazakhstan (people)¹⁹

	Students enrolled		Number of students		Graduated		Expected release
	total	incl. women	total	incl. women	total	incl. women	total
5B060700 Biology	1 041	845	3 057	2 555	668	552	733
5B060800 Ecology	999	620	3 488	2 246	960	631	994
5B073100 Life safety and environmental protection	1 177	288	4 397	1 133	949	263	1 284
5B080700 Forest resources and forestry	500	172	1 073	358	189	57	228

SPHERE OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

In 2018, the level of economic activity of the working-age population was 82.4%. Among men are 85.4%, among women -5% lower, making up 80.3%. In the city, the level of economic activity of women is lower not only compared to men (78.8%:84.7%), but also to rural women (78.8%:82.6%)²⁰. According to statistics on groups of economic activities²¹, the share of women employed in agriculture was 43.1%, in the service sector - 55.6%, and just 28.8% (least of all) - in industry and construction.

In 2016, women in the country were mainly employed in such areas of the economy as health and social services – 74.5%, education – 74.0%, accommodation and food services – 72.9%, trade – 59.8%, financial and insurance activities – 59.1%, art, entertainment and recreation – 57.4%, agriculture – 44.2% of all employed in the relevant field of activity. Men were traditionally represented in transport and warehousing - 80.5%, construction - 79.8%, industry - 66.5%²².

The lack of data in the forest sector complicates the analysis of the gender situation in this area.

Of particular interest is the percentage of women working

¹⁹ www.gender.stat.gov.kz

²⁰ www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=20&slug=16-58-16-63&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²¹ https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=21&slug=-16&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²² *The fifth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women / CEDAW report/CJ/KAZ/5, 2018*

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/KAZ/CEDAW_C_KAZ_5_7362_R.pdf

part-time broken down by gender. In the country, this indicator in 2018 was 9.3%. At the same time, the share of employed women living in rural areas and working part-time was higher not only in comparison with men (16.2%:11.1%), but also in comparison with urban women (16.2%:8.5%)²³. These data should be taken into account when involving women in various programs and projects.

The long-term unemployment rate for 2018 among the general population of the country was 2.2%, among women - 2.7%²⁴, which is higher than the indicator at the national level.

Regarding independent workers, it is worth noting that their share among the population of the republic is 24.0% without significant gender gaps: the share of men is 24.4%, the share of women is 23.5%²⁵. However, there are significant differences between urban and rural areas.

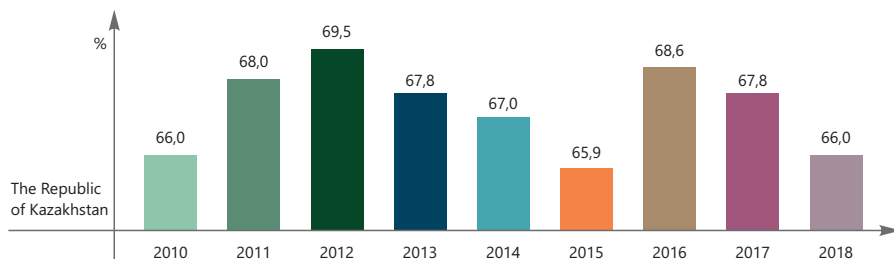
An important indicator for the economic sphere in terms of ensuring equal opportunities is wages. The data indicate that in the third quarter of 2018, the lowest level of nominal wages was recorded in agriculture, forestry and fisheries – 106.4 thousand tenge, which is 34.2% lower than the average wage in the country²⁶. These figures confirm the views of relatively low wages and critical attitude towards the work in the forest farms. However, the lack of gender-disaggregated data makes it difficult to determine the financial situation of men and women in this area. In general, the gender wage gap in recent years has been more than 30% (Table 2).

²³www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=17&slug=-13&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²⁴https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=23&slug=-18&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²⁵https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=14&slug=-10&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²⁶<https://kursiv.kz/news/obschestvo/2018-11/srednemesyachnaya-zarplata-v-rk-za-3-kvartal-sostavila-161-783-tenge>

Table 2. Wage ratio of women and men²⁷

PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES

According to statistics, the share of employers at the country level in 2018 was 1.3% of the country's population. The share of employers among the female population was a smaller percentage (0.9%) in relation to the country's indicator, as well as in comparison with the share of employers among the male population (1.6%)²⁸. In 2018, 27.9% of enterprises in the country were headed by women, respectively: 27.9% are small enterprises, 32.4% - medium-sized enterprises, 17.2% - large enterprises²⁹. The ratio of percentages in rural and urban areas against the country situation varies slightly, within 2%.

According to official statistics, the share of women among the adult population who own land (the number of owners and land users) in 2018 was 2.6%, while the share of the male population was 9.7%³⁰ maintaining this trend over the past years.

In the period from 2011 to 2018, there is the gradual increase in the number of women from 17.5% to 23.1%³¹ who head farms.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, out of the total number of 3,312,457 registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as of January 1, 2019, the number of the SMEs headed by women was 1,035,107 or 31.24%, which shows regression compared to 2018 where this figure was 42.07%³². It is also necessary to take into account unequal distribution of these data by regions,

²⁷https://gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=18&slug=-14&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²⁸https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=16&slug=-12&cat_id=7&lang=ru

²⁹https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=19&slug=-15&cat_id=7&lang=ru

³⁰https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=4&slug=-4&cat_id=1&lang=ru

³¹https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=5&slug=-5&cat_id=1&lang=ru

³²https://gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=106&slug=1-2018&cat_id=6&lang=ru

since most of the SMEs are concentrated in such large cities of the republic as Almaty and Nur-Sultan, as well as in South Kazakhstan, Almaty regions and other regions.

At the same time, out of the total number of the SMEs, among which 280,525 are the farms, the number of the SMEs headed by women is only 58,290 or 20.77%, which is also an indicator of regression compared to 2018 (22.17%).

Interestingly that in the field of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, out of 246,492 SMEs, 54,673 are women-headed entities³³.

Thus, the existing statistical data confirm the limited access of women to material resources, which significantly leads to the restriction of economic opportunities for rural women, including women involved in the forest sector.

In this regard, we draw attention to the fact that environmental and gender equality issues should be considered through the prism of equal access and control of women and men over natural resources and their derivatives, as well as equal access to decision-making and participation in the natural resources and environmental management and use.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION - MAKING

Despite the increase in the number of women in decision-making positions, their representation remains low, both in the political and economic spheres. Thus, the share of women in leadership positions in 2018 was 41.2%, in 2017 - 37.0% throughout Kazakhstan, in urban areas - 41.7% (2018) and 37.8% (2017), in rural areas – 39.5% (2018) and 33.3% (2017).

At the same time, among the persons holding the position of ministers in the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2017-2018, the share of women was only 6.25%. The representation of women in the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2017-2018 was 27.4%. The share of seats held by women in elected local authorities (maslikhats) in 2018 was 22.2%³⁴.

³³https://www.gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=108&slug=1-2018-3&cat_id=6&lang=ru

³⁴https://gender.stat.gov.kz/page/frontend/detail?id=73&slug=-60&cat_id=9&lang=ru

It is noteworthy that in the regional territorial inspections of the Committee of Forestry and Fauna of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the number of women was 31% of the total number of employees and 11% of the total number of middle level managers (heads of departments, divisions, services) (2017)³⁵. After restructuring the ministries, the total leadership of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources (MAGNR) of 10 people represented by the Minister, Vice-Ministers, as well as the Committees of the MAGNR represented by the Chairpersons, consist exclusively of men. As of March 2020, the share of women among the directors of departments of this state body was only 33.33%³⁶.

Consequently, despite some progress, women are underrepresented in decision-making in biodiversity-related structures.

In the context, we note that, in general, scientific studies confirm the idea that more active participation of women in agriculture and forestry will have a positive impact on the development of these sectors of the economy³⁷.

Also, the 2013 FAO study showed that gender-balanced forest communities are more effective in performing all their functions, such as plant protection, forest regeneration, biodiversity maintenance and forest management distribution, than predominantly male communities.

At the same time, it is assumed that more active participation of women in forest management can improve forest policy and planning, making them more responsible for the food security of the local communities.

³⁵The information is presented on the basis of calculations by an expert of the internet data on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan

³⁶The information is presented on the basis of calculations by an expert of the internet data on the website of the MEGNR RK.
<http://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/ecogeo/about?lang=ru>

³⁷<https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UNFF14-BkgdStudy-SDG8-March2019.pdf>; <https://greenbelarus.info/articles/07-03-2018/kak-borba-za-prava-zhenshchin-sposobstvuet-podderzhanuyu-bioraznoobraziyu>

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN KAZAKHSTAN

This publication was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has profoundly affected the lives of women and men. In the context of new conditions and data (see below), programs of development require new approaches and adaptations.



01.

The time spent by women on care and housework has increased significantly (from 18 to 41%) when compared with the men's situation.

02.

Cases of domestic violence have increased, where victims are mainly represented by urban residents, respondents aged 25-34 (17%), women with disabilities (23%) and representatives of low-income segments of the population (22%).

03.

More and more women face the problem of optimization/reduction of household expenses.

04.

More women lost their jobs than men, especially women aged 18-34 living in cities.

05.

Working women with children are more likely to be on a 'quarantine leave' than women without children.

06.

During the quarantine period, 13-16% of women used reproductive health services. 6% of women faced serious or minor difficulties in getting maternal health services.



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ G. Amirova



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ Zh.Alemseitova



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ Zh.Alemseitova



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ A. Belgubayeva



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ A. Belgubayeva



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ A. Belgubayeva



Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ S.Zhumanov



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Photo: UNDP Kazakhstan/ A. Belgubayeva



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