Tatiana Bozrikova has a PhD in Philosophy. She is an expert on gender and development, a sociologist and deputy Director of the non-governmental research centre “New Panorama”. Tatiana was a former advisor to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on Social Development and Public Relations (for seven years until 2004) and is a founder and former president (until 2014) of the Coalition of NGOs “From Legal Equality - To Actual Equality.” She is the author of more than sixty publications, analytical reports and research studies on gender issues. She is also one of the main developers of the national long- and medium-term strategies and state programmes on gender and development in Tajikistan. Tatiana is the head of expert groups on gender mainstreaming in land and agrarian legislation, as well as on the preparation of alternative reports on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She is also a member of the Advisory Council on Civil Society of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

KEY PRIORITIES TO OVERCOME THE UNEQUAL ACCESS OF RURAL WOMEN TO RESOURCES IN TAJIKISTAN

In 2015, the permanent population of the Republic of Tajikistan was 8,352,000 people. The proportion of men was 50.6 percent (4,224,000 people) of the total population, and the proportion of women was 49.4 percent (4,127,000 people). Up to 73.5 percent of the total population lives in rural areas.1 The average age of the population is 25.7 years.2 According to the available statistical data, the proportion of the population below working age accounts for 34.6 percent of the total population; the working age population for 60.5 percent; and those above working age for 4.9 percent. The age structure of the rural population is similar to this.3 The agricultural sector is the main employer in the country: 65.5 percent of the population is engaged in agricultural employment.4 The share of people employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry represents 90.6 percent of the population employed in the real sector.5

In 2012, life expectancy at birth for members of the Tajik population was 72.8 years of age. This indicator was higher in the rural population at 73.6 years of age. On average, rural women live three years longer (75.2 years) than rural men (72.1 years).6

In 2014, the total level of poverty in Tajikistan fell to 32 percent; and the level of extreme poverty fell to 16.8 percent. The level of poverty is higher in rural areas than it is in urban areas. Eighty-one percent of the poor live in rural areas and approximately four out of five poor people live in rural households. In urban households, the poverty rate is 23.5 percent, whereas in rural areas it is 36.1 percent. The incidence of extreme poverty within the rural population is 1.8 times higher than in the urban population (19.7 percent and 10.7 percent respectively).7

In 2014, GDP per capita was 5,498.2 TJS (1,114 USD). In the first nine months of 2015, the share of agriculture in GDP reached 21.4 percent, compared with industry representing a 12.5 percent share and services representing a 53.2 percent share.8 At least 600,000 people are annually involved in the process of external labour migration, and remittances account for more than 40 percent of the country’s GDP.

---

1 Agency on Statistics, 2015a, p. 9, p. 32.
3 Agency on Statistics, 2015a, p. 9, p. 32, p. 35.
5 Agency on Statistics, 2015b, p. 41.
7 Agency on Statistics, 2015c, pp. 23-34.
In November 2015, the average monthly nominal wage amounted to 920.97 TJS (138.4 USD).9 In the real sector of economy, those employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry received the lowest wages of 302.31 TJS (45.4 USD).10 This means that the average salary of agricultural workers is 3.3 times lower than the average salary of workers in the real sector. Owing to current occupational segregation, women's wages are generally lower than men's in all sectors of the economy. In 2009, women's average nominal salary in agriculture and forestry represented 86.8 percent of the average men's salary, and in 2013, this share was only 57.5 percent.

Tajikistan holds the 129th position in the Human Development Index (0.624), out of 188 countries. In 2014, the value of the Gender Inequality Index was 0.357 and Tajikistan was ranked 69th out of 155 countries in the world.

The low level of education among rural women constitutes a pressing issue in Tajikistan. According to 2010 census data, only 8.7 percent of rural women entered professional education (higher, incomplete higher or secondary vocational education), compared with 39.1 percent of urban women. In addition, there are 2.5 times fewer employed rural women with professional education than rural men, while among urban women and men there is almost no difference.11

The main priorities for overcoming inequality between rural women and men are: gender equality in the allocation of resources and opportunities; gender equality in decision-making in the public and private sectors; and freedom from violence against women and girls.

In recent years, the government of Tajikistan has used a number of legislative, institutional, organizational and financial mechanisms to enhance rural women's access to tangible and intangible resources:

- **Access to land.** Within the “State Programme on the Main Directions of State Policy to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001-2010”, the State Land Committee of RT conducted regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the section “access of rural women to land” using gender indicators. In order to track the dynamics of the processes of land reform and to assess women’s access to land and other resources, gender indicators were incorporated into statistical reports on agriculture, and the publication “Gender Indicators in the Production Activities of Dekhan Farming” is published annually.

  The results of the activity of NGOs in lobbying for gender mainstreaming in the Land Code of RT are also noteworthy. For the first time, land legislation contains provisions concerning: the equal access of men and women to land; the equality of participants in land relations; granting the right to receive small plots close to the house for categories such as heads of single-parent families and single adults who are unmarried and do not live with relatives; and regulations on the application of rules concerning the joint property of spouses and their equal rights to expropriate and use the land.

- **Access to financial resources.** Since 2006, Presidential grants aimed at improving the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs and access to financial resources have been introduced to support women entrepreneurs, including the heads of agricultural holdings and rural women. Between 2016 and 2020, there are plans for a further 80 Presidential grants per annum for these purposes. The total amount of the grants is 2 000 000 TJS (340 000 USD).

  In recent years, a practice focusing on the social mobilization of local communities, with the involvement of women, has become increasingly common. Self-help groups are organized to promote the empowerment of rural women by obtaining financial resources through loans from the solidarity funds, and through the creation of credit unions on the basis of self-help groups.

- **Access to professional education.** In 1997, the Presidential quota system was introduced to reduce the unequal access of rural girls and boys to higher education.12 According to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2 408 students were assisted by the quota in the 2015/2016 academic year: 1 178 were female students and 1 230 were male students.

---

10 Ibid, p. 221.
12 A quota system is used to encourage school graduates from remote rural areas to enrol in higher education (HE). Applicants are admitted to an HE institution on the basis of interviews, rather than on the results of entrance examinations. Initially, the quota system was established for girls, but was later extended to boys.
Despite a significant number of state policies and programmes on gender mainstreaming, gender inequality persists, and has even increased in some areas, particularly in relation to access to various resources. On average, women have a smaller plot of land, and experience unequal access to (i) agricultural decision-making processes, (ii) the distribution of financial benefits from the harvest and (iii) obtaining loans. In 2014, there were almost seven times fewer female managers of agricultural enterprises compared with male managers, and women represented a 13 percent share in the management of agricultural enterprises.

In Tajikistan, there is an explicit gender imbalance in the staffing of the agricultural departments, land management and other specialized structures. Women should not only have equal access to land and other resources, but real control over them. This would enable women to have a real impact on decision-making in relation to acute problems.

Rural women are also mainly engaged in unpaid work, including household duties and work in, for example, family businesses and agricultural holdings. Overcoming the obstacles to gender equality in employment and the mobility of rural women in the labour market requires women's increased access to education, their acquisition of professional skills and knowledge, and the development of infrastructure in the sphere of pre-school education and in the fields of, for example, household services and transport communications.

Furthermore, the issue of social protection is significant for the rural population. The existing mechanisms for ensuring the pension rights of rural workers, most of whom are women, are not sufficiently developed. In 2013, the value of a woman's pension represented 80.4 percent of the average pension of a man.13

One of the main barriers to overcoming gender inequality is the impact of prevailing gender stereotypes, associated with the division of roles between men and women. Changing social and cultural norms in rural communities is a difficult challenge, and one which requires time, and targeted and coordinated action by the state and civil society.

Government policies and actions need to aim towards achieving equal outcomes for both women and men, rather than focusing solely on the equal treatment of women and men, and rural and urban women. Overlooking the different capabilities of women and men in general, and those of rural and urban women in particular, in the enjoyment of granted rights enshrined in certain laws, policies, programmes or measures, results in the indirect discrimination of women in general, and rural women in particular.

In order to broaden the information base for effective gender analysis on the status of rural households and women, and given the substantial differences not only between the sexes but also between urban and rural women, publications with the results of the statistical surveys and census data must incorporate a full range of indicators, including those disaggregated by sex, but also by sex and by geographical location (rural and urban).

Moreover, it would be beneficial for the Agency on Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, in partnership with the gender experts’ community, to undertake a gender analysis of the results of the agricultural census (implemented in 2013), and use the data to adjust gender indicators for the effective monitoring and evaluation of the agrarian reform.

The development of new programmes and action plans needs to take into account significant differences between (i) women and men, and (ii) agricultural holdings and households headed by women, in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and the characteristics of households and holdings by, for example, type, size, composition and potential. Special attention to the most vulnerable groups of rural women is required, including: women with young children; women with children or with family members with disabilities; “abandoned wives” of labour migrants; and women with low levels of education. Within these groups, women living in remote villages are at particular risk.

13 Agency on Statistics, 2010, p. 84; see also 2014b, p. 122.
In the context of a changing legislative base, in the parts relating to the alienation of land use rights and formation of land markets, it is very important to make satisfactory changes to the regulatory framework. In this regard, it would be useful to conduct a broad information campaign with the wide involvement of women, in order to explain the new provisions of the Land Code of Tajikistan, including the provisions made for applications for the registration of joint property in marriage, to ensure both individuals have the right to expropriate and use the land.

It is also recommended that the Presidential quota for rural girls and young women is increased, particularly in specialties such as law, economics and finance, agriculture and management, in order to overcome occupational segregation by sex. This should also include the greater involvement of women in the adults’ training groups in education centres, and specific training for these groups focusing on the professions which are in demand in the labour market (rather than based on the principle of “male” and “female” professions).

Finally, in order to increase women’s access to financial resources, credit products for the most vulnerable groups of rural women need to be more actively introduced, with interest rates ranging from 12 to 18 percent and without the need for collateral.

References


