

IRSTI 17.40.01

REVIEW OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN IN KAZAKHSTAN

Aizhan Salimzhanova¹, Ipek Ilkcaracan²

¹PhD candidate in Economics, Acting director of Scientific and research Institute for social and gender studies at Kazakh State Women's Teacher Training University
Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com

²Prof. Dr. of Economics, Istanbul Technical University,
Istanbul, Turkey, e-mail: ilkcaracan@itu.edu.tr

There is a gap in the living standards between urban and rural population in Kazakhstan, which increased even more in the recent years. Women are more likely to suffer from social and economic inequalities. Authors aimed to make a comparative study of the living standards of urban and rural women and social practices of their adaptation to the market conditions. Unfortunately, Kazakhstan's government commitments concerning urban development, improvements in urban infrastructure and access to basic services have not referenced fully determination of gender issues. We strongly believe that the deficiencies in basic infrastructure affect both women and men, and the design of urban development projects should aim to identify those differential impacts more precisely. Attention should be paid to such factors as how access to basic services correlates with economic status, the roles played by women and men in finding alternatives when services are deficient, and how particularly women stand to benefit from improved infrastructure.

Key words: rural and urban area development, gender policy, rural women, rural and urban infrastructure, gap in the living standards.

Introduction. Kazakhstan is the largest country among Central Asian countries with fast-growing economy. Kazakhstani government is pursuing important policies on gender equality and national programs on specific issues affecting women. Today, Kazakhstan is becoming increasingly urbanized. Its largest cities (like Almaty and Astana) experienced significant population growth in recent years. However, the percentage of population living in rural areas is still high, especially in comparison with OECD countries. According to official World Bank data, in 2016 almost half of population in Kazakhstan was living in rural areas (47 percent of population living in rural and 53 percent living in urban areas). Even a considerable portion of the urban infrastructure in Kazakhstan (water supply and sanitation, energy supply, and housing) yet remain outdated and in need of rehabilitation, not to speak of rural areas. While deficiencies in infrastructure affect both women and men, it is important to also consider such factors as a) how access to infrastructure and services correlates with economic status, b) the roles played by women and men in finding alternatives when services are deficient, and c) how women and men stand to benefit from improved services [1]. Government of Kazakhstan is taking every effort to ensure that the people of Kazakhstan, equally women and men, both in urban and rural areas, will benefit from development of infrastructure as one of the critical anchors to achieving the SDGs.

Within «soviet period» Kazakhstan's important political task was to overcome inequality in the social and economic opportunities for urban and rural residents. Currently, the government also pays attention to the development of rural areas and is implementing programs for supporting the rural economy and rural population. However, throughout the period of independence of the country, and during the transformation and modernization of the economy, the gap in the living standards between urban and rural population was further widened. The population of the country was faced with various challenges associated with the need to adapt to the market institutions such as competition for job. Women are more likely to suffer from social and economic inequalities.

The authors' task is to make a comparative study of the living standards of urban and rural women and social practices of their adaptation to the market conditions. The topic of differences between rural and urban life was mentioned frequently in the works of many authors and reports of international organizations. Most of them mention that rural women face more difficulties than women in urban areas because they must contend with fewer opportunities for formal employment, a greater burden of domestic work, and a lack of

infrastructure and social services. While the gender policy framework in Kazakhstan is sound, the realization of the gender equality strategy and implementation of related laws are not yet complete. Women's NGOs point to persistent problems such as the disparities between women's lives in rural and urban areas, women's unemployment, and domestic violence.

Review of the socio-economic development of rural and urban women

The topic of differences between rural and urban life are frequently mentioned in various researches worldwide. Most of them claim that rural women face more difficulties than women in urban areas do, because they must contend with fewer opportunities for formal employment, a greater burden of domestic work, and a lack of infrastructure and social services. Rural areas have far less access to piped water than urban areas. According to a survey conducted in Aktiubinsk Oblast, by OSCE, rural women who live in larger settlements and are employed and able to buy some goods from shops, spend 50%–60% of their time on household chores. By contrast, it is reported that women in small and more remote villages with high female unemployment and limited supplies of gas and water spend 90%–100% of their time on household chores. A large part of their time is spent collecting and transporting water [2].

Recent researches suggests that gender stereotypes vary by region and that people in rural areas, especially in southern and western Kazakhstan, tend to be more conservative and to have more traditional views on the roles of women and men. Deficiencies in basic services and the burden of household work on rural women in Kazakhstan are considerable obstacles to their other endeavors. As it was mentioned above, women in rural areas spend a significant amount of time transporting and treating water and collecting fuel to use for home heating. In rural regions, many women who are not formally employed nevertheless engage in informal businesses, such as making sweets, baking, and selling home-produced goods (meat, milk, fruit, and vegetables).

Worldwide, women play a significant role in agriculture and rural employment, including in food production and rural marketing, and Kazakhstan is not exception. Women in Europe and Central Asia also play an essential role in agricultural production, and make up a substantial part of the agricultural labour force. The female share of the agricultural labour force is just below the world average in Central Asia, at 41 percent (in Europe, the average is 32 percent, ranging from 29 percent in Eastern Europe to 45 percent in Southern Europe). Overall, in Europe and Central Asia, rural women are less likely to be self-employed than men, yet they are more likely to be involved in wage and salary employment [3].

Women working in rural settings are often involved in numerous activities in Kazakhstan. For instance, they may change their work depending on the season, or may remain unemployed or underemployed for periods of time due to their significant involvement in seasonal and part-time jobs. In rural settings, the domestic sphere and market production appear to be more closely linked than in urban areas, and production activities, which rest to a large extent on women's shoulders, are often constrained because of poor infrastructure and a lack of facilities. There are also many obstacles that women in rural areas face while starting their own businesses. Such constraints as lack of collateral (property is often registered in the name of the husband or male head of household), refusals by banks, complicated banking procedures, fear of taking on debt, and the lack of skills and knowledge necessary for creating a business plan (a requirement for obtaining loans) can be a serious problem stopping women in taking advantage to own their own business. Moreover, there are few organizations offering women assistance in business planning, and women generally cannot afford to pay for business assistance services.

Generally, women make up about two-thirds of the officially registered unemployed in 2008–2010 in Kazakhstan. Official unemployment figures for rural areas show a different pattern. Women represent only 48% of those registered as unemployed, and data for rural areas by region show that the number of unemployed women and men are comparable. Women are overrepresented among the long-term unemployed in both urban and rural settings. Women's higher unemployment rate can partly be explained by the fact that they take leave from work to care for children [1].

Under the socialist state in Kazakhstan, all citizens of working age were obligated by law to be employed in paid occupations. As a result of these policies, women used to have higher rates of economic activities than in other part of the world [4]. The state commitment for guaranteeing equal access to education and employment to women and men -- and the subsequent high employment rates of women -- spread the perception that gender equality had been achieved. However, these measures did not ensure the transformation of the gender division of labour within the family and therefore resulted in a double burden for women. Also, "as women entered the labour force in large numbers, men moved upwards in the

occupational structure or assumed new specializations,” reinforcing the occupational segregation and the gender pay gap [5]. The transition to a market economy brought a series of negative impacts to the region, such as an increase in the poverty rate because employment was no longer guaranteed by the state. In many rural areas, former collective and state farms were privatized, leaving rural workers unemployed and with few opportunities for alternative employment. The incidence of rural poverty is from one to three times that of poverty in urban areas. Key factors leading to rural poverty include the lack of local employment opportunities. For many rural poor people, remittances from family members who have emigrated are a vital source of income, also injecting cash into the rural economy [6].

Numerous social, cultural, political and economic trends in Central Asia are altering gender roles and the division of labour in rural households, holdings and pastures. The lack of economic opportunities in rural areas has led to a large-scale labour migration to national urban centers and other countries, mainly southern Kazakhstan and Russia. There are two main flows of migration, internal (mainly rural-urban) and external (to another country). In Kazakhstan, we mainly observe rural-urban migration of women, though there is a migration to other countries as well. Women migrants can experience empowerment and autonomy, as well as a greater ability to make household decisions due to their new wage earning capacity. Women left behind also are very likely to encounter changes in gender roles as they might become more responsible for the household, including taking on greater economic responsibility and management of remittances [7].

Growing internal labor migration from villages and small towns, especially from Akmola, East Kazakhstan, South Kazakhstan, and Zhambyl oblasts, is a major driver of urban growth. The internal migration rate in Kazakhstan is higher than the rates in neighboring Central Asian countries. The primary motivation for migration to larger cities is the deterioration of living conditions in rural areas and the lack of economic opportunities, primarily because of declining agricultural production. The Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2020 foresees the development of the road sector and the creation of a modern road network linking cities and towns, with particular attention to the development of local roads. Kazakhstan 2030 prioritizes the development of a network of paved rural roads. According to official estimates, about 2 000 rural settlements do not have year-round access to transport, and only 69.3 percent of rural towns and villages have regular transport connections. Rural women are particularly dependent on public transport for travel to regional centers, where they go to visit government offices (e.g., to apply for child benefits), access health services, and sell home-produced goods. Women often travel with children. Men in rural settlements are much more likely to drive privately-owned vehicles, in part because fewer women can afford to purchase cars. Other issues that should be considered in public transport projects for rural women include the distances between bus stops, condition of bus shelters (often without lights or benches), and infrequency of bus service between villages and city centers, which results in overcrowded buses and long journey times [1].

Moreover, the limited transport options result in overcrowding, and women are concerned by unsafe driving practices on public transport. A situational analysis conducted by UNDP in Almaty, under a project to support sustainable transport, found that public transport is characterized by such problems as «overcrowding especially at peak hours that allows bus operators to maximize profits; lack of services in off-peak hours; poor mobility on roads due to traffic congestion and lack of priority for buses; and a lack of cleanliness on board». The development of both main and feeder roads can lead to increased income earning opportunities for women, such as selling goods to drivers, operating cafes, and managing rest-stop facilities. Project planning for road improvement should explore ways to create an environment that will support such businesses for women [1]. Measures could include creating highway rest areas, reserving commercial and vending spaces for women in roadside infrastructure, installing public toilets, and establishing transport from rural villages to roadside rest stops. Improvements in transport logistics should also take into account the numbers of women involved in trade, and how reform in this sector could improve the efficiency and profitability of women’s enterprises.

Kazakhstan’s government commitments concerning urban development, improvements in urban infrastructure and access to basic services have not referenced fully determination of gender issues. State programs provide analyses of the current situation in particular spheres and have focused on improving the quality of life for the population as a whole. Assessments within national programs do not refer to gender differences in access to services, nor do the programs specify measures to promote women’s participation in decision-making or the advancement of gender equality. In the annual state of the nation address in 2011, the President outlined three priority areas under the theme of social modernization: two of them - modernizing

utilities and providing safe drinking water are related to urban services [5]. The President instructed the government to develop new programs to improve communal services, heating, electricity, and gas supply, and to construct new water facilities to provide 100 percent water-supply coverage in urban areas. The Program for Modernization of Housing and Utilities, 2011–2020 includes infrastructure improvements; the development of a condominium management system; and the modernization of municipal utilities providing heat, gas, electricity, and sanitation services. These programs are providing a source of income and indirectly a chance to improve women's lives both in rural and urban areas in Kazakhstan.

Conclusions

Achieving gender equality in the economy is one of seven priority areas of the government's Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2006–2016. The implementation of this strategy, through a series of action plans, requires positive gender related activities at the national level and the inclusion of gender in strategic development plans at the regional level. Currently the emphasis has been on social sector initiatives rather than other sectors of the country's development, such as transport or urban infrastructure.

We strongly believe that, the deficiencies in basic infrastructure affect both women and men, and the design of urban development projects should aim to identify those differential impacts more precisely. Attention should be paid to such factors as how access to basic services correlates with economic status, the roles played by women and men in finding alternatives when services are deficient, and how women and men stand to benefit from improved infrastructure. We shouldn't forget that women and men differ in their needs, perceptions, and roles with regard to urban services. Because women take on the primary responsibility for household chores and are the primary users of utilities in the home, deficiencies in basic services increase women's unpaid workload. Improving women's access to urban infrastructure would not only improve their living conditions but also increase their time for productive activities. Assessments of improvements in access to basic services within urban development projects should not be limited to the most immediate impacts on the lives of women, such as the time saved when piped water is available in the home. The ability of women to invest this time in their education, income-generating activities, care of family members, and in their own welfare is equally important.

To sum up, we can say that today the urban areas (big cities) act as economic and cultural centers of society; they provide great benefits to their residents. By and large, urban women in Kazakhstan have a better life conditions, higher labour force participation and access to well-developed infrastructure. We believe that, the government of Kazakhstan should ensure women's full inclusion in development initiatives. Enabling women to participate in planning and share in all the benefits will help avoid the long-term negative impacts that gender inequality could have on the country's development and growth.

References

- 1 Asian Development Bank report «Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment», 2013.
- 2 OSCE and Feminist League, «Monitoring Respect for Women's Rights», 2010.
- 3 Rocca V., Bossányi Z., Di Giuseppe S., «Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia», FAO, 2014.
- 4 UN, «Confidence and security-building measures from Europe to other regions», 1991. New York, USA, UN Department of Disarmament Affairs.
- 5 «World Bank, Making the transition work for women in Europe and Central Asia», 2000. World Bank Discussion Paper No. 411. Washington, D.C.
- 6 IFAD, «Assessment of rural poverty: Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States», 2002. Rome.
- 7 Martin S.F., «Women and Migration», 2004. Paper prepared for the Consultative Meeting on Migration and Mobility and How This Movement Affects Women organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Malmö, Sweden, 2-4 December 2003.
- 8 Shedenova N., Beimisheva A., «Social and Economic Status of Urban and Rural Households in Kazakhstan», 2013. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 585 – 591.
- 9 Committee on Financial Monitoring of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 2011. Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. A. Nazarbayev to the People of Kazakhstan [in Russian]. 28 January. <http://www.kfm.gov.kz/ru/president-address-2011>.

- 10 Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2011). Living standards in Kazakhstan 2006-2010: the statistical collection. Astana: Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- 11 The Program of Modernization of the Housing and Public Utilities of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020.
- 12 World Development Indicators on Urban and Rural population (% of total) in Kazakhstan, 1960-2016.
- 13 Abdurazakova D., «National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in South-East and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia: Regional Study», 2010. Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
- 14 Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Migration of the Population Data for 2003–2008.
- 15 Women and Men in Kazakhstan[in Russian], 2010. Statistical collection. Astana.
- 16 Asian Development Bank, «Kazakhstan: On the Path to Higher Levels of Development. Development Effectiveness Briefs», 2010. Manila.
- 17 The Business Road Map Program 2020[in Russian]. Government Resolution No. 301. Astana, April 2010.

ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ АУЫЛМЕН ҚАЛА ӘЙЕЛДЕРІНІҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК-ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ ДАМУЫНЫҢ ШОЛУЫ

А.С. Салимжанова¹, Инек Ильккараджан²

¹Экономика саласында PhD докторант, Әлеуметтік және гендерлік ғылыми - зерттеулер институтының директор лаузымын атқарушы,

Қазақ мемлекеттік қыздар педагогикалық университеті,
Қазақстан, Алматы қ., e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com

²Экономика саласының профессоры, Доктор, Стамбул Техникалық Университеті,
Туркия, Стамбул қ., e-mail: ilkcaracan@itu.edu.tr

Бүгінгі күнде қала мен ауылдық жерлерде өмір сүру деңгейінде алшақтық бар және ол соңғы жылдарда өсіп келе жатыр. Әйелдер әлеуметтік және экономикалық теңсіздіктен көбірек зардап шегеді. Авторлар қала және ауыл әйелдерінің өмір сүру сапасына салыстырмалы талдау жасайды және әлеуметтік практикада олардың нарық жағдайындағы олардың адаптациясын талқылайды. Өкінішке орай, бүгінгі күні мемлекеттің қаланы дамытуында, инфрақұрылымын дамытуына және базалық қызметтерге қолжетімділікке байланысты мәселелерді шешуге қатысты сұрақтарда гендерлік мәселелерді шешу толығымен қамтылмайды. Базалық инфрақұрылымның кемшіліктері әйелдерге де ерлерге де әсерін тигізеді және жобалардың дамытылуы кезінде бұл мәселелерді шешу нақты іске асырылуға тиіс. Негізгі қызметтерге қолжетімділік экономикалық факторларға, сонымен қатар баламаларды іздеуде әйелдер мен ерлердің рөлі, қызмет жеткіліксіз болған кезде, өз әсерін тигізеді, және әсіресе, әйелдерге инфрақұрылымның дамуы қаншалықты пайда әкелетініне назарымызды аударуымыз керек.

Түйін сөздер: ауыл және қалалық аумақтарды дамыту, гендерлік саясат, ауыл әйелдері, ауыл және қалалық инфрақұрылым, өмір сүру деңгейіндегі алшақтық.

ОБЗОР СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ЖЕНЩИН СЕЛЬСКИХ И ГОРОДСКИХ РАЙОНОВ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

А.С. Салимжанова¹, Инек Ильккараджан²

¹PhD докторант в области экономики, и.о. директора Научно-исследовательского института социальных и гендерных исследований при Казахском государственном женском педагогическом университете, Казахстан, г. Алматы, e-mail: aizhan.salimzhan@gmail.com

²Профессор, доктор экономики, Стамбульский Технический Университет, Турция, г. Стамбул, e-mail: ilkcaracan@itu.edu.tr

На сегодняшний день существует разрыв в уровне жизни между городским и сельским населением в Казахстане, который еще больше увеличился за последние годы. Женщины чаще страдают от социального и экономического неравенства. Авторы провели краткий сравнительный анализ уровня жизни городских и сельских женщин и социальных практик их адаптации к рыночным условиям. К сожалению, в настоящее время обязательства правительства Казахстана в отношении развития городов, улучшения городской инфраструктуры и доступа к базовым услугам не включает в достаточной мере в себя решения гендерных вопросов. Мы убеждены в том, что недостатки базовой инфраструктуры затрагивают как женщин, так и мужчин, а проекты развития сельских и городских районов должны быть направлены на более точное выявление этих различий. Следует обратить внимание на то, как такие факторы, как доступ к основным услугам коррелирует с экономическим статусом, ролью женщин и мужчин в поиске альтернатив, когда услуги представлены в недостаточном объеме, и на то, как в особенности какуювыгоду от развития инфраструктуры женщины могут получить.

Ключевые слова: развитие сельских и городских районов, гендерная политика, сельские женщины, инфраструктура в сельских и городских районах, разрыв в уровне жизни.