

## WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

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The real situation with regard to the right of women to participate in the decision-making process, to put it simply, to influence the power and to be present in power, reflects the sad saying that has developed in Kyrgyzstan in recent years: “Men are where it is necessary to decide, women who need to do the work.”

Unfortunately, the practical experience of the Development Policy Institute in municipalities confirms the truth of the saying that men make decisions, a significant portion of the preparatory work preceding the decision, and most of the work on its subsequent implementation is carried out by women.



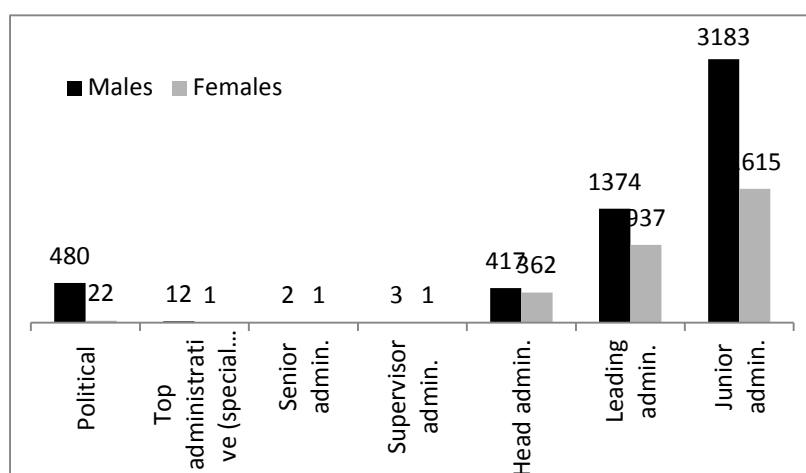
Table 1. Gender composition of the executive bodies of LSG (heads of aiyyl okmotu and city mayors)<sup>1</sup>

Oblast	F	M	In percentage
Chui	4	107	3,6
Osh	1	90	1,1
Naryn	3	64	4,5
Batken	0	36	0,0
Issyk-Kul	1	63	1,6
Jalal-Abad	3	73	3,9
Talas	1	38	2,6
TOTAL	13	471	
<b>On average across the Kyrgyz Republic</b>			<b>2,5</b>

The illustration is also supported by the gender statistics in local self-government, which we publish without any special comments, considering the spring holiday of March 8, when it is customary to recall the role of women in the development of society. We just decided to illustrate the statistics with “live pictures” that depict the actual situation regarding the situation of women in local self-government, and also supplement this “spring salad” with excerpts of the study of gender balance in various processes.

A reader will make conclusions on his or her own.

Diagram 1. Number of women and men in the municipal service



### Women in executive bodies of LSG<sup>2</sup>

Women hold 37.0% of all municipal positions, but in political positions the proportion of women is only 4.0%, at higher levels - 13.0%, while the main ones - 46.0%, at senior - 41.0% on younger - 34,0%, on patronage - 25,0%. That is, the lower the position, respectively, the level of wages, and more “dirty” work, the more women occupy this position.

Access to the municipal service for women with disabilities is worse than that of men in a similar situation. Thus, 134 people with disabilities are working

in municipal positions, including 117 men and 17 women, including disabled people of the third group - 51

<sup>1</sup> This table relies on data of SALS GIR.

<sup>2</sup> This section uses data from the publication “Local self-governance in the Kyrgyz Republic”, 2015-2016. Informational and analytical annex to the “Municipalitet” magazine.

people (38%), of whom 12 are women (24%); disabled group II - 70 (52%), of them women - 17 (24%); disabled group I - 14 (10%).

Table 2. Women representation in city keneshes<sup>3</sup>

City	After elections of 2012				After elections of 2016			
	M	F	Total	Share of females	M	F	Total	Share of females
Kerben	24	7	31	22,6%	24	7	31	22,6%
Aidarken	15	6	21	28,6%	15	6	21	28,6%
Balykchy	24	7	31	22,6%	24	7	31	22,6%
Batken	26	5	31	16,1%	24	7	31	22,6%
Bishkek					36	9	45	20,0%
Jalal-Abad	27	4	31	12,9%	29	2	31	6,5%
Isfana	25	6	31	19,4%	27	4	31	12,9%
Kadamjai	14	7	21	33,3%	16	5	21	23,8%
Kaindy	18	4	22	18,2%	17	4	21	19,0%
Kant	20	11	31	35,5%	21	0	21	0,0%
Kara-Balta	20	11	31	35,5%	25	6	31	19,4%
Karakol	23	8	31	25,8%	23	8	31	25,8%
Kar-Kul					25	6	31	19,4%
Kara-Suu	26	5	31	16,1%	26	5	31	16,1%
Kemin	16	5	21	23,8%	15	6	21	28,6%
Kok-Zhangak			0		13	8	21	38,1%
Kochkor-Ata			0		18	3	21	14,3%
Kyzyl-Kia	22	9	31	29,0%	24	7	31	22,6%
Mailuu-Suu	26	5	31	16,1%	26	5	31	16,1%
Naryn	22	9	31	29,0%	24	7	31	22,6%
Nookat	15	6	21	28,6%	15	6	21	28,6%
Orlovka	14	7	21	33,3%	17	4	21	19,0%
Osh	37	8	45	17,8%	37	8	45	17,8%
Sulyukta	22	9	31	29,0%	22	9	31	29,0%
Talas	29	1	30	3,3%	25	6	31	19,4%
Tash-Kumyr	21	10	31	32,3%	28	3	31	9,7%
Tokmok	26	5	31	16,1%	26	5	31	16,1%
Toktogul	15	6	21	28,6%	15	6	21	28,6%
Uzgen	25	6	31	19,4%	28	3	31	9,7%
Cholpon-Ata	14	7	21	33,3%	15	6	21	28,6%
Shopokov	13	8	21	38,1%	15	6	21	28,6%
Total:	695	174	761	24,6%	695	174	869	20,5%

### Women in local keneshes<sup>4</sup>

Decline in the level of the women representation in the rural local keneshes. As a whole, according to the Kyrgyz Republic, after the elections of 2016, the representation of women in rural local keneshes decreased by 2% and amounted to 13% of the total number of deputies.

The greatest decrease in the level of female representation is observed in Naryn and Chui oblasts - by 5% and 6%, respectively.

Some growth is observed in Talas and Jalal-Abad oblasts. The lowest level of representation of women in local keneshes is observed in Osh oblast.

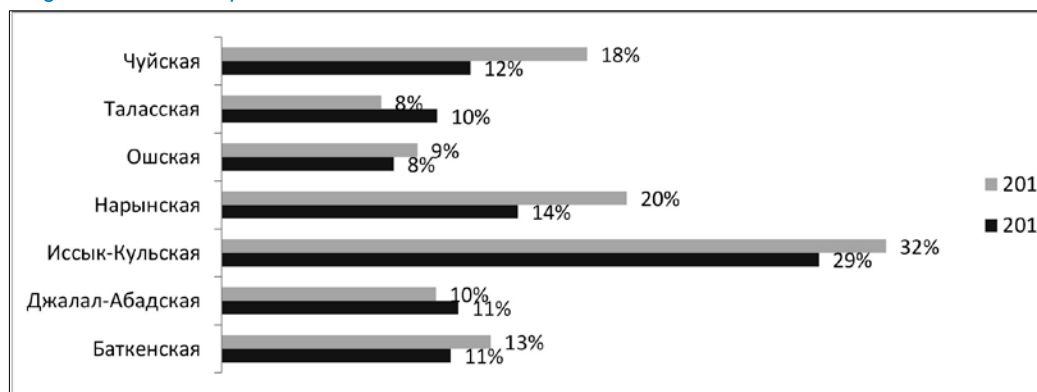
The share of women in the composition of city keneshes decreased from 24.6% to 20.5%. Although in general in urban keneshes the situation is more favorable than the average for the country and for the oblasts. According to the results of the 2016 elections, there is a city with the kenesh that has no women at all - the city of Kant.

Less than 10% of women in the kenesh of Jalal-Abad, Tash-Kumyr and Uzgen. Cities of Aidarken, Kemin, Nookat, Toktogul, Cholpon-Ata, Shopokov, Sulukta are approaching the generally accepted level of representation of 30%. Threshold of 30 percent was exceeded only in the city of Kok-Dzhangak, where the share of women in the kenesh was 38.1 percent or 8 deputies out of 21.

<sup>3</sup> Data about 2012 convocation were collected by sending inquiries to the cities, not all of them have responded.

<sup>4</sup> This section uses data from the publication "Local self-governance in the Kyrgyz Republic", 2015-2016. Informational and analytical annex to the "Municipalitet" magazine.

Diagram 2. Women representation in local keneshes



### GENDER pictures: observations by practitioners and researchers

The Development Policy Institute and other non-governmental organizations conduct many activities and research in rural

communities, which makes it possible to form a complex of observations in relation to the real situation with gender equality. The observations presented below do not purport to be a complete and exhaustive description of the situation, but they will help obtain a general impression of the real situation around women in the local community, how their right to participate in the decision-making process and access benefits and conditions for development is exercised.

### There are much fewer opportunities for the girls' development than for boys

In recent years, priorities of local communities have in many cases shifted from meeting the basic needs in infrastructure services (drinking water, garbage collection, repair of local roads) to solving various social issues, in particular, in education, culture and sports. In many municipalities sports grounds are being built, sports halls are opened, competitions are held. However, the vast majority of these sports facilities are designed for the development of sports that can be practiced, mostly by men. So, in municipalities football fields are being built, including clubs for wrestling, boxing, gym and so on. So it turns out that sports sections and facilities become accessible mainly for boys, adolescent men and male adults, but not for girls and women. There are no statistics on the gender balance of those using these sports facilities, but it is obvious that if there are tens of messages about the sports facilities for men, then the news about the opening of sports services for women is so rare that it is akin to sensation. Although, for the sake of justice, it is worth noting that they also happen. For example, in the village of Grozd in Chui oblast, a gym for women was opened, and there is girls' volleyball team in Masy village of Jalal-Abad oblast. But these are really rare exceptions.

#### Some facts about the share of women in local self-government:

- Political positions are filled by only 4 percent women;
- Among municipal employees with disabilities, women occupy only 14.5 percent of jobs;
- After the elections of 2016, the representation of women in rural local keneshes decreased by 2% and amounted to 13% of the total number of deputies;
- Share of women in the city keneshes decreased from 24.6% to 20.5%;
- After the elections of 2016, Kant city has kenesh with no women at all;
- Less than 10% of women are in the keneshes of Jalal-Abad, Tash-Kumyr and Uzgen.

### Women's right to work for the government is questioned

One young woman works in aiyl okmotu of one of the mountain regions. But her right to work is being questioned by society, so her husband must accompany her to work every day and sit next to her during the working day otherwise the reputation of the working married woman is threatened, only because she must talk with men in the context of her work duties.

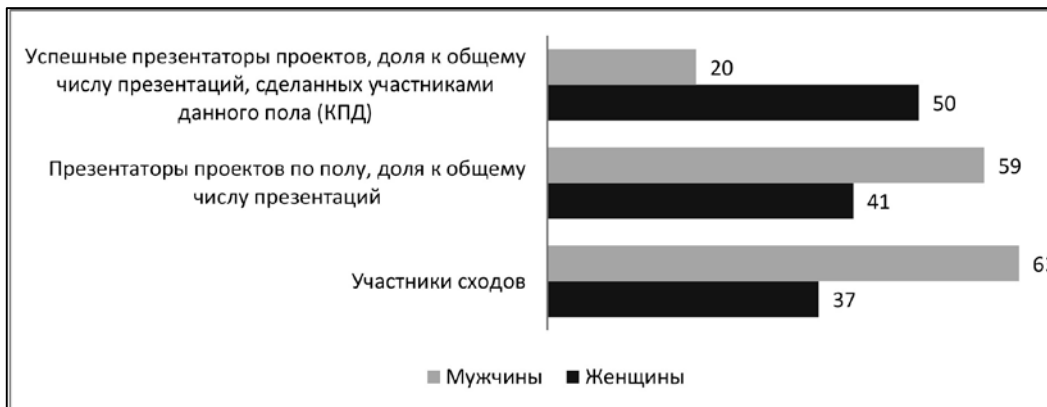
### Social stereotype of a "good girl" prevents the socialization of girls<sup>5</sup>

In the communities of Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts, there are very strict gender stereotypes regarding girls, their life style, preferences and career ambitions that create social pressure on girls and prevent them from realizing their dreams and goals. One of the most common stereotypes is the concept of a "good girl". This stereotype implies a set of behavioral patterns that the girl should follow at home and in the community. First of all, this stereotype applies to the appearance of the girl. "Good girl" wears modest clothes that do not distinguish

<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from the research produced by the Public Association "Youth of Osh" contracted by HELVETAS Intercooperation Association branch in the KR.

parts of the body; many “good girls” walk with their heads covered, wear hijab. “Good girl” does not communicate with the males; she skillfully performs all house chores, listens to her parents and does not have ambitious career plans. She is not involved in public events at school and community. According to the portrait, which was built during focus groups, the “good girl” agrees with choice of parents and adults; not later than 18 years old she gets married, has a family. This stereotype prevents the acquisition of higher or even secondary special education for girls.

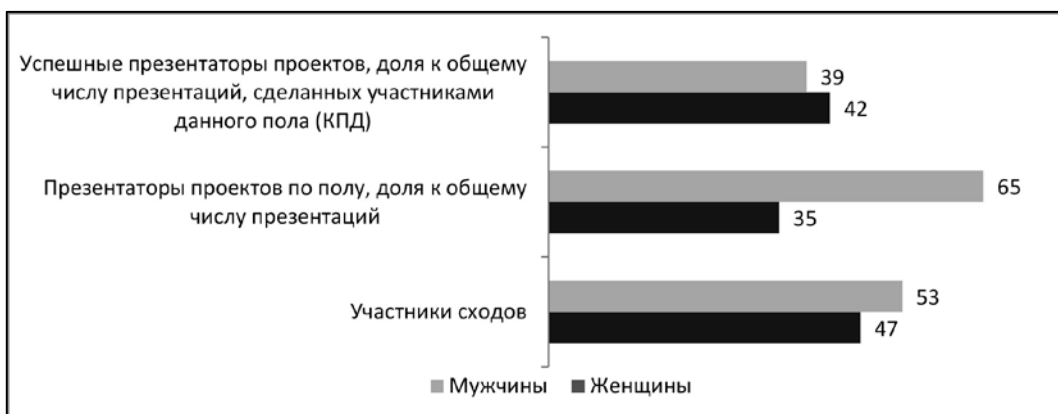
Diagram 3. Women’s efficiency in presenting the projects for investment, Chui oblast, 2017, in percentage



Results of the research indicate that girls have to perceive their role according to public opinion, even if they are inwardly against it. Girls share their dreams that they would like to be free, receive education, not wear

hijab, but they cannot independently resist public opinion in their communities. Avoidance of social norms and the stereotype of “good girl” lead to negative consequences - social exclusion and alienation.

Diagram 4. Women’s efficiency in presenting the projects for investment, Osh and Naryn oblasts, 2018, in percentage



**Is it possible to change the situation?**

The practice of working in local communities shows that if desired, the community can correct and equalize the gender balance by involving women in

the decision-making process. The experience of the VAP Project with local communities has shown how the level of women's participation in public discussions and the selection of priority projects for investment can grow. At the same time, the effectiveness of women's participation is often higher than that of men. In this case, it is about how successfully women defend proposed projects for investment, compared to men. So, in 2017 in Chui oblast among women who presented their projects for investment, community supported every second - 7 out of 14 projects proposed by women were supported. Among men, successful presenters turned out to be much smaller - only one in five, as the community supported only 4 out of 20 projects proposed by men. In 2018, in Osh and Naryn oblasts, share of successful female presenters was 42%, among men 39%. It should be noted that the voting in the Chui municipalities was held with prepared audiences - for two years the VAP Project actively collaborated with these municipalities, including gender equality issues. In Naryn and Osh oblasts, work has just launched, however, even here the share of successful presenters among women has turned out to be little, but higher. It is also important that in all areas of male participants there were much more male participants than women. And this means both men and women voted for the projects presented by women.