Key Findings - Final Evaluation of Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water Project

The project "Securing livelihoods for vulnerable women, men and children, through their participation in community governance of water resources, and enhanced ability to use water efficiently" ("Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water") was implemented from October 2015 to June 2018 by the UN Women Kyrgyz Republic Country Office and the Rural Advisory Services of Jalal-Abad.

Implemented in seven municipalities within three provinces of the Kyrgyz Republic, the project aimed to secure livelihoods for vulnerable women, men and children through efficient on-farm use of water and equitable community governance of water resources.

The project was part of the broader FinWaterWEI II programme implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with funding support from the Government of Finland

The evaluation was conducted in May and June of 2018, informed by a set of questions grouped under four rubrics of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation process included secondary data review and a primary data collection mission in Bishkek, Osh and three selected project sites encompassing a total of 153 (122 female/31 male) stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Relevance

The project worked to support key national development strategies and international commitments while remaining highly relevant to the needs of the target communities, including the most vulnerable beneficiaries. Project relevance was enhanced by capitalizing on UN Women's comparative advantage to make critical linkages between the policy and grassroots levels, thereby allowing the project to serve as a model for operationalizing national commitments to natural resource management, participatory local governance, gender equality and human rights attainment.

Effectiveness

The project delivered its planned results, and met or exceeded the intent of project indicators at the outcome and output level. Key factors found to have a positive impact on project performance included:

- A **strategic shift in thinking** in design away from a focus on scarcity of water to address the fair distribution of limited water resources.

- Sound **site selection process** identified communities that were ready and willing to make changes in how they functioned.

Effectiveness (cont'd)

- Focus on strengthening and building **greater connectivity between institutions**.

- A **hands-on approach to community development** coupled with a **step-by-step approach to learning** that built people's **confidence** and belief in themselves, leading to **empowerment**.

The project is succeeding in building the capacities of rights-holders, especially students and marginalized women, to advocate for and claim their rights to fair water allocation. The project was able to improve the capacities of duty-bearers to increase the transparency and accuracy of service delivery while ensuring a special focus on vulnerable women and men. The strategy of empowering youth and engaging LSGs to advocate for gender equality and human rights made a positive contribution to community stability.

Though other means of project monitoring were effective, the results framework failed to capture some of the projects most significant successes, particularly in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, and was of limited use in guiding project activities, particularly at the outcome level.

Efficiency

The project strategically allocated resources to achieve and exceed the planned outcomes. Project efficiency was enhanced by a design and implementation strategy that leveraged off of relevant models within the country. Outputs were delivered in a timely manner despite some delays in start-up activities and filling some staff positions in the first year of implementation.

The management structure supported project efficiency, with UN Women and RAS JA working effectively as a team to tackle challenges and deliver results under the guidance of the Coordination Council. High levels of staff competence and commitment, coupled with low turnover rates, further enhanced efficiency.
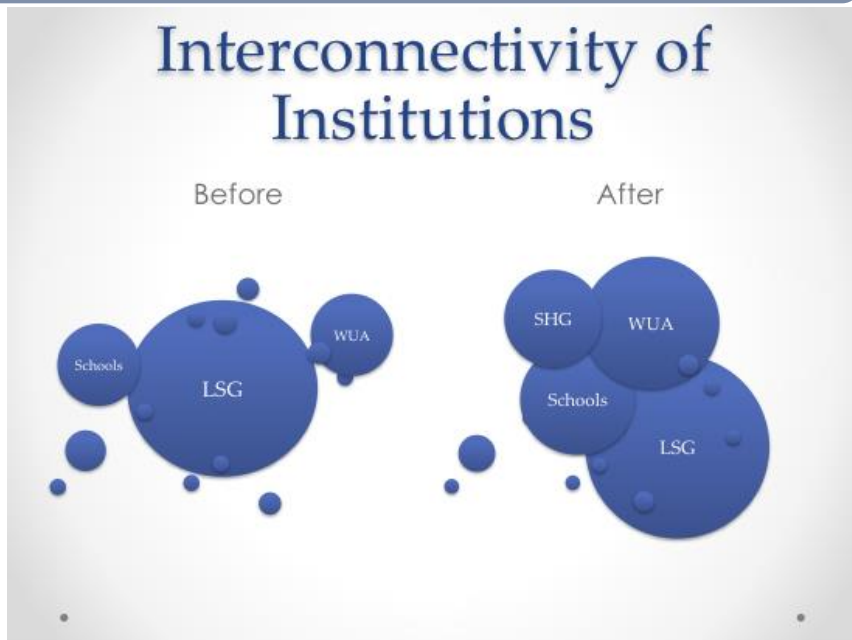
The water issue is the most critical issue in our area. We were not aware about management of the water system before. The project was very important and necessary. We had many disputes and conflicts before related to water, but now relations are very peaceful. **Woman in Asyl-Bash Municipality**

Now they (the people) understand that irrigation should be for all and should be rational and fair…before, it was as if the community was on one side of the river and the Water Users Association was on the other side. **Head of Municipality**

Women are active in social life because we participate in training and get new knowledge, and while we increase our knowledge, at the same time, we had the new irrigation supply and these changes are related to each other. With all these positive changes, we see how our lives have eased. **Woman in Khalmion Municipality**

Sustainability

Project benefits are likely to continue for a reasonably long period of time after the project close. Identified changes in behaviours should continue to impact positively on target municipalities into the future.

Stakeholders expanded the visibility of successful practices, and promoted replication. The MSF/MSPS and AIMAK components hold good promise for national up-scaling. Representatives from key national agencies displayed high degrees of ownership, and are likely to take forward relevant project aspects within their own institutions and spheres of expertise.

The project design successfully embedded the exit philosophy within operations to foster sustainability at the close of the project, leaving behind a critical mass of empowered change agents to continue without further external inputs. A smooth handover will require ensuring local control over key electronic resources (software, templates and materials) at project close.

Women in Water Governance - 2015

13

377

- Men
- Women
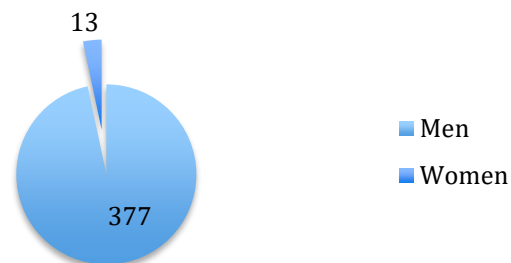
Women in Water Governance - 2018

124

345

- Men
- Women
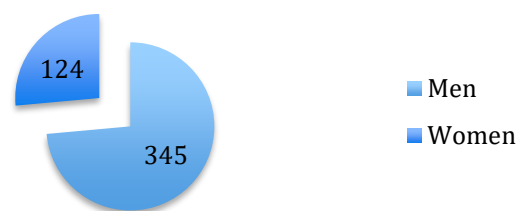
Recommendations

1 – Pilot New Efforts to Reach Challenging Communities/Institutions. Build on the effective model of community development to expand to 'challenge' communities/institutions that do not meet 'readiness' criteria.

2 – Engage Stakeholders Actively from the Start. Involve government and civil society stakeholders in field-level project oversight from the inception phase, including M&E design.

3 – Prioritize M&E. Dedicate the necessary human and financial resources up front; ensure outcome indicators are monitored to serve as guides; outsource key monitoring elements to independent external experts for reliability and impartiality.

4 – Upscale AIMAK. Create a formal 'sharing' mechanism to ensure communication between e-governance personnel remains open and productive while maintaining links with community level users.

5 – Further Support Self-Help Groups. Provide further individualized support to SHGs to assess work and sustainability plans, and identify resource needs and areas of support after project close.

6 – Facilitate Formal Handover of Electronic Resources. Provide community stakeholders electronic resources needed to continue operations in the post-project period.

7 – Build Capacities of RAS Network. Provide opportunities for RAS in target provinces to develop capacities through involvement and collaboration with RAS JA, thereby strengthening the national network.