

# COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN KYRGYZSTAN

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Country: **Kyrgyzstan** - Principal Organisation: **KYRGYZ JAYITY Association**

### ABSTRACT

To remedy the degradation and ineffective management of pastureland, the Law on Pastures, enacted in 2009, allowed the formation of Pasture Users' Unions (PUUs). The National Pasture Users' Association of Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz Jayity, has facilitated the formation of 454 PUUs. Using community-based pasture management systems, these

committees have enabled pasture users and local communities to participate and directly manage local areas, learn new approaches, and adopt best practices in rotational, effective, and planned pasture usage. As a result, land resources are better managed to prevent degradation.

### ILC COMMITMENTS



**DIVERSE  
TENURE SYSTEMS**



**LOCALLY MANAGED  
ECOSYSTEMS**



**EFFECTIVE ACTIONS AGAINST  
LAND GRABBING**

# COMPETENCIES

## AREAS

**COMMUNITIES,  
INDIGENOUS AND  
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS,  
AND RIGHTS  
RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS  
AND GENDER JUSTICE  
YOUTH  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
NATURAL DISASTERS**

## SKILLS

**USE OF MEDIA AND  
COMMUNICATION  
LAND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
LAND MONITORING, INDICATORS  
AND ALTERNATIVE REPORTING  
LEGAL ASSISTANCE, LEGAL EMPOWER-  
MENT AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE  
LAND POLICY AND MULTI-STAKE-  
HOLDER DIALOGUE  
MAPPING AND LAND REGISTRATION  
PROJECT DESIGN AND  
IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT  
ESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTHEN-  
ING OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING**

2

## BACKGROUND

Kyrgyzstan has suffered unmitigated degradation of its pasturelands, resulting in reduced productivity and low pastureland capacity. This is a result of ineffective pastureland management mechanisms. Government intervention became necessary for the protection of pastoralists' livelihoods, and in 2009 it passed the Law on Pastures. This sought to support pasture users in taking effective action to manage pasturelands, including the formation of PUUs. Kyrgyz Jayity has facilitated the formation

of 454 PUUs, each with an executive body, and a Jayit (Pasture) Committee in every region of Kyrgyzstan.

Community-based PUU members and committees, with the support of other stakeholders, have improved the condition of pasturelands, repaired livestock drive-ways, bridges, and other infrastructure, and contributed to the effective, efficient and equitable use of pasture resources.

## THE CHALLENGE

The main reasons for reform of pastureland management in Kyrgyzstan included the need to mitigate degradation caused by unsystematic and uncontrolled land use, the decline of pasture infrastructure, the pasture sector's ineffective three-level management system (aiyl okmotu, raion state administration and oblast state administration), the lack of legislation, and the absence of any official body to set rents for pastureland. Furthermore, some wealthy pastoralists have seized large areas of land and have begun to sub-let them. Kyrgyz Jayity addressed all these challenges through the development of an inclusive community-based pasture management

system, which combined participatory and action-oriented field research in all seven regions of the country.

The aims of the Law on Pastures and the creation of PUUs include the transfer of responsibility for and control of pastureland from the state to local self-governing bodies and a prohibition on leasing pasturelands. To achieve this, Kyrgyz Jayity and local communities have established and defined pasture boundaries, set fees for the use of pasturelands, and made provisions for access by foreign users and for other, non-grazing uses. The PUUs have developed pastureland resource use and management plans, which local governments have approved.

## OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

As a result of a long-term vision and collective effort, pasture users and local communities have an opportunity to directly manage local areas, learn new approaches, and employ best practices in rotational, effective, and planned usage of pastureland. New legislation and effective approaches have helped to prevent continued degradation of land resources.

The PUUs were mandated with the development of pastureland resource management plans, for which they required a better understanding of legislation, best practice in pastureland management systems, and mechanisms for rotational and sustainable land use practices. Kyrgyz Jayity had the requisite expertise to work with committees to develop these plans.

It also cooperated with other actors, including government, NGOs, independent experts, and international funds. The process was inclusive and community-driven, and utilised partners' expertise in different areas, such as ecology, animal husbandry science, and social sciences. The project also strengthened rural livelihoods and economies and promoted gender balance in access to pasturelands. The pastureland management plans were developed and implemented at local level, and systematically monitored and evaluated by Kyrgyz Jayity and state agencies.

## MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

Improvements to the legal framework have resulted in better public administration of pasturelands. Kyrgyz Jayity has worked with the Coordination Council on sustainable pasture management issues, which includes representatives of state structures, independent experts, representatives of international organisations, local NGOs, the Regional Association of Pasture Users (RAPP), and the chairmen of active pasture committees. The new legislative framework lays the foundation for a more inclusive and participatory management regime.

As a result, pastoral communities and other users have more equitable access to grazing resources. The resource management plans are premised on a recognition that the effective management of grazing lands depends on pasture users themselves. Users recognise the need for pasture committees and their responsibility for housing, communal services, and effective pasture planning and management. Women and youth are increasingly interested in pastoral activities because they now have improved and equitable access to pasturelands.

PUUs are essential to the effective management of pasturelands. Their administrative responsibilities include collecting fees for the use of pastures, managing their use and maintenance, maintaining infrastructure, and planning activities to combat degradation. All the monies collected have been dedicated to activities for effective management, the reduction of conflicts related to pastureland, and improving access for local communities. Activities undertaken by Kyrgyz Jayity include technical, methodological, and consulting assistance to the PUUs at different levels of governance.



# THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS



1

**Enactment of a law on pastures:** The 2009 Law on Pastures was a milestone in pasture management in the Kyrgyz Republic. It authorised community-led pastureland management through the formation of PUUs and created synergies between the work of executive bodies of pasture users, local government, farmers, veterinarians, and other experts. The law was formulated in a bottom-up manner: all active pasture users and local communities were involved, followed by several stages of community discussion and adjustment, taking into account the interests of all parties.

2

**Creating pasture users' unions:** PUUs were created by local communities, pasture users, shepherds, farmers, etc., living in a particular area. The participatory approach, based on the needs of communities, empowers them to manage their resources more effectively; encourages them to prioritise, plan, and implement proposed economic activities; helps communities organised on a voluntary basis to interact more effectively with local authorities, central government, and others to provide services; helps to build new relationships and public-private partnerships based on democratic governance; and targets communities and individuals to expand their livelihoods using market-oriented approaches.

3

**Preparing pasture usage plans:** The use of pastures is planned by the PUUs in accordance with their pastureland use and management plans. Access can be for grazing or for other specified purposes. Grazing is carried out on a pasture use permit basis, while access for other purposes is governed by individual contracts.

Community plans for the management and use of pastures include:

- maps marking boundaries, pasture conditions and quality, areas excluded from use, protected areas, cattle pasturelands, watering places, and other significant infrastructural facilities;
- optimum animal load;
- plans for the development and reconstruction of pasture infrastructure;
- annually updated management plans for pastureland use;
- plans for management and use of pasturelands for other purposes.

Medium-term plans for pastureland use and management include the improvement and rehabilitation of land and investment over a period of up to five years.

# THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

4

**Capacity building:** The pastureland management and organising capacity of communities have been enhanced by the participatory approaches adopted by Kyrgyz Jayity. Government agencies have also been given capacity to meet priority needs voiced by communities in a timely and transparent manner. The main tools used have been trainings and experiential exchange visits. Furthermore, pasture users and government agencies have helped to increase access to pasturelands for women and youth.

5

**Implementing activities:** All activities at local and national levels are aimed at providing sustainable livelihoods for pastoral communities and promoting more effective use and management of pastureland and animal health. Pasture users benefit directly through increased capacity to adapt to climate change and increased income for livestock producers. Activities prioritise adaptation and investment in infrastructure to improve community access to pasturelands and income. In addition, this has a positive impact on climate change mitigation and environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration, an improved water cycle, and expansion and conservation of local biodiversity.



## 3 THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

The government reacted swiftly to a legislative need, resulting in the adoption of the Law on Pastures. The law is based on the need for sustainable management of pasture resources, the general developmental needs of pastoralists, their livelihoods, and national economic growth. Kyrgyz Jayity and other pastureland actors were also swift to implement plans.

2

The process for drawing up pastureland resource management plans was led by the community, and community members thus supported and owned the process. This made it possible to create functional pasture committees that worked efficiently on their own and with government agencies.

3

The management plans have short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. These are based on traditional management approaches that prevent further deterioration of pasturelands and provide security of access for all community members.

6

## LESSONS LEARNED

Kyrgyz Jayity had to contend with a lack of understanding by both officials and the local population and resistance to new pasture management approaches. The most difficult task was to convince people that community-based pasture management was more effective, environmentally friendly, transparent, and fair

than other approaches. Over the years people have become accustomed to treating pasture resources in a commercial manner and not planning their grazing systems, which has led to degradation. It became apparent that it was necessary to conduct community workshops to educate people on community pasture management

systems before the project began, and to enhance support for the project at local and national levels. Kyrgyz Jayity was able to convince local communities to buy into the community pastureland management plans because they were based on traditional management approaches.

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