

Women entrepreneurship in natural resource management

Challenges and Opportunities for
MSMEs in the post COVID-19
socio-economic recovery



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17 December 2020

Introduction

Objectives of the Study



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- The State Committee of Industry, Energy and Subsoil Resources of the Kyrgyz Republic requested the UNECE to conduct a study on this topic.
- This study has been conducted with support from the UNECE Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC).
- The study provides a summary of policy imperatives and insights that will be useful for UNECE member States in their decision making.

Introduction

Scope of the study



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- assess role of women in natural resources sector, including SDG linkages
- analyse new paradigms for innovative resource management ecosystem vis-à-vis women participation
- assess role of women in MSME sector related to resource management – COVID-19 related challenges and opportunities
- identify opportunities in digitalized ecosystem, circular economy, and low-carbon industry
- identify challenges & contextual obstacles (educational choices, STEM curriculum, stereotyping, gender differences, etc.)
 - economic obstacles (access to markets, access to financing, etc.)
 - soft obstacles (access to information, networks, training, role models, etc.)
- case studies from selected countries in the UNECE region
- promoting women entrepreneurship in post-pandemic economic recovery

Methodology



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- The first phase of the research was desktop-based detailed review of:
 - national policies
 - government-led programmes
 - role of local and international institutions
 - financial mechanisms
 - industrial climate
 - academic literature
 - published news articles
 - market-based reports
- In the second phase, the report was reviewed by national and international experts.



Challenges for Women-led MSMEs

Natural Resources Management



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- access to **Markets** and **Finance**:
 - 70% of women-led SMEs are underfunded; shortfall projected to be up to \$285 billion (IFC)
 - women tend to have better loan repayment records than men (OECD, IFC)
 - as a result of societal norms and unconscious biases, male investors are less confident in investing in women-led businesses (IFC)
 - men are more likely to use bank loans than women
 - women tend to be more risk averse
- access to **Information**:
 - access to information is critical for MSMEs
 - the lack of information can create confusion in uncertain times
 - unclear messages / absence of communication from government severely disrupts planning
- access to **Learning** and **Skill Development**:
 - historic gender gap narrowing, but gender bias remains in some regions of the world
 - gender disparity exists in education at the tertiary level in many countries
 - policies targeting STEM gender gap in tertiary education should consider gender differences emerging earlier in life
 - reducing gap earlier at the family level most effective at impacting culturally embedded roles (OECD)



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic



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- prior to COVID-19 pandemic:
 - encouraging and supporting women entrepreneurship gaining traction across organizations and financial institutions
 - social perceptions, doubting capabilities of women in high-risk sectors, slowly evolving
- under COVID-19 crisis:
 - rate of private investment and raising capital shifted away from preferentially supporting women-led firms due to economic downturn
 - increased market volatility and economic slowdown have set back women entrepreneurs
- increased financial risk and social impact



Opportunities



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- cleaner and greener economic opportunities in natural resource management:
 - bioeconomy
 - circular economy
 - digitalization, big data, and AI
 - innovation, R&D
- promoting new opportunities through training and skill development

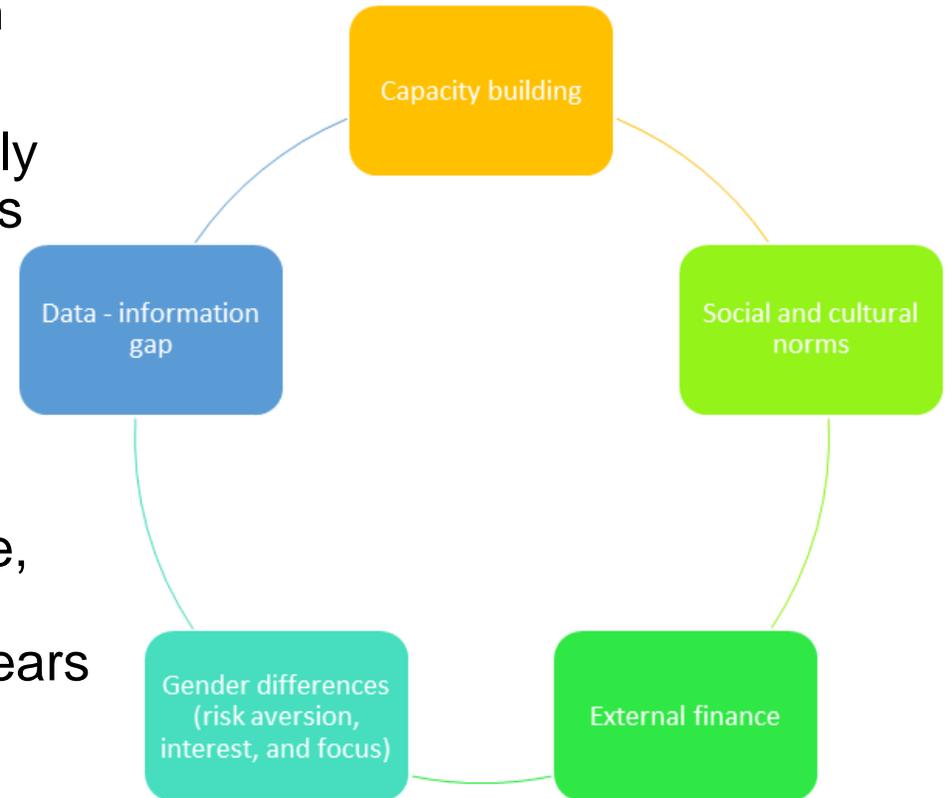


Conclusions



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- evident gender diversity problem in natural resources management
- COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously presents unprecedented challenges and unique opportunities to women-led MSMEs
- few policies to promote women entrepreneurship in NRM
- number of women studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics increased in recent years



Recommendations



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- Enabling business environment
- Pro-growth tax systems
- Labour market flexibility
- Challenge social and cultural stigma
- Information and data distribution system
- Disaster management strategy
- Non-discrimination
- Networking and mentoring
- Affordable childcare and healthcare
- Capacity development
- Green economic recovery
- Create a platform



Case studies



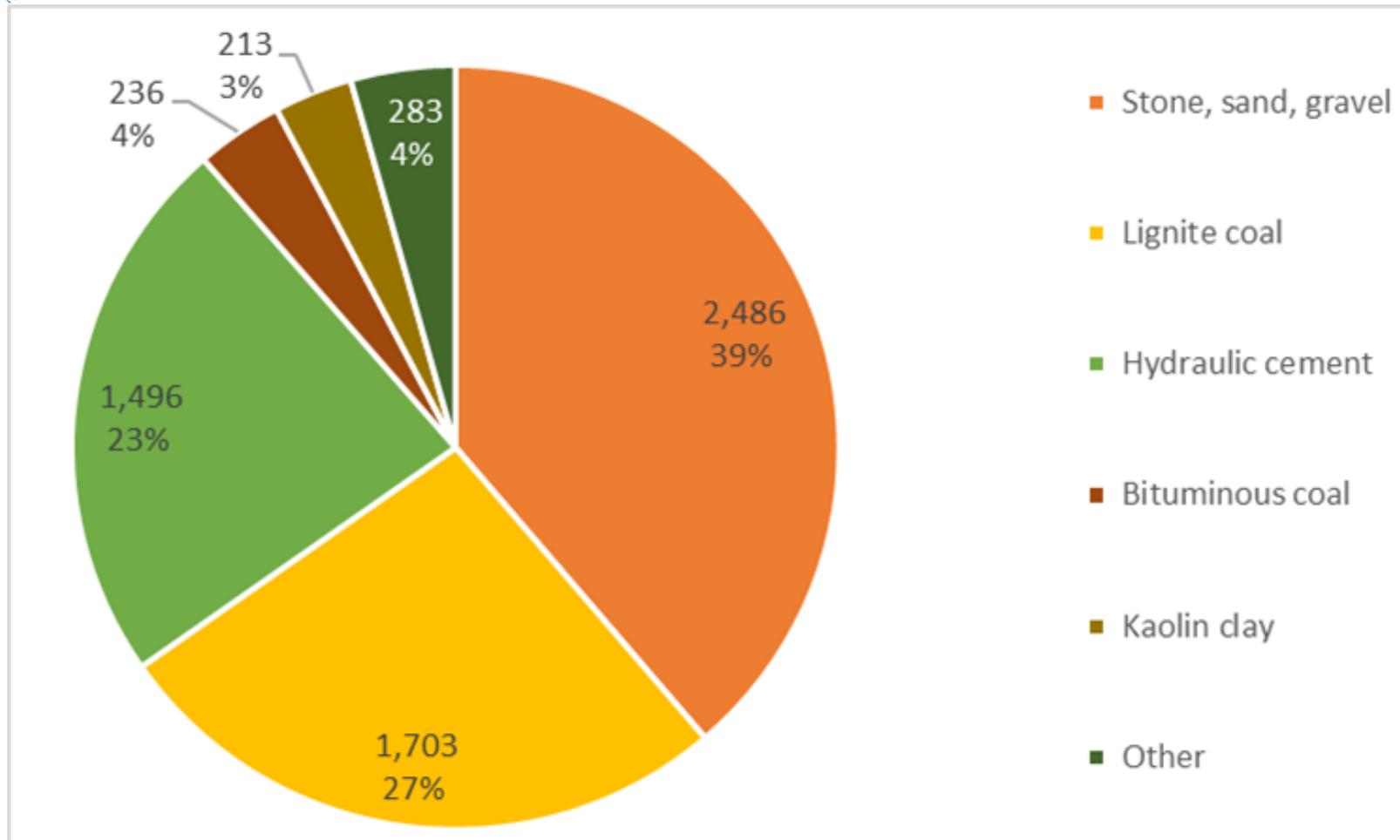
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- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan: Mineral Natural Resources Production



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Kyrgyzstan: COVID19 Impact



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- Kyrgyzstan has been severely affected by COVID-19, rapidly depleting public finances and paralyzing most of the country's economy.
- Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are largely being borne by women.
 - women in Kyrgyzstan spend 68% of their time performing unpaid care work
 - social restrictions and school closures have increased burden
 - families losing economic stability amidst food security challenges
 - recent months have witnessed an increase in domestic violence

Kyrgyzstan: Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs



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- women-led MSMEs in natural resources sector currently predominantly limited to agriculture
- digitalization and development of IT sector can create economic opportunities.
- proportion of female college graduates in STEM in Kyrgyzstan is 29%
 - suggests substantial opportunity to promote women entrepreneurship in scientific and technology industries – including IT

Kyrgyzstan: Recommendations



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- *Recommendation 1: The government should provide MSMEs access to information on financial tools, professional organizations, and institutions to promote collaboration and development between enterprises and supply chains.*
- *Recommendation 2: The national and local authorities should provide supporting financial mechanisms, education programmes, and gender awareness programmes to tackle the cultural and social stereotyping of women's role in society and to pave the way for changing the social mindset and lend support for women entrepreneurship.*
- *Recommendation 3: The government should consider investing in developing infrastructure and undertaking necessary reforms to digitalise the economy. This can create a much-needed opportunity for female participation in knowledge-based economic sectors beyond agriculture.*

Study available at:

<https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Women%20Entreprenurship.pdf>



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Thank you

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**Women entrepreneurship in natural resource management:
Challenges and opportunities for the micro-, small, and
medium enterprises (MSME) sector in the post-COVID-19
socio-economic recovery, 17 December 2020**

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Thank You



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17 December 2020



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