

Understanding the Impacts of Migration on Nutrition and Household Decision-Making in Khatlon Province, Tajikistan

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Tajikistan

- Mountainous, landlocked country in Central Asia
- Bordered by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, and Afghanistan
- Population: 7.4 million
- Independence in 1991 following breakup of Soviet Union
- Among poorest republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States
- Poverty headcount ratio: 54%

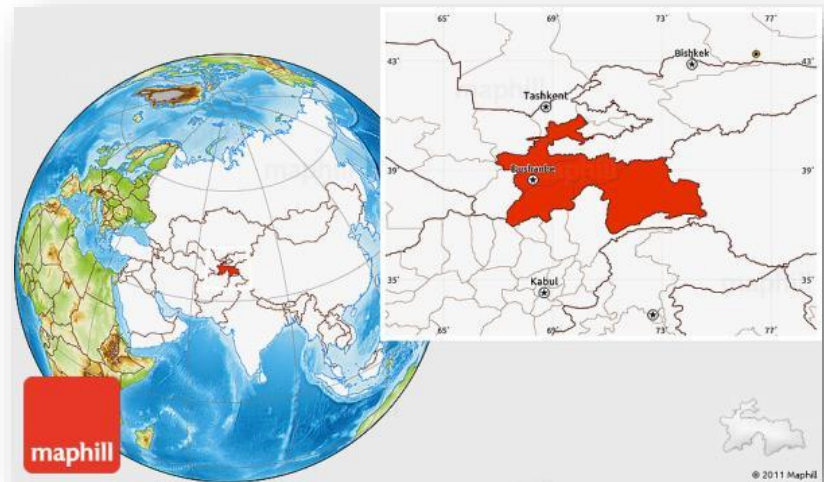


Figure 1. Map of Tajikistan

Source: CIA, 2017 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

Internship Project Background

- Internship Experience: “Household decision-making around food in rural Tajikistan”
- Feed the Future
 - United State’s initiative to combat global hunger and poverty
 - Programs work with various partners to generate economic growth, boost agricultural productivity, improve family nutrition, and increase resiliency within countries
 - In Tajikistan, Feed the Future activities are focused on the Zone of Influence (ZOI) – the Khatlon Province
- Feed the Future Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services (INGENAES) project
 - Focuses on assisting Feed the Future countries by developing and strengthening gender-sensitive and nutrition-responsive extension programs and activities

Extension Services in Tajikistan

Offer trainings on:

- Vegetable production
- Fruit production
- Dairy production
- Proper handling of pesticides
- Soil testing, weeding, and irrigation
- Greenhouse vegetable production
- Backyard and open field vegetable production
- Demonstration orchards
- Livestock forage production

Top photo: A local Tajik woman in Khatlon Province.
Bottom photo: WEEP group with TAWA and TAU students



Special Project Overview

- Themes emerged from qualitative research that I was particularly interested in: the impacts of gender dynamics and migration on household decision-making and nutrition
- Chose to expand on these topics for special project and write recommendations to **submit** to INGENAES



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Women participating in an extension training about composting in Khatlon Province

Gender in Tajikistan

- Very strict gender roles within families
- Women and girls in Tajikistan suffer from limited ability to leave the home, and may have contact only with family members and a few neighbors, which negatively impacts their psychological, social, and intellectual development
- Martial age raised to 18, not always followed
- Social norms constrain agency of women in all areas of life
- Patriarchal systems of decision-making, multigenerational households



Image Source: Gender Resources, Inc.

Source: UNICEF, & Ministry of Education, Republic of Tajikistan, 2007 http://wunrn.com/wp-content/uploads/090907_girls.pdf

Male Migration to Russia

- UNICEF describes as “one of the biggest socio-political issues in Tajikistan”
- Began after independence and outbreak of civil war in 1990s
- Few economic opportunities for employment, especially in rural areas
- 43% of GDP in 2013 from remittances
- Men usually in most productive years
- Women fulfilling roles men leave behind (feminization of agriculture)



Figure 2. Map of Tajikistan and Russia

Tajikistan

Source: UNICEF, 2007 https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/Web_Migration_Report_Eng_light.pdf;

World Bank, 2009 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/134951468119378299/pdf/561660WP0Box341jicSocAssessment1web.pdf>

Nutrition

- Three quarters of population lives in rural areas, spend 70-80% of income on food
- Only 24% of rural population is food secure, 22.2% of population is undernourished
- In the Feed the Future ZOI 30.7% of children under 5 years old are stunted and 14.1% are severely stunted



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Foods traditionally consumed in Tajikistan, including bread, yogurt, and plov (rice-based)

Source: WFP, 2017 <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/tajikistan>; USAID, 2015 <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/tajikistan>

Rationale and Need for Project

- All health and development interventions influenced by migration and gender
- Disparities in literature (some argue migration provides women with more agency to act as decision-makers, while others conclude that the absence of men does not lead to this outcome)
- Important for extension services targeted at improving nutrition outcomes to consider implications of migration on daily life and family structure, and take gender-sensitive approach



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Tajik children from Khatlon Province

Methods

- Used data from “Household decision-making around food in rural Tajikistan” formative study
- In Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews issues related to migration emerged organically from discussion, focus group questions were not designed to address migration specifically
- Questions asked were about issues related to decision-making around nutrition, perceptions of healthy diets, and gender dynamics



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A local Tajik woman from Khatlon Province

Focus groups

- 15 FGDs in ten villages in the ZOI in Khatlon Province
- Stratified by mothers, mothers-in-law, men
- Focus groups used to generate discussion
- Mothers and mothers-in-law separated, important due hierarchical nature of social relationships in Tajikistan



Mothers from one of the villages where focus groups were held

Key Informant Interviews

- Conducted using semi-structured questionnaires
- Stakeholders at international organizations in Dushanbe (UNICEF, World Health Organization, GIZ) and Khatlon Province (local health clinic)
- Provided richer understanding of the challenges faced by implementers of extension services

Participants

Recruited through USAID-funded Feed the Future Tajikistan Agriculture and Water Activity (TAWA) project

- Female Participants from USAID-funded Women's Entrepreneurship and Empowerment Project (WEEP) groups
- Male Participants from local Water User's Association



TAWA Home Economist conducting extension training about composting for a WEEP Group

Analysis

For special project:

- Coded and analyzed manually
- Thematic Framework Analysis method

Focus Group Transcript

Khuroson, Khatlon Province

Mothers: 10 participants

February 14th, 2017, 2:00 pm

Who typically buys food in your household? (Husband, mother in law, or wife)

Mainly women buy foods, because men in this village are in Russia. Even if they are here, even if the men are here, they tell us to purchase foods by ourselves.

Are they the only one who buys food?

Yes, we are the only people who buy foods and we also grow some crops in our garden. Regarding our foods like oil, flour, sugar, biscuits, we buy from the market.

The other products come from our garden like potatoes, other vegetables, and dairy products come from our garden and from our cattle.

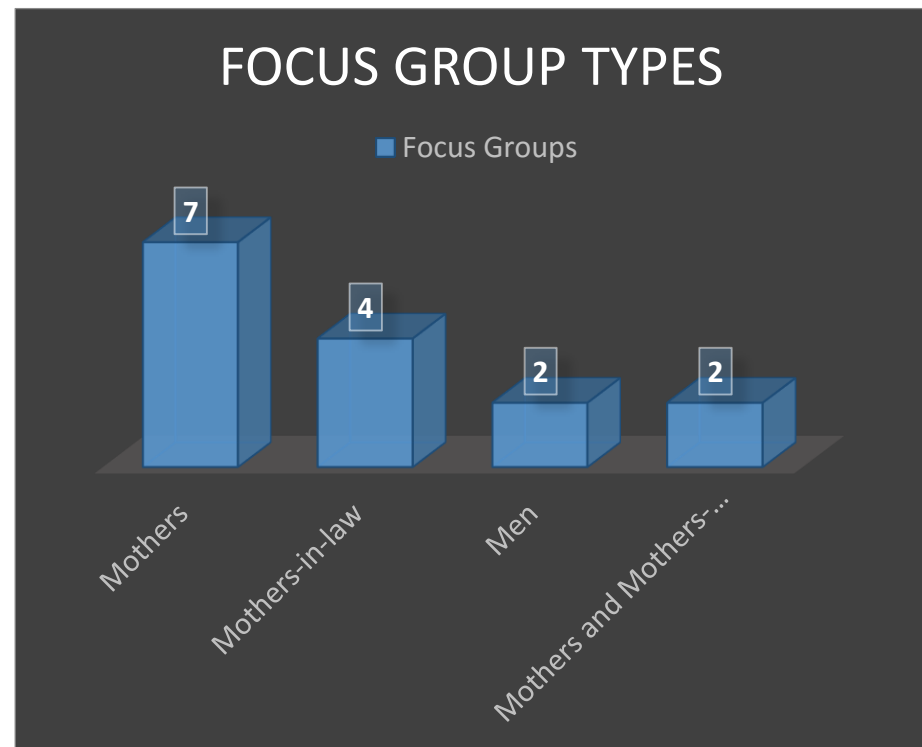
We also make salads, we can foods, we preserve foods, for example we make cabbage salad, we make carrot salad, tomato pasta and we don't buy these foods.

As we have lots of tomatoes we make different foods like tomato pasta and we preserve it.

Example of how themes were identified from FGD transcripts

Results

- Total of 132 participants
- Out of 15 focus groups:
 - 7 conducted with Mothers
 - 4 conducted with Mothers-in-law
 - 2 conducted with Men
 - 2 conducted with both Mothers and



Graph 1. Focus Group Participants

Theme: Household Roles

Sub-theme: Purchasing Food

- Typically thought of as male's responsibility
- Females took over when men were in Russia
- Mothers-in-law often took over as heads of household
- Not the same in every household



Image Source: Welt Hunger Hilfe

Women selling fruit in a local market in Tajikistan

Theme: Household Roles

Sub-theme: deciding what food to buy

- Person who cooked food (usually [young] mother) chose what foods to purchase most often
- Some Mothers-in-Law said they decide
- Men said it was responsibility of women
- Key informant said final decision of what children eat was made by child's mother



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Women selling bread in a market in Qurghonteppa, Khatlon Province

Theme: Household Roles

Sub-theme: change in food choices as a result of migration or death

- Women had chance to try new foods, go to market after husbands left for migration or passed away
- “We didn’t used to have cauliflower and for the last two years we have been eating cauliflower. We visited some place and we tried it there and we asked how we can get it. They said it was in the market and from there we started eating it, it’s very delicious... We didn’t used to go out, we used to stay at home so we didn’t know about these foods. When we go to the center of the city we see that there are other foods”

(Mother-in-law, FGD participant)



Vegetables being sold in Dushanbe market

Theme: Household Roles

Sub-theme: Preparing meals

- Mostly Mother's responsibility
- Mother-in-laws helped with small tasks like peeling vegetables, taking care of children
- Men cooked on very rare occasions (Women's day, weddings)
- Women felt pressure to make food taste good. "We try to make it tasty, to make it delicious so that everyone likes it. We are afraid before we cook, we are afraid of how it [the food] will become" (Mother, AGD participant)



Plov being cooked in Qurghonteppea, Khatlon Province

Theme: Money and Economic Concerns

Sub-theme: Barriers to a healthy diet

- Financial barriers: money, remittances from Russia
- Financial difficulty during winter (in both Tajikistan and Russia)

Solutions for a healthy diet

- Employment for women
- Skill development for women



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TAWA home economist showing researchers preserved peaches that families process and consume during the winter

Discussion

- Extension and advisory services are very important in the ZOI as a source of information and [social] support
- FGDs revealed roles in households not always fixed, changed based on migration
- Extension services should incorporate men in some way (challenging)
 - Teach women strategies for discussing topics with men
 - Instructional pamphlets tailored for men
 - Nutritional information (men and mothers-in-law frequently shopping for food)



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Woman in Khatlon Province showing researchers dried apricots

Discussion

- Challenge of behavior change and diet modification
- Traditional foods may be more highly prioritized by heads of household
- 24-hour food recall reveals diet repetitive, focused on staples and traditional foods
- Narrow window of what foods are acceptable to cook
- Engage person who does shopping or agricultural production in extension services, so they can understand reasoning behind diet modification
- Use behavior change theories (Health Belief Model)
- Explore employment opportunities in the ZOI (also challenging)
- Integrate nutrition related extension services into existing employment activities in the ZOI

Strengths and Limitations

- Recruiting men was a challenge
- Men included in FGDs may not be representative of males in Russia or households from which women were targeted for FGDs
- FGD questions did not ask specifically about migration



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Conclusions

- Meeting held with USAID in Tajikistan to share initial findings
- Additional work being done by UF faculty Drs. Wood and Kowalewska in Tajikistan
- Findings being shared with TAWA, THNA, INGENAES, USAID





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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

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