



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT
Institute of Public Policy and Administration



The Ninth Annual 'Life in Kyrgyzstan' Conference 2023





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The Ninth Annual ‘Life in Kyrgyzstan’ Conference 2023

*Promoting Research, Exchange, and Evidence Based Policy Making
in Central Asia*

12 – 13th October 2023, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

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Conference webpage: <https://lifeinkyrgyzstan.org/lik-conference-2023/>

The University of Central Asia’s (UCA) Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) was established in 2011 to promote systematic and in-depth research on issues related to the socio-economic development of Central Asia, and to explore policy alternatives.

IPPA is part of UCA’s Graduate School of Development. UCA was founded in 2000 as a private, not for profit, secular university through an International Treaty signed by the Presidents of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and His Highness the Aga Khan; ratified by their respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations. The Presidents are the Patrons of the University, and His Highness is the Chancellor. UCA’s mission is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities, by offering an internationally recognised standard of higher education, and enabling the peoples of the region to preserve their rich cultural heritage as assets for the future.

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ISSN 2617-9245

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Contents

Welcome	5
Introduction	7
Background of the ‘Life in Kyrgyzstan’	8
Parallel Sessions	9
Session 1.1. The World Bank Session: Findings from the Recent Research on Kyrgyzstan.....	9
Session 1.2. Entrepreneurship Dynamics in Central Asia and Social Impacts of Foreign Investments in Kyrgyzstan	10
Session 1.3. Recent Developments in Afghanistan.....	11
Expert Sessions	13
Session 1.4. The State of the Kyrgyz Economy: Expert Panel Discussion.....	13
Parallel Sessions	14
Session 1.5. The Changing Dynamics of Civil Society in Central Asia: How We’ve Come to Where We Are?	14
Session 1.6. Green Economy Modeling in Kyrgyzstan	16
Session 1.7. Air Pollution and its Health, Social and Economic Impacts in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan.....	17
Session 1.8. Perceptions and Attitudes on the War in Ukraine on Central Asia	19
Session 1.9. Representation of Women’s Art and Women’s Stories in Museums of Kyrgyzstan	21
Session 1.10. Agricultural Productivity, Food Inflation, Migration	22
Session 1.11. Human Mobility Feedback Loop: New Evidence from Kyrgyzstan	24
Session 1.12. Do Political Quotas Work? Women’s Political Participation in Kyrgyzstan	25
Parallel Sessions	27
Session 2.1. UNFPA Session: Demography and Population Dynamics	27
Plenary Session 1	27
Keynote Speech 1: Correlates of Life Satisfaction: A Human Capital Perspective	27
Session 2.2. Public Perceptions and Political Behavior.....	29
Session 2.3. Advances in Methods, Data, and Development Indicators	30
Plenary Session	32
Keynote Speech 2: Food Security in Mountains of Central Asia: Down to Upstream Challenges.....	32
Parallel Sessions	33
Session 2.5. Mercy Corps, WFP, WHO Session: Recent Interventions and Research on Health and Nutrition.....	33
Session 2.6. Impacts of Climate and Ecological Shocks on Living Standards and Human Health	34
Session 2.7. Intra-Household Distribution and Female Well-Being.....	35
Session 2.8. Mountains of Sorrow: the Role of Art in Creating the Historical Narrative of the 1916 Uprising.....	36
Session 2.9. Mitigation and Impacts of Climate Change.....	38
Session 2.10. Digital Transformation of Education in Kyrgyzstan: Distant Reality or Matter of Fact?.....	39
Annex I	41
Annex II	48
Annex III	49
Journal Articles Based on the Life in Kyrgyzstan Study	49
Organisers of the Conference	52
Partners	52

List of Acronyms

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AUCA	American University of Central Asia
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CHP	Combined Heat and Power station
CNN	Convolutional Neural Networks
DALY	Disability Adjusted Life Years
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSD	Graduate School of Development
IAMO	The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies
IDSC	International Data Service Center
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGZ	Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops
ISDC	International Security and Development Center in Berlin
IPPA	Institute of Public Policy and Administration
LiK	Life in Kyrgyzstan
L2KGZ	Listening to the Kyrgyz Republic
MSDSP	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme
MSRI	Mountain Societies Research Institute
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NIMAS	National Integrated Micronutrient and Anthropometric Survey
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
NUPI	Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM2.5	Fine particulate matter
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNDP	The UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	The UN Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
VAT	Value-added tax



Photo 1. Group photo, 12 October 2023



Photo 2. Opening remarks (from left to right) Baktybek Kainazarov, Head of Office, UNFPA; Naveed Hassan Naqvi, Country Manager, World Bank; Christopher Gerry, Dean, Graduate School of Development, UCA; Timothy O'Connor, President, AUCA; Tilman Brück, Professor, Humboldt University, IGZ, ISDC

Welcome

On behalf of the University of Central Asia's (UCA), Graduate School of Development (GSD) it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 9th Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) Conference, hosted in Bishkek and organised jointly by UCA, The Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops and the International Security and Development Center, with support from our partners American University of Central Asia, Mercy Corps, World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund.



As previously, the 9th LiK conference brings together a community of researchers, students, development practitioners, policy makers, civil society organizations and others. The breadth and range of the topics covered, across 75 presentations, is again breath-taking with papers on entrepreneurship, civil society, air pollution, the green economy, ecological shocks, migration and climate change, public attitudes and perceptions, women's political participation, Afghanistan and much more. In addition, we are privileged to host what promise to be two great keynote speeches on Life Satisfaction (Dr Michelle Brock, EBRD) and on Food Security (Dr Arnaud Caiserman, MSRI) as well as an important expert panel on the state of the Kyrgyz economy.

Of course, not all these papers and presentations draw on the LiK data, though many do. But they have in common that they speak to the lives of ordinary people and the challenges and opportunities they face as they navigate an increasingly complex world characterised by climate change, stagnating economies, natural disaster and conflict. And, in this, they serve to remind us of the light that research shines on the problems society confronts. It is that light which draws us together as scientists, practitioners and policy makers in a collective effort to make the world a better place for us and for those that follow us.

On behalf of all those that are able to enjoy the conference and to learn from the research presented and the discussions we will have, a huge thank you to the founder of the Life in Kyrgyzstan Study, Professor Tilman Brück, but also to all of those involved in bringing this conference to life. I know how hard you have worked – thank you!

I hope you will enjoy the conference, whether in-person or joining online, and that you will continue to work on the topics that really matter to people's lives.

Professor Christopher J Gerry
Dean, Graduate School of Development
University of Central Asia

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of Life in Kyrgyzstan,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 9th annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference! For 14 years now, I love coming to visit and work in Kyrgyzstan and with my Kyrgyz colleagues and friends. Kyrgyzstan is obviously a very beautiful country, rich in human and physical resources, and full of potential for future development. And the people in Kyrgyzstan have always welcomed me openly, with curiosity and great hospitality. It is good to be back in Bishkek once more!



Kyrgyzstan is a small but beautiful country at the heart of Central Asia, at the crossroads of powerful global trends, including climate change, growing inequalities, political radicalization, and the fluctuations of rising and falling globalisation. Kyrgyzstan is also in the crosshairs of brutal geopolitical competition, competing for attention from larger, more powerful neighbours and partners. There are challenges that all countries in the world face, but for smaller, open, and middle-income countries like Kyrgyzstan, these challenges are even harder to overcome.

Today and tomorrow, we want to draw on evidence from the long-term Life in Kyrgyzstan Study and related micro-level data sources, to understand how people in Kyrgyzstan have coped with these challenges. Our focus, for a change, will not be on the country at large, on balance of payments, or the budget deficit, or the national rate of inflation. Instead, we want to ask what livelihoods people pursue, how farmers navigate production for domestic and export markets, how people cope with drought, heat and floods, if people can feed themselves and their families adequately, how women and men relate to each other, how migration shapes family welfare, and what hopes and dreams people have for the future. Today and tomorrow, we want to place people at the centre of our analyses and discussions, finding out what happens in the country and how to make better policies that work for people.

The team from the Life in Kyrgyzstan Study have been collecting data from a large cohort of people since 2010, tracking their lives and livelihoods over many years. We think it needs high quality data to generate evidence on which effective policies can be built. And if policies sometimes fail, then that's ok, as long as we learn from that and make an effort to do better next time. People's lives are too important to leave to ideology - we strongly believe that people deserve scientifically founded evidence. And the annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conferences aim to provide exactly that.

I would like to thank all our partners for their support and encouragement, above all the University of Central Asia and its fantastic team which has helped to organise this event once more. Thank you to you all for being part of this journey - I wish us a successful conference!

Tilman Bruck

Principal Investigator, Life in Kyrgyzstan Study

Group Leader, Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, Germany

Professor, Humboldt-University of Berlin, Germany

Director, ISDC - International Security and Development Center, Germany

Introduction

On October 12-13, 2023, the Institute of Public Policy and Administration of the University of Central Asia (UCA), ISDC - International Security and Development Center in Berlin (Germany), the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, IGZ (Germany) in partnership with the World Bank, UNFPA, AUCA, Mercy Corps and Economics Fundamentals Initiative organized the ninth annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference.

This annual conference is organized annually to stimulate academic research exchange, to promote evidence-based policymaking and dialogue on developmental challenges between academia, government, development, and non-governmental institutions. This year conference covered a wide range of topics and also included expert sessions that were led by high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as by experts and academia from the civil society, Academy of Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, Asian Development Bank and universities including from Kyrgyz Agrarian University, California University, Washington University and various development agencies. The 2 keynote speeches were delivered by Dr Michelle Brock and by Dr Arnaud Caiserman. On the first day of the Conference Dr Michelle Brock from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development talked about Correlates of Life Satisfaction: A Human Capital Perspective. Their keynote speech on the second day of the conference was delivered by Dr Arnaud Caiserman from the Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia on the topic of Food Security in Mountains of Central Asia: Down to Upstream Challenges.

This year's ninth annual conference included various topics from entrepreneurship dynamics in Central Asia, recent developments in Afghanistan, civil society in Central Asia, green economy, air pollution, perceptions and attitudes on the war in Ukraine on Central Asia, women's representation, agriculture productivity, human mobility, political quotas, demography, public perceptions, development indicators, nutrition, climate change, historical narrative of the 1916 uprising, and digital transformation in Kyrgyzstan and a wider Central Asian region.

A two-day conference included six expert sessions, two plenary sessions with a keynote speaker on each of them, and fifteen sessions with panels of 3-4 speakers on each session.

This report starts with a background on the 'Life in Kyrgyzstan' study and continues according to the program of the Conference with each session.

A LiK Data User Workshop was held on 20th of October 2023 in the framework of the 9th Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference, to help new users of the data to learn more about the LiK Study developments, the construction of an individual panel file across waves, the specifics of using the variables that are not collected every wave and the impact the study has had since its inception in 2010.

Background of the 'Life in Kyrgyzstan'

The Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) Study is a research-based, open access, multi-topic longitudinal survey of households and individuals in Kyrgyzstan. It tracks the same 3,000 households and 8,000 individuals over time in all seven Kyrgyz regions (oblasts) and the two cities of Bishkek and Osh. The data are representative nationally and at the regional level (East, West, North, South). The survey interviews all adult household members about household demographics, assets, expenditure, migration, employment, agricultural markets, shocks, social networks, subjective well-being, and many other topics. Some of these topics are addressed in each wave while other topics are only addressed in selected waves. The survey was conducted in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, and 2019.

The LiK Study received funding from the Volkswagen Foundation for the first three waves (2010-2012) when it was hosted by the German Institute of Economic Research (DIW). In the period 2013-2015, Wave 4 was funded by DFID and IZA as a part of the Growth and Labour Market-Low Income Country (GLM-LIC) Programme. The consortium included the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) as the lead institution, UCA as the main Kyrgyz partner, and several research institutions from Asia, Europe and North America. Since then, the study has been hosted by the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops (IGZ) for Waves 5 and 6 and has received funding from UN-FAO, IFPRI, DFID, IZA and, internally, from IGZ and UCA.

The 'Life in Kyrgyzstan' survey data is publicly available. The data can be used by any interested party for non-for-profit research, policy analysis and teaching purposes.

The data for 2010-2013 and 2016 can be obtained from the International Data Service Center (IDSC) of the Institute for Labor Economics (idsc.iza.org/lik). The survey questionnaires and interviewer manuals can be downloaded on the project website at www.lifeinkyrgyzstan.org.

The LiK Study today is a global knowledge and research infrastructure, with panel dataset made available for public access. This has resulted in the wide use of the LiK Study for academic research. Scientific academic articles using the LiK data were published in various international peer-reviewed journals including *Agricultural Finance Review*, *American Political Science Review*, *Demography*, *Demographic Research*, *Economic Journal*, *Economics of Transition*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, *Journal of Development Studies*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *World Bank Research Observer*, and *World Development* and others.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

SESSION 1.1. The World Bank Session: Findings from the Recent Research on Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: **Aibek Ashirov** – World Bank

Findings from the Listening to the Kyrgyz Republic Survey

Aibek Ashirov – World Bank

Listening to the Kyrgyz Republic is a system to comprehensively monitor the views and well-being of a representative group of people. The L2KGZ survey provides high frequency data on social and economic wellbeing. It provides valuable insights into the impact of reforms or crises, with an impressively short lag, enabling policymakers to make informed decisions promptly. One of the survey's notable strengths is its inclusive approach, as it conducts interviews with a representative sample of respondents from all regions of the country, encompassing both rural and urban areas. This ensures a holistic perspective on the nation's social and economic dynamics. By blending traditional welfare monitoring techniques with polling-type questions, the L2KGZ survey bridges a critical gap in the policy generation process. It empowers policymakers with actionable information, enabling them to design effective strategies that address the needs and aspirations of the population.

Listening to the Kyrgyz Republic is led by the Poverty and Equity Global Practice of the World Bank under the Effective Governance for Economic Development (EGED) program, funded by FCDO.

Systematic Country Diagnostic Update – From Vulnerability to Resilience

Gohar Gyulumyan – World Bank



Photo 3. The World Bank session

Systematic Country Diagnostic Update is conducted once in five years in WB operating countries, and it informs WB partnership framework. First diagnostic was conducted in Kyrgyzstan in 2017 and published in 2018. Last year WB found that the main diagnostic was relevant and conducted

just an update. The main question is assessing the country's performance in achieving 'twin goals'. 'Twin goals' are poverty reduction and achieving prosperity. In understanding the drivers of barriers to 'twin goals' we are doing full diagnostic of growth performance, governance context, climate vulnerability, investment climate, human capital challenges and so on. The author provided context of Kyrgyz economy's growth and poverty performance over the last two decades; presented some of the main challenges in key areas such as business environment, public service delivery, human capital development, environmental and climate challenge. The author summarized the key findings of the diagnostics and suggested development pathways that draw from the diagnostics.

Don't be Fooled: a Few Thoughts on Development Economics and E-commerce

Chiyu Niu – *World Bank*

The author presents his thoughts on the three fools in economic development. First, rich countries have been poor and their history of transition provides more lessons than there are present. Second, free trade is not always good, unless you are trading with comparable intellectual inputs or use against to invest in education and skills. Third, rich countries did not start with perfect institutions. So weak institutions could also start economic growth which will force institutions to grow as well. Finally, by F. List: "It is a very common clever device that when anyone has attained the summit of greatness, he kicks away the ladder by which he has climbed up, in order to deprive others of the means of climbing up after him."

SESSION 1.2. Entrepreneurship Dynamics in Central Asia and Social Impacts of Foreign Investments in Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Damir Esenaliev – IGZ/ISDC

Entrepreneurship Across Central Asia – A Look Back and Some Early Insights from an Ongoing Research in Applied Economic Anthropology

Philipp Schroeder – *Nazarbayev University*

Across Central Asia, and the post-Soviet space in general, economic anthropologists have so far primarily researched barter and trade. More specifically, the focus was put on small-scale shuttle or bazaar merchants and their stake in the cross-border distribution of low-tier, China-made goods. By contrast, entrepreneurship in the sense of manufacturing or the service industry began to attract some modest attention only recently. The first part of author's contribution briefly recap the evolution of Eurasian capitalism in the past three decades. The author mostly draw on his previous studies on middlemen, agricultural and other entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan, Russia and China to illustrate how changes towards more economic diversification, professionalization and formalization became associated with larger-scale initiatives at transregional integration. The second part presented early insights from an ongoing research project that investigates contemporary business-making in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with an ethnographic and mixed methods-approach. At the core of this project's academic component is to capture and compare the ways in which entrepreneurs of these neighboring 'econo-scapes' navigate opportunities and obstacles, strategize and trial, succeed and fail. Not less relevant, however, will be to reflect on the project's applied component, whose ambition it is to translate scientific evidence into actionable recommendations for economic practitioners and policymakers.

Salient Cleavages: The Effect of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Social Cohesion and Institutional Trust in Kyrgyzstan

Marika Miner – *University of California (online)*, **Pengshan Pan** – *University of Pittsburgh*

Globalization and international investment have transformed local economies. Host countries often benefit from foreign investment, enjoying increased incomes and improved infrastructure. However,

large-scale development projects also impact local social and political dynamics. This project investigates the effects of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on social cohesion and political trust in Kyrgyzstan. Authors implement a difference-in-difference design that leverages geolocated BRI project sites and multiple waves of the Life in Kyrgyzstan panel survey to investigate how proximity to BRI project sites has impacted local identity and intergroup attitudes. They pair this analysis with data on individual behavior to assess how shifting social dynamics impact civic trust and participation. The results indicate that in addition to improving local economic conditions, exposure to BRI sites reorders individual identity, reducing the salience of ethnicity and citizenship, and heightens negative attitudes towards other ethnic groups. Proximity to BRI sites also reduces trust in political institutions and participation in civic life.

Taken together, these findings indicate that foreign investment can have dramatic implications for local social and political outcomes.

Golden Promises and Divided Communities: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan Kumtor Mine

Pengshan Pan – *University of Pittsburgh*; **Marika Miner** – *University of California*

The impact of extensive natural resource extraction on worker welfare and the politics of host countries remains an ongoing topic of debate. This paper contributes to the issue by examining Kyrgyzstan's largest gold mine, Kumtor, operated by the Canadian Company Centerra, which accounted for 12.5% of the country's GDP in 2020. A key finding is that when the central government unevenly distributes revenue derived from vast natural resources, it tends to breed segregation between the mining community, which benefits directly, and the rest of the local residents if they are not adequately compensated. Utilizing data from the Kyrgyzstan household panel surveys conducted between 2010 and 2019, the study reveals that Kumtor provides superior social benefits solely to workers associated with the mine. This selective welfare provision exacerbates the economic grievances of workers in non-mining sectors and stimulates social division.

Furthermore, the study found that larger corporate earnings consequently erode trust in local community leaders among mining workers. The paper underscores the issue of local governance in the context of a large-scale firm operating under weak state fiscal institutions.

SESSION 1.3. Recent Developments in Afghanistan

Moderator: Marzhan Akimbaeva – University of Central Asia

Political Change and Poverty among Rural Households in Afghanistan: Evidence from Marmul District, Balkh Province

Ahmad Barlas – *University of Greifswald (online)*

It has been over eighteen months since the Taliban resumed leadership in Afghanistan and people are struggling with severe issues including insecurity, human rights violations, unemployment, poverty and hunger. This research focuses on poverty status among rural households before and after the political change, using the Marmul district of Balkh province as a case study. Specifically, this study emphasizes on what are the differences in poverty status among rural households before and after the Taliban? The primary data was collected in two phases. In the first phase, 280 households were surveyed in June 2021 (before the collapse) in Marmul district with assistance of an administered questionnaire.

The second phase was conducted in January 2022, and the author attempted to survey the same households after the fall, but only 100 households took part in our study. Poverty headcounts, poverty gap and poverty squared gap were estimated based on USD 1 per day (poverty line) to analyze

the status of poverty in the study area. The findings show that the average household monthly income declined by 30%, from AFG 12,807 to AFG 8,930.

Poverty indexes indicate that the severity of poverty increased in addition to the number of people living below the poverty line. For instance, poverty headcount and poverty gap increased from 0.77 and 0.35 to 0.88 and 0.51 respectively. This implies that people are becoming poorer and losing their economic power daily. In addition, the logit coefficients exposed that gender and employment status of household head, number of males employed, literacy ratio, remittances, access to banking service and land size are negative correlated with poverty. While the number of males and females (household size) increase the possibility of becoming poor.

The Impact of Women's Education and Employment on Their Experience of Domestic Violence in Afghanistan

Atefa Bahr – *American University of Central Asia*

Domestic violence against women is a widespread global problem. Studies show that 1 in every 3 women worldwide experience domestic violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is particularly more prevalent in developing countries such as Afghanistan. Statistics show that 87% of women in Afghanistan have experienced domestic violence at least once in their life (UN, 2015). In addition to risking women's mental and physical health, this problem has a significant economic impact.

Domestic violence leads to a loss in women's labor productivity and increases the cost incurred to sectors such as health, justice, police, and social services involved in assisting victims. Women's empowerment through education and employment is considered as one of the strategies to combat this problem. Thus, this research paper aims to study how women's education and labor force participation affect their experience of domestic violence in Afghanistan. This question is addressed through a mixed methods approach.

For the quantitative approach, the Demographic Health Survey's cross-sectional dataset for 2015 is analyzed through Logistic Regression and Propensity Score Matching Methods. For the qualitative methodology, five semi-structured, in-depth interviews are analyzed through a thematic analysis approach.

The findings of both approaches suggest that education reduces the burden of domestic violence on women. However, the quantitative methodology reveals that employment increases the experience of domestic violence among Afghan women. The qualitative part explains this positive correlation between employment and domestic violence, indicating that beyond measurement factors also influence women's employment opportunities, their bargaining power in the household, and consequently, their experience of domestic violence

The Short-run Effects of Active Labour market Policies of Germany on the Employment of Syrian and Afghan Refugees

Zainab Adib – *American University of Central Asia (online)*

This paper examines the effectiveness of Germany's Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) on the labour force participation of refugees, with a particular focus on comparing their impact on two distinct refugee groups - Syrians and Afghans. The data used, «Refugees in Germany,» consists of survey information from 2018 and 2020, primarily for refugees who entered Germany in 2015 or later. This study considers four types of ALMPs: short-term training programs, long-term training programs, employment subsidy, and job search assistance. By employing a binary choice model with random effects to correct for unobserved heterogeneity, the research finds that short-term programs, such as

language training, integration courses, job training, skill assessment, and short-term internships, are the most effective programs in the short run. In contrast, long-term programs exhibit higher lock-in effects, negatively affecting employment prospects in the short run. Subsidized employment proves ineffective, while job search assistance is found to decrease employment prospects in the short run, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. By using Propensity Score Matching, the result confirms the effectiveness of the ALMPs on the employment of refugees in the short-run.

EXPERT SESSIONS

SESSION 1.4. The State of the Kyrgyz Economy: Expert Panel Discussion

Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev – University of Central Asia

Challenges of Sustaining Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan

Tchoro Seyitov – *Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Deputy Minister*

An outline of Kyrgyzstan's present economic situation for 2022-2023 was provided. The major emphasis of the address was government policy initiatives aimed at aiding the country's economic growth. A policy outline was provided to compensate for the country's existing development problems with the objective of sustainable development. The Deputy Minister's speech sparked a heated debate, with a thorough examination of various Kyrgyz state policy actions. All of the questions were adequately answered.

Monetary and Financial Policy of Kyrgyz state in 2021-2022

Azat Kozubekov – *National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic*

The work of the Kyrgyz National Bank to conduct monetary policy in 2022-2023 was outlined to stabilize inflation processes and the country's financial system. Explanations were presented on the issues that the regulator effectively dealt with in the past and this year, despite turbulent exogenous shocks. In response to comments about the regulator's limited impact on economic growth, specifically the high discount rate on economic development, a response was given about the need to fulfill the National Bank's mandate to stabilize inflation in the country and the stability of the national currency.

Economic Growth and Investment Environment in the Dynamic External Environment

Stanislav Karpovich – *Businessman & Board Member at Keremet Bank*

The current situation in the country was discussed from the perspective of the financial industry and private enterprise. Despite the negative effects of the crisis, economic activity in the private and financial sectors has grown. Private enterprises actively participated in boosting international commercial activities toward Russia. Furthermore, the banking industry was able to greatly enhance its income via active work, both through increased operational activity and through foreign currency transactions. The business representative expressed optimism that the crisis in this case helped to expand prospects in the country's financial industry and private enterprise.

Effects of the War in Ukraine on Migration to Central Asia and Agro-food Systems in Kyrgyzstan

Kanat Tilekeyev – *University of Central Asia, Senior Research Fellow*

The university's activities describe efforts to study the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on Central Asian nations. An analysis of shifting migratory flows between Russia and Central Asian nations was provided, with an emphasis on the growth in Russian citizen immigration. A profile of Russians who have arrived in the region has been offered. Separately, the impact of the conflict on agri-food systems was assessed, leading to a rise in agricultural input and food costs. As a result, despite improved

economic development rates, the expansion of poverty and extreme poverty in Kyrgyzstan in 2022 stabilized at the level of 2021. The nutrition of the first two quintiles in 2022 worsened both in comparison with the pre-pandemic period and with 2021.



Photo 4. Expert panel discussion on *The State of the Kyrgyz Economy*

PARALLEL SESSIONS

SESSION 1.5. The Changing Dynamics of Civil Society in Central Asia: How We've Come to Where We Are?

Moderator: Medet Tiulegenov – University of Central Asia

It has been three decades since civil society in the newly independent states in Central Asia has been developing in various forms. There have been variety of studies of some thematic aspects of development of this sector as well as studies of particular turbulent moments which affected its development. Yet there are rare moments when dynamics of civil society development is captured from a macro-historic perspective. There is growing need among practitioners as well as among scholars to summarize lessons learned about civil society in the region and to assess how the past dynamics brought us where we are and what may then follow. This proposed panel aims to contribute to responding for this need.

The proposed panel brings together presentations which look into different aspects of development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These presentations complement each other with the common aim to search for major factors which can be viewed as determinants pathways which brought civil society in these two countries to where they are now. The systematic literature review looks into the scholarly approaches to study and understand conceptualization of civil society in Tajikistan, whereas analysis of public attitudes towards the sector and review of the story of the shrinking space in Kyrgyzstan helps to understand the changing environment. Cases of gender and human rights advocacy also shed light on the complex challenges which civil society in the region has been and is still facing.

Navigating Complexity: Understanding Challenges and Trends in Kyrgyzstan's Civil Society

Aizharkyn Kozhobekova – *University of Central Asia (online)*

This paper examines the intricate landscape of civil society in Kyrgyzstan during a period of adversity, shedding light on the multifaceted array of internal and external challenges confronted by civil society organizations. Focusing specifically on gender-related concerns and human rights advocacy, the study delves into three primary dimensions. Firstly, it endeavors to comprehend the comprehensive concept of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by analyzing the encompassing criteria associated with them. Secondly, it traces the evolution of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan over the course of three decades since its attainment of independence. Lastly, it identifies and scrutinizes the pivotal challenges and prevailing trends afflicting this sector amidst the current social, political, and economic circumstances.

Civil Society in Tajikistan: Systematic Literature Review

Nargis Kuchakshoeva – *University of Central Asia (online)*

The civil society sector has been insignificantly researched in Tajikistan. Most studies on this topic have been undertaken in Central Asia but almost no specific academic research was conducted previously to identify and measure the contribution of civil society to the national development of Tajikistan. A systematic review of the current state of the literature on civil society in Tajikistan was critical to conduct. The study aimed to 1) identify previous studies on civil society in Tajikistan; 2) examine various forms of self-organization in the associational life of Tajiks; 3) assess the practices of civil society actors, including various public organizations such as NGOs, CSOs, nonprofit organizations, that are focused on solving diverse issues in the community. Four electronic databases and few international organizations' websites) were searched across last three decades to identify studies that reported research data on civil society in Tajikistan. A total of 17 studies were included in this review. The reviewed sources supported the general belief that the civil society concept is in constant evolution. A transparent limitation of the study is the quantity and quality of the research available on civil society in Tajikistan. Future research studies need to look at the role of civil society in addressing priority issues such as social equality, improved education and healthcare, employment development, and climate change action. Also, the women's role in the civil society sector, their participation and decision-making at the local and national levels is recommended to research. Priority is given to future research, which will identify best practices of relation-building and partnership among the civil society sector, government, and donors.

Searching for Tectonic Shifts: Changing Attitudes of Kyrgyzstan's Citizens Towards Citizenship, Human Rights and Civil Society

Medet Tiulegenov – *University of Central Asia*

There have been a number of various surveys and other studies of public attitudes towards various aspects of Kyrgyzstan's civic space and civic activities. How people view citizenship and civic engagement, human rights, civil society in its broad conception have been occasionally captured in various studies – in the regular Gallup polls, waves of World Value Survey, youth surveys by Ebert foundation just to name few. Not all of the studies allow to have valid assessment of temporal changes of attitudes and in many cases an analysis can be done cross-sectionally on variety attributes of civic space and activities. With all these caveats this paper looks into the gradually changing attitudinal landscape with the aim to understand whether current upheavals for civil society development have been path dependent on these trends. The main question is not only what has or has not changed during the last two or more decades, but also what the main determinants of particular attitudes and predisposition towards citizenship, rights and civil society are.

Shrinking Civic Space and Challenges for the Kyrgyzstan's NGO Sector

Erkina Ubysheva – *Smart Zharan Association*

The NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan has been for long considered as one of the most vibrant in the post-soviet space. It grew up quickly in the 1990s due to variety of initiatives of citizens and with the support of the external donors. The environment in overall was enabling in many regards and this facilitated the growth of the sector and its ability to function. However, during the last fifteen years there have been repeated attempts to regulate space where NGOs operate and this space was slowly shrinking. The paper looks into the history of the sector and policies of the governments in the past and present toward NGOs. Many of them were creating challenges to the sector and NGOs were finding themselves in increasingly more difficult environments. The paper concludes with the recommendations regarding the current situation with rapidly shrinking space which has been unfolding during the last two years.

SESSION 1.6. Green Economy Modeling in Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Tatiana Vedeneva – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development

Debt Swap on Green Initiatives

Almaz Azimov – *Kyrgyz Japan Center*; **Aigul Kulmatova** – *National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic*; **Tatiana Vedeneva** – *Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development*

For the rapid implementation of green measures by the households, there should be good financing source - green loans. However, green loans are issued by banks against collateral and at very high interest rates, which is often an obstacle for households and businesses. It is assumed that the reduction in funding rates will lead to an improvement in the impact of loans on the country's economy.

As a result of the analysis, it can be concluded that a decrease in interest rates on green loans will have a positive effect on the country's GDP and employment, and that the state can afford to reduce the average rate on green loans by 12% down to 10% per annum in the time until 2030. It is recommended to use the mechanism of debt swap, with preliminary analysis, to reduce interest rates on green loans to 10% per annum in the time period until 2030. The created model can be used to consider additional scenarios with modified assumptions, to optimize the developed «green» public policy measures.

Reducing Coal Consumption for Heating Private Houses

Darika Sulaimanova – *DEKA Group*; **Tatiana Vedeneva** – *Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development*; **Nurila Ibraeva** – *Kyrgyz National Agrarian University*

The population of the Kyrgyz Republic uses 3 types of energy to provide heat in their homes (electricity, gas and coal), in the heating season of 2022, the electricity deficit is estimated at 2.4 billion kilowatt-hours. Given that the level of gasification in the Kyrgyz Republic reaches only 38%, the shortage of electricity and its relative high cost, households have to use a cheaper and more affordable type of energy resource for heating - coal, which has high impact on air quality.

Air pollution negatively affects human health and the sustainability of ecosystems. Moreover, Kyrgyz doctors signal those respiratory diseases, especially children's diseases, are progressing. In this regard, it is advisable to find a solution to reduce the use of coal by the population, without increasing the load on electricity.

As a result of the analysis, it can be concluded that the introduction of all the considered measures, except for a simple transition to heating with gas and electricity, will have a positive effect on the country's GDP, and the introduction of heat pumps and solar systems will bring the greatest increase in GDP and employment in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Comparison of Electricity Generation Options

Sonunbubu Sayakova – National Academy of Sciences; **Saikal Esenamanova** – Kyrgyz Economic University; **Elmira Djaparova** – National Academy of Sciences; **Tatiana Vedeneva** – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development

With the increasing population and economy, there is consumption increase in electricity too. And it is necessary to increase generating capacities and taking into account the current situation in the field of ecology and climate change issues, it is necessary to take into account the possibilities of renewable energy sources in Kyrgyzstan.

The following power generation options are being considered: construction of a coal station to generate electricity; construction of hydroelectric power plants; construction atomic power plants; construction wind generators; construction solar power stations; construction gas power stations; construction biogas power stations; construction geothermal power plants.

According to the modeling results, it is preferable for the Kyrgyz Republic to build large and small hydroelectric power plants, which will make it possible to balance the energy system to add the solar stations recommended by the scenarios. Of the scenarios considered, the best macroeconomic outcomes are achieved under a scenario with a generating grid consisting of 82% large hydro, 10% coal-fired, 5% small hydro, 3% large solar PV. It is recommended to pay closer attention to the potential of geothermal power plants, since, at a given cost of electricity, they are among the most profitable.

Comparison of Options to Support the Transition to Green Transport (Public and Private)

Saikal Esenamanova – Kyrgyz Economic University; **Azyk Orozonova** – Kyrgyz National University; **Tatiana Vedeneva** – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development

The transport sector in Bishkek continues to be one of the main sources of air and atmosphere pollution. In the city of Bishkek, the number of vehicles is more than 500 thousand units, which are mainly represented by second-hand units.

In accordance with the presented model, it is predicted that under the BAU “business as usual” baseline scenario, by 2050, with an increase in the population in the city of Bishkek, the number of private transport will also increase, which will lead to such problems as an increase in emissions into the atmosphere, with social consequences; an increase in traffic jams and increase in travel time; an increase in the number of road accidents and increased government spending on roads, health care, and reduced air pollution.

Based on the modeling results, it is generally recommended to carry out government interventions to gradually replace obsolete public transport and increase the number of new environmentally friendly and economical types of public transport - trolleybuses and gas buses.

SESSION 1.7. Air Pollution and its Health, Social and Economic Impacts in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Jules Hugot – Asian Development Bank

Bishkek experiences poor air quality throughout the year, with extremely dangerous levels during the wintertime heating period. Annual fine particle (PM_{2.5}) air pollution concentrations are far in excess of those known to have major adverse health effects in urban populations. Responding to increasing government and public concern about air pollution, members of the United Nations (UN) Country Team in Kyrgyzstan undertook studies to improve available knowledge about air quality, key emission sources, and air pollution’s health, social and economic impacts, providing for the first

time scientific evidence for policymaking around air quality. Studies engaged stakeholder groups, including government (Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision, Ministry of Health, KyrgyzHydromet, etc), civil society, academia, and young people. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) jointly with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) developed the first assessment of air quality in Bishkek and identified key emission sources. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessed the health and economic impacts of air pollution in Bishkek. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) investigated internal migrants' perceptions of air quality in Bishkek. This multi-disciplinary session presents the three studies for critical discussion to support evidence-based policymaking around air pollution in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan.

Air Quality in Bishkek: Assessment of Emission Sources and Road Map for Supporting Air Quality Management

Katja Loven – *Finnish Meteorological Institute (online)*

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital, experiences poor air quality throughout the year, with extremely dangerous levels during the wintertime heating period (approximately October – March). This study provided the first comprehensive analysis of key emission sources and their impact on ground-level air pollution concentrations in Bishkek. The study analysed air quality monitoring data (2015-2021), developed and analysed emissions inventories for the city, conducted local-scale dispersion modelling, and analysed satellite data. Findings showed that the most dangerous levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) pollution are caused by residential heating with (sulphur-rich) coal during the wintertime exacerbated by poor mixing conditions of the air. The study was also the first to model emissions from the Combined Heat and Power station (CHP) and their impact on ground-level concentrations of various air pollutants using a mathematical atmospheric Gaussian urban dispersion model UDM-FMI. Results showed that the CHP has limited impact on ground-level pollution concentration levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide during most meteorological conditions. Emissions from transport, followed by waste, were identified as other key pollution sources. Policies that reduce emissions from private housing will have the greatest impact on reducing air quality. Action plans should be developed for episodes with severe or poor air quality.

Health and Social Impacts of Air Pollution on Women and Children in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Entry-Points for Action

Rufus Edwards – *University of California*; **Jay Turner** – *Washington University*

Air pollution is the single biggest environmental risk factor for premature death and ill-health in Kyrgyzstan, with ill health due to PM_{2.5} air pollution primarily borne by the elderly and young children in the first days of life. This study examined the health and social impacts of air pollution on children and women in Bishkek. Health impacts from PM_{2.5} air pollution exposure were estimated to cause 112 (95% CI 97- 131) deaths and the loss of 3,568 (95% CI 2990-4220) Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) between 7/1/2021 and 6/30/2022. Population weighted annual average exposures for a household survey representative sample were 18.0 µg/m³. Exposures are driven by infiltration of local neighbourhood PM_{2.5} air pollution into indoor environments and are thus borne unequally by the population depending on the prevalence of stoves burning raw coal in different neighbourhoods.

The estimated welfare loss from PM_{2.5} air pollution in Bishkek was 1.6 billion KGS (95% CI 1.4-2.0) or 20 million USD (95% CI 17-24) in 2021-2022. Availability and awareness of clean household alternatives and their relative costs is a key barrier to reducing air pollution. Capacity building is necessary to build institutional capabilities, technical resources, human resources, legal frameworks and informational resources.

Air Pollution and Its Health Impacts on Internal Migrants in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Assessment Report

Zulaika Esentaeva – *International Organisation for Migration*

This scoping study assessed internal migrants' views on air quality and its impacts on health in 25 of the most polluted residential neighborhoods with the largest number of migrants and the least access to public services. The study included a household survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and developed air quality maps for three heating seasons (2019-2022). Survey respondents listed local factors contributing to air pollution including the location of the neighborhood within the city. Despite air quality challenges, a majority of respondents were interested in investing in their homes and the neighbourhoods. Every third respondent reported experiencing a variety of illnesses, including heart attacks, lung conditions, cancer, and asthma.

Respondents noted that busy parents do not seek medical attention immediately when they or their children begin experiencing acute health symptoms, exacerbated by a lack health facilities located nearby. Coal is the most common fuel used by households in the neighbourhoods, with the majority of respondents finding it expensive to switch to gas or electricity. Residents lack understanding of home energy efficiency measures. With more information on the negative impacts of poor-quality coal, residents would be more likely to switch to cleaner forms of energy.

SESSION 1.8. Perceptions and Attitudes on the War in Ukraine on Central Asia

Moderator: Bakhytzhon Kurmanov – University of Central Asia

The Russian-Ukrainian War: Perceptions in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia

Kasiet Ysmanova & Tlegen Kuandykov – *Central Asia Barometer*



Photo 5. Parallel session

Central Asia Barometer Survey explores the perceptions of the Russian-Ukrainian war in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Through a comprehensive survey, the research examines attitudes towards the conflict, migration patterns, perceptions of Russia, Russian immigrants in Central Asia, and media

consumption. The survey investigates the level of awareness and knowledge among the local population regarding the war, including its causes and the parties involved. It explores the perceived consequences of the conflict, particularly its impact on migration and the presence of Russian immigrants in Central Asia. Additionally, the study analyzes the influence of the war on public opinion towards Russia in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, considering historical, cultural, and economic ties between the regions. Furthermore, the role of media consumption in shaping perceptions of the war is examined. The survey investigates preferred sources of information and the impact of media narratives on the understanding of the conflict. The study contributes to a better understanding of regional dynamics surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian war and its implications in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

Russian Propaganda in Kyrgyzstan

Rashid Gabdulhakova – *University of Groningen (online)*

Control over media in Russia has moved from strict to absolute. New laws and amendments to existing legislation have made it impossible for media to report truthfully. The information provided via traditional media (TV, radio, and newspapers) and online media (websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms) is actively used to distribute propaganda at home and abroad.

Kyrgyzstan is a country where Russian propaganda resonates particularly well, as there are strong political, economic, and historical ties between the two countries; the Russian language is broadly used; and competition from local and international alternatives to Russian media is modest at best.

This policy brief assesses the impact of Russian propaganda on audiences in Kyrgyzstan. It does so by addressing the scope of Russian media outlets available in Kyrgyzstan; analyzing the narrative of Russian propaganda; and assessing the on-the-ground perception of audiences across Kyrgyzstan.

The study finds that the scope of Russian propaganda in Kyrgyzstan is massive. It includes all traditional media and is omnipresent online via social media platforms. It ranges from the traditional Channel One and Moskovskiy Komsomolets to YouTube streaming to VKontakte and Telegram messaging. The sheer volume of Russian media and daily messaging dwarf any local Kyrgyz or other media.

The narrative of Russian propaganda targeting audiences in Kyrgyzstan, centres on four main issues: Ukraine, the West, Russia itself, and Kyrgyzstan. Ukraine is portrayed as confused. On the one hand, it is an artificial state that has no reason to exist, while, on the other hand, it is an inseparable part of Russia that is being ruled and ruined by Western-supported Nazis. Russian propaganda creates a broad enemy image of a collective and evil West that interferes in other countries out of self-interest and stirs problems worldwide. It is holy Russia that stands up to the West's immoral policies. In that sense, Russia was forced to react to Western aggression in Ukraine. Kyrgyzstan is portrayed as an extension of the Russian world, heavily dependent on Russia for its economy (labour migrants) and its security.

Local media in Kyrgyzstan is weak in numbers and resources and is seen as being run by corrupt politicians. Western media, which has little traction in the country, is seen as amoral, and is alien to most Kyrgyz. The Russian narrative is seen as familiar, trustworthy, and a stable middle ground between the poor-quality local media and the amoral Western media.

As a result, the report concludes that a series of steps and investments are necessary to counter Russian propaganda and develop Kyrgyz media. The Kyrgyz authorities should move from pressuring local media to supporting Kyrgyz journalists and investing in professionalizing media that is more independent. International donors should step up support for capacity-building, and, at the same

time, not take Russian media influence for granted. Journalists need to come together and build an association that is inclusive and professional. Universities and civil society need to conduct more research, teaching, and awareness-raising activities.

SESSION 1.9. Representation of Women’s Art and Women’s Stories in Museums of Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Elena Kolesova – University of Central Asia

Tobacco Industry of the USSR: the Labor of Nookat Women Represented in the Museum Space

Baktygul Midinova – *Osh Regional Museum of Fine Arts*

The Nookat District Historical Museum of Osh province conducted a research exhibition in 2022. The purpose of the exhibition was to reflect on the history of tobacco growth in the district by focusing on the experiences and hardships of women who worked in tobacco production beginning in their youth.

These stories were presented in photo and video format in the Museum Space. The goal of the Museum exhibition is to present scholarly research work on how the personal experiences and stories of ordinary women, who implemented the mandatory state plan for tobacco production during the Soviet period, illustrate the history of the district. During research, 15 women who worked in tobacco from their youth in the villages of Jangy-Nookat, Zulpuev, and Kara-Tash were interviewed. Their memories, containing interesting research material, were filmed and a short film was produced.

Weaving a Memory: a Curatorial Research of the Fine Art of Kyrgyzstan in the Practices of Women Artists of the XX Century Based on the Collection of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts named after G. Aitiev

Diana Ukhina – *Bishkek School of Contemporary Art/SYNERGY (online)*

This research is an independent exploration of the institutional memory of the National Museum of Fine Arts named after G. Aitiev and its collections on women artists of the 20th century, their visual languages and stories curated by Diana Ukhina as part of SYNERGY art studio and Bishkek School of Contemporary Art (BiSCA). Diana Ukhina was curator and co-researcher of this project and Alima Tokmengenova co-researcher. The study was conducted in several stages during 2021-2022:

- Work with the Museum’s library materials on art works made by women of Kyrgyzstan in the 20th century. As a result, a research exhibition-archive I Look at You, You Look at Me was issued on the web-site of SYNERGY art studio (<https://ci.kg/exhibition>).
- Collection of data in the city’s libraries, in the archive of the Union of Artists and in state archives, conduction of interviews.

The aim of all this was to prepare a series of lectures.

- Research in the museum’s collection storage and production of research exhibition The Air We Breathe presenting 22 women artists and 140 of their art works, with sound-art and a reading zone with documents (copies of books) about these women artists.
- Collection, organisation and analysis of new data, preparing a catalog of entire research, titled The Art of Kyrgyzstan in the Practices of Women Artists of the 20th Century: Painting, Graphic, Sculpture and Ceramic. Being an exhibition catalog, the book does not include all women artists whose works are in the museum, but it contains works of 23 of these artists, with biographies for more than half of them.

The book became one of the few contemporary resources on Kyrgyzstani art history using curatorial and artistic research approaches. It has been distributed to museums, libraries, universities, and independent art spaces in Kyrgyzstan.

A Woman at the Museum

Aleksandra Filatova – *Narkhoz University/ MOFA (online)*

This presentation is based on a study of contemporary museums in Kyrgyzstan about coverage of life, political participation, and women's contribution to the economy. How do modern museums represent women's history? To what extent are the works of artists shown in modern art museums? What museum rhetoric exists about women and the preservation of women's history. What prevailing images of women have been created by Kyrgyz museums?

The representation of women's history in museums in Kyrgyzstan differs from museum to museum. Somewhere they talk about her in passing, somewhere she is a mother and wife, somewhere she simply doesn't exist. It is not in the discourse, in the exposition. But who makes the existence of the museum possible? Cultural worker! Caretaker, curator, director, activist and enthusiast who keeps it in a small town or who popularizes it throughout the country. This presentation is based on a study of contemporary museums in Kyrgyzstan.

How to Display in the Museums Festive and Everyday Practices Related to Women

Aida Alymova – *Kurmanjan Datka Museum of Nomad Civilization*

Kurmanjan Datka Museum of Nomad Civilization, together with the local keepers of traditions have undertaken research devoted to the types, meanings, and features of bata (blessing) and crafts. This research is aimed at preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Kyrgyz people including oral traditions. The research team has organized several events devoted to studying and preservation of oral traditions of Kyrgyz culture in the Museum.

Museums, Women and Social Change

Altyn Kapalova – *University of Central Asia (online)*

What should be a contemporary museum in a changing world? What values should it carry within its walls? How did the functional goals of the museum change? Is the museum a silent keeper of history or is it able to construct a new reality towards gender justice? How museums can increase the visibility of women in art and history. The presentation will answer these questions through a large number of visualizations.

SESSION 1.10. Agricultural Productivity, Food Inflation, Migration

Moderator: Anwar Naseem – University of Central Asia

The Relationship between Land Size and Agriculture Productivity in Kyrgyzstan

Meher Angaiz (online); Safdar Jan; Anwar Naseem – *all from University of Central Asia*

The relationship between land size and productivity has long interested researchers and policy-makers due to its implications for resource efficiency and land distribution. Historically, an inverse relationship was assumed, however, more recent literature suggests possible positive, U-shaped, or even insignificant association. What is emerging from these recent studies is that the relationship is considerably more nuanced, dependent on both selected indicators and methodologies. For instance, employing efficiency indicators might yield a positive association, while gross output indicators could denote an inverse relationship. Despite the abundance of research in developing countries, this subject remains relatively underexplored within the Central Asian context. Given the shared economic transformations that Central Asian countries have experienced over the last 30 years, this study aims to understand the land size-productivity relationship for the case of Kyrgyzstan, potentially illuminating broader trends within Central Asia.

This research utilizes data from the Life in Kyrgyzstan dataset (2016 and 2019). We employ panel

pooled regression and panel quantile regression methodologies, with log crop value as the dependent variable. Land size, measured in hectares, is the principal independent variable, while control variables comprise diverse factors such as crop types, input costs, characteristics of the household head, regional variations, and specific agricultural practices.

One notable limitation is the absence of infrastructure data, which might introduce biases into the results. To counteract this, the study applies robust econometric techniques and controls to reinforce the validity of the analysis.

The study's findings suggest a positive correlation between land size and productivity in Kyrgyzstan when applying panel quantile regression. However, panel pooled data imply an insignificant relationship between farm size and crop value. The research also identifies other important variables, including characteristics of the household head, input cost, quality, quantity, regional distinctions, and crop types, as significant determinants of agricultural productivity.

Gender-Based Disparities in Agricultural Productivity in Kyrgyzstan: A Crop-Specific Investigation

Zainab Muborakshoeva – *University of Central Asia*

Efficient agricultural production and ensuring food security necessitate the total engagement of the workforce, with a particular emphasis on women's involvement. This becomes even more critical in regions experiencing significant male labor out-migration, as women's role in agriculture inevitably increases. However, entrenched gender roles and discriminatory practices hinder women's full participation in agricultural markets. This is especially evident in women's access to productive land, financial services, and technology, often resulting in male-led farms frequently outperforming those managed by women.

Previous research on the factors influencing productivity disparities between genders has predominantly focused on a single crop's productivity or that of an entire farm enterprise. This study, however, expands upon this literature by investigating the productivity of a range of crops cultivated by households and determining whether differences in yield are influenced by both the gender of the cultivator and the type of crop grown.

Our analysis relies on data gathered from agricultural households in 2016 and 2019 as part of the Life in Kyrgyzstan Study. We examine factors influencing crop yields, particularly the gender of the household head, geographical location, and specific agricultural practices. Our regression analyses, after controlling for relevant factors, suggest that farms led by female household heads yield less across three major commodity groups (vegetables, fruits, and others), with the notable exception of grain crops, which demonstrated higher yields under female management compared to male.

Interestingly, geographical factors play a role in gender-based yield differences, with specific patterns emerging in regions such as Talas and Naryn. The agricultural practices employed, including machinery usage, tillage methods, insecticide application, and the presence of erosion or salinity, also appear to influence gender-based yield disparities. We discuss potential mechanisms driving these outcomes, particularly focusing on labor allocation, input use, and land productivity.

Drivers of Local Food Prices Inflation in the Kyrgyz Republic

Nurbek Madmarov, Talantbek Asan uulu, Bermet Talasbek kyzy, Fatema Qambary – *all from American University of Central Asia*

This study analyzes the macroeconomic drivers of food prices inflation from the perspective of comparing COVID-19 and other factors by building the nonlinear ARDL model of the (log) consumer

price index of food products on the regressors such as COVID-19 indicators, agricultural production, price of crude oil, global food prices, exchange rate depreciation, Ukraine-Russia war index etc. as the independent variables in the period January 2000 – April 2023 in the Kyrgyz Republic. The empirical model findings show that there are six variables that contribute to the food prices inflation in the long-run. These are the growth rates of agricultural production, mean monthly wage, M2 money supply, and local inflation rate, agricultural loan interest rate, and stringency index; that is to say, the food prices gives more responses to the declines than the raises in these variables except the stringency index. Whereas the prices gives more short-run responses to the increases in monthly/ minimum wage growth and the war dummy variable than the declines in these variables, it gives more responses to the declines in the economic growth, oil price inflation, global food price inflation, and interest rate on agricultural loans than the increases in these variables. On the other hand, none of the other COVID-19 indicators is correlated with the food prices. Although the Ukraine-Russia war has a minor impact on the food prices in the short-run, it has a massive effect on the prices within the next year.

Return to Migration Experience in Kyrgyzstan

Zukhruddin Juliev – *University at Buffalo (online)*

Over the last two decades migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia reached 20% of the labor force annually, making Kyrgyzstan one of the top 3 remittance receiving countries in the world. Migrants are not only sending remittances but also bringing migration experience when they return and work at native labor market. Using labor demand shocks in Russia as an instrument for migration experience, I estimate about 40% wage premiums for returning migrants relative to non-migrants.

Since jobs are available jobs for migrants at a lower skilled level, the migration experience is mostly gained by the less educated. The study shows that returning migrants can be viewed as an asset for the source country to increase economic growth even if it is in a lower skill distribution.

SESSION 1.11. Human Mobility Feedback Loop: New Evidence from Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Christopher Gerry – University of Central Asia

The panel explored the various feedback loops associated with labor migration in different scales, including the impact on individuals, families, and society as a whole. It focused on three distinct research perspectives: kinship dynamics, health concerns among labor migrants with a specific focus on HIV, and the effects of labor migration on agrarian changes in regions that send migrants. By bringing together these diverse research perspectives, the panel aims to foster a transdisciplinary discussion that can provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between mobility and social transformations in Kyrgyzstan.

The holistic approach enables the exploration of interconnected issues and facilitates a broader understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the context of labor migration in Kyrgyzstan.

Chalma-Grad: Mobilization of Kinship in the Context of Migration

Aksana Ismailbekova – *Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (online)*

Kyrgyzstan remains one of the most migration dependent regions in the world. It is no surprise then that when borders closed and lockdowns came into place in the wake of Covid-19, this part of the world was struck particularly hard. During the pandemic, migrants from Kyrgyzstan as well as from other Central Asian countries were frequently in the news. With many migrants unable to work during lockdowns or not able to travel to Russia, remittances plummeted before rapidly recovering as migration restarted. However, despite the difficulties many migrants in Russia faced during COVID- 19, Kyrgyz migrants from Kara-Kulja in particular helped each other in different ways, depending on the

migrants' needs. For example, the trans local lineage community worked on a volunteer basis. Among the Kyrgyz, the formation of such a translation lineage based- community is based on mutual support, unity, care and solidarity, that goes beyond their current place but extends as far as their own villages in Kyrgyzstan. Initially, migrants had to survive on their own, but when it came to helping each other in bad times or transferring a deceased person to Kyrgyzstan, community members had to learn to mobilize quickly as there was no alternative. The formation of such a community is based on trust, lineage identity, and reciprocity. However, money gives life to group solidarity.

People Living with HIV among Labor Migrants from Kyrgyzstan – Barriers and Coping Strategies on Their Way to Survival and Recognition

Bakytbek Satybekov – *PU Alliance for Civil Initiatives Promotion Director*; **Jainagul Bayizbekova** – *Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic*

The purpose of the study is to determine the legal and institutional barriers related to HIV faced by citizens of Kyrgyzstan returning from migration. The objective of the study was to conduct a situational analysis in the field of migrant health, as well as the provision of HIV-related health services in Kyrgyzstan. To achieve the objectives, a combination of the following research methods was used: desk research, interviews with experts, interviews with HIV-positive citizens of Kyrgyzstan who returned from migration. A total of 31 interviews were conducted using the developed questionnaires. Analysis of data on government spending in the area of HIV infection. Absolutely all the experts interviewed see the need to raise issues of migrants' access to HIV services to a high political level, in particular, dialogues should be developed at the Government level at intercountry platforms on the abolition of the deportation norm; availability of HIV medical care in the country of destination; the ability to register remotely in the country of origin and receive treatment.

The Apricot Power: Human Mobility and Agrarian Change in Isfara River Basin

Asel Murzakulova – *University of Central Asia*

The presentation examines the role of migrant remittances in agrarian change in the Isfara River basin. Based on extensive field data collected between 2015 and 2022, it demonstrates how the life cycle of the apricot tree reveals parallel power dynamics, where the interests of the apricot tree influence the actions of individuals whose income relies on the sale of dried apricots. Depending on the apricot harvest, people can strategize their mobility. Simultaneously, the apricot serves to establish cross-border spaces of interaction during periods of heightened conflict escalation at the border. This analysis contributes to critical geography and agricultural studies by highlighting the intimate connections and feedback loops between people's lives and environment.

SESSION 1.12. Do Political Quotas Work? Women's Political Participation in Kyrgyzstan

Moderator: Gulfia Abdullaeva – PIL Research

Kyrgyzstan was one of the first countries in Central Asia to introduce political quotas, but they have not become stable mechanisms. Quota procedures have changed from election to election. Nevertheless, the results of the elections (both national and local) after the introduction of political quotas proved that the quota system has become a factor to ensure women's political representation. Protective mechanisms are there and applied. However, there is an ongoing discussion on women's representation – are quotas effective? Therefore, the participation of women remains rather nominal & passive than empowered (Agarwal, 2001).

In this session, based on findings of the specific study conducted in early 2023, researchers in women's political representation and leadership presenters discuss how the quota system fits local political culture, and what is de-facto impact of political quotas in the country. The three presentations based on case studies of women's political participation at local and national levels.

The panel presented (1) the nature of gender quotas in Kyrgyz political realities in terms of Access to participation and Power in Participation and (2) critical analysis of discourses of political quotas in Kyrgyz politics.

What Figures Show: Equal Representation ≠ Equal Power?

Gulfia Abdullaeva – *PIL Research*

Since the political quota was introduced in 2007, the number of women in Parliament have increased – from 0% in 2007 to 21% in 2021. While the quota has expanded women's political participation, the questions remain: Do they consider themselves as weighty or legitimate political actors? Can they influence political agenda (and if it conflicts with the agenda of the political party)? Has it resulted in positive policy and legislative outcomes? The presenters would like to discuss the challenges of the quota system by looking into voting results and exploring whether more voters' support is linked with more active engagement in legislative and political initiatives.

Mechanism of Gender Quota as Bricolage in Current Kyrgyz Politics

Gulnara Ibraeva – *PIL Research*

A number of institutions and mechanisms, such as political parties and quotas in Kyrgyz reality, often do not function in the same way as in «developed democracies». Studying the experience of implementing quotas for women in parliament allows us to see how «old» norms, values and attitudes are built into the «new» form of the quota mechanism, creating bizarre patterns of women's participation in politics. The combination of «new» forms and «old» content in the visual arts, literature and now in the social sciences is referred to as «bricolage». The presentation will analyze how the model of quotas was culturally produced in practice from «improvised» means after the introduction of this mechanism in the electoral legislation. The analysis will provide a better understanding of how and why women's political participation achieved through quotas has not evolved from nominal and passive to empowered participation.

Myths and Realities of Gender Quotas: Case Study of the Functioning of Quotas in the Saruu Local Kenesh

Gulnara Ibraeva – *PIL Research*

The introduction of gender quotas into local electoral legislation in 2019 was accompanied by several conflicts in communities and public (media) scandals at the national level. One of the first conflicts occurred in the Saruu Aiyl Kenesh (village council), where quotas were applied for the first time, immediately after the adoption of the relevant amendments to the electoral legislation.

The presentation provides a preliminary assessment of how, almost 4 years after the introduction of quotas, the community perceives quotas, how they assess their significance, and how women's political participation and leadership have changed.

PLENARY SESSION 1

Keynote Speech 1:

Correlates of Life Satisfaction: A Human Capital Perspective

Dr Michelle Brock – Senior Research Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (UK)

Moderator: **Tilman Bruck** – Humboldt University, IGZ, ISDC

Michelle Brock holds the position of Senior Research Economist within the Office of the Chief Economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Her research is centered on various significant areas, including social and professional norms, attitudes towards risk and uncertainty, as well as inequality of opportunity. In the realm of inequality of opportunity, her work encompasses macroeconomic assessments and perceptions of inequality of opportunity in the transition region. Furthermore, she is involved in microeconomic projects that delve into the intersection of gender and finance. Michelle also delves into the impact of professional and social norms on worker effort and explores the potential of non-monetary incentives to complement wages. Her research is instrumental in shedding light on how unfair circumstances and uncertainty regarding returns influence individual decision-making. She approaches these complex topics through the lens of behavioural economics and employs a range of research methodologies, including experimental economics, randomised controlled trials, and household surveys, to establish connections between controlled laboratory settings and real-world scenarios. Michelle earned her PhD from the University of Maryland in 2011.



For many, bouncing back after the COVID-19 pandemic has meant scaling back on work, in pursuit of less stressful lives. Meanwhile, skill shortages demonstrate a robust demand for increased investment in and productive use of human capital. These two trends call for a reassessment of the ways in which people benefit from their own human capital, beyond the wages it produces. Non-monetary benefits, such as life-satisfaction, may be one such benefit. While the literature generally finds a positive correlation between life satisfaction and human capital, economists have a limited understanding of what drives this correlation. The talk will present trends of life satisfaction and human capital, propose some unanswered puzzles and highlight potential policy implications for sustaining human capital growth in conjunction with human welfare.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

SESSION 2.1. UNFPA Session: Demography and Population Dynamics

Moderator: **Baktybek Kainazarov**, UNFPA

Gender Equality and Gender Relations in Pilot Communities of the Spotlight Initiative

Larisa Ilibezova – Center for Democratic Research

IMAGES research was initiated and coordinated by Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice (formerly known as Promundo-US) and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and is one of the most comprehensive surveys on opinions and attitudes of men and women toward gender equality.

The overall goal of the survey is to assess men's and women's practices and attitudes related to gender equality in pilot communities of Spotlight Initiative through the standardized tool for subsequent practical use of findings and recommendations by projects and programs targeted at achievement of gender equality and reduction of violence. For more details, please refer to www.menandgendersurvey.org

This paper is prepared by the public association "Centre for Research of Democratic Processes" within the frame of the partnership of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the United Nations and the European Union - Spotlight Initiative.

Preliminary Results of the Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic

Gulkhumar Abdullaeva, Anara Kudakeeva – *National Statistics Committee*

The first publication contains data on the main socio-demographic characteristics of the population obtained from the 2022 population and housing census of the Kyrgyz Republic. It is designed for authorities and management, socio-economic services of enterprises and organizations, scientific and expert circles dealing with demographic issues, graduate students and students of higher educational institutions, the media, individuals.

Women's Stories of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narrative Analysis

Fotima Zarchabekova – *American University of Central Asia*

This study aimed to analyze the narratives of Central Asian adult females who experienced childhood sexual abuse and assault. Using the unobtrusive research method, the study analyzed narratives shared on the Instagram pages of TellMeSister and Teens.kg, which are social activist and educational platforms, respectively. Stories were selected based on the severity and age of sexual abuse. The stories were analyzed based on the components of the story's structure, particularly how the victim, abuser, and bystanders of family members are described. Upon conducting a comprehensive analysis of 54 narratives, the discovered narrative was labeled as «The story of the helpless child who ceased to be helpless», and comprised of four distinct parts: (1) the beginning of the story where the child is left unsupervised; (2) the sequence of events that unfold; (3) the reactions of the child to these events; (4) the emergence and expression of a new identity in present time. The research aimed to identify why females decided to share their experiences after keeping them a secret for a period of time and how they expressed their experiences through narratives. There is a conclusion that new trends in social media help people to understand their childhood experience with abuse and provide women with the language to share this experience. The findings of this study contribute to the limited research available on childhood sexual abuse experiences of Central Asian females and help raise awareness about the issue.

The Biopolitics of the Family and Demographic Policies for the 'Ideal' Representation(s) of the National Identity(-ies): The Case of the Kyrgyz Republic

Aizada Erkinova – *American University of Central Asia*

This study explores why Zhaparov's government has decided to deploy family and demographic policies for the representation of the "ideal" national identity in the Kyrgyz Republic. Based on the theory of constructivism, which states that the nation and national identities are built by political elites and in particular for their own interests, the thesis examines that biopolitics and biopower have been instrumental in constructing the national identity. To explore the biopolitical approach of Zhaparov's government, this research followed the Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis that consists of text coding via the MAXQDA software program and contextual analysis of President Zhaparov's official speeches and official government documents. Analysis shows that by promoting traditional society and family values, Zhaparov's government became the ethnic Kyrgyz society's defender and has regulated the citizen's bodies, in order to expand and stabilize its power. The body is created as

a trans-local boundary and a central node around which the imaginary traditional society stabilizes. In the traditional society approach of Zhaparov's government, an "ideal" individual is one that has received a particular gendered and sexualized education, which enables citizens to exercise self-control for the whole nation. As a result, Zhaparov's government has successfully adopted and regulated citizens' bodies in the name of the ideal representation of the national identity that helps them to strengthen and stabilize their power.

SESSION 2.2. Public Perceptions and Political Behavior

Moderator: Bakhytzhon Kurmanov – University of Central Asia

Citizen Perception and Participation in Local Government in Post-Soviet Countries: the Case of Kyrgyzstan

Razia Abdieva, Damira Baigonushova, Sezer Bozkuş Kahyaoglu – *all Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University*

The major aim of local government is to maintain a well-established system where councils use their official power, roles, and responsibilities to work together for good order and good governance of their municipal districts. As part of their duties, local governments are expected to work toward improving social, economic, and environmental sustainability for the well-being of their citizens. In this respect, effective local governments provide overall quality standards of life for the people who live in their districts. Citizen participation in local government is significant for the governance efficiency and social welfare.

In this paper participation of citizen in local government in Kyrgyzstan investigated. Along with this, citizens' perception about efficiency of public services, local governance and trust on local governance institution analyzed based on the survey "Life in Transition" that conducted in 2019 to more than 7000 individuals in Kyrgyzstan. Logit model will be applied to identify the factors affecting on the participation of citizen in local governance such as gender, education, social status, trust in government. Policy recommendations are made based on the empirical findings to contribute to the relevant literature.

Unresponsive Autocrats: Exploring Citizens' Perceptions of Open Government in Tokayev's Kazakhstan

Bakhytzhon Kurmanov – *University of Central Asia*

The Open Government reform has been actively adopted across various non-democratic regimes, including post-soviet Central Asia. The reform is supposed to bolster responsiveness and transparency through the active use of information-communication technologies, and numerous authoritarian countries have recently adopted and deepened open government reform. In this work, we study whether open government reform contributes to responsiveness in autocracies using the case of Kazakhstan under Tokayev rule (2019-present time). We investigate the concept of the Listening State recently adopted in Kazakhstan through the analysis of novel primary data. The perceptions of ordinary citizens reveal that the open government reform in the country has not led to the realization of its key goal of increased responsiveness. Therefore, open government reform has serious limitations in achieving its ultimate goal of a better listening state to people's needs in autocracies.

Common Knowledge of Social Norms and Political Behavior: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan

Damir Esenaliev – *IGZ/ISDC*; **Anselm Hager** – *Humboldt University Berlin*; **Lukas Hensel** – *Peking University*; **Elnura Kazakbaeva** – *Evidence Central Asia*

Authors study the role of social norms regarding female political participation in traditional societies. Updating women's private information about the norms of others regarding female engage-

ment does not change their activism. However, when making the information about social norms common knowledge, women become less likely to attend community meetings when informed about low social support for female engagement. At the same time, there is no positive effect on behavior when providing common knowledge about high social support. The evidence suggests that the perceived backlash from becoming more active than socially desired is greater than the potential praise of engaging in communities open to greater female activism. The findings highlight the relevance of common knowledge about social norms in shaping behavior, and suggests that behavior is driven more by fears about punishment rather than the pursuit of potential community praise.

Kalyys Kalaa: Resident's Perception of Bishkek Urban Development

Kasiet Ysmanova – *Central Asia Barometer*; **Daria Gavriushchenko** – *Friedrich Elbert Foundation*

The issues of urban development, ecology, infrastructure, and housing in Bishkek have become prominent concerns for its residents, who are increasingly seeking ways to enhance the livability of their city and address existing challenges. However, amidst these discussions, the voices of Bishkek's critical stakeholders, its residents, have not received adequate attention. In 2022 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia Barometer conducted a joint survey research on the perceptions of Bishkek urban development by its residents. This research endeavors to bridge this gap by covering in a comprehensive representative survey various aspects of urban life, including affordable housing, urban climate and air pollution, public transport, urban infrastructure, and participation in city/area decision-making. The research seeks to amplify these valuable perspectives, serving as a catalyst for informed urban planning and decision-making. The findings of this research emphasize the importance of engaging and involving Bishkek's residents as active participants in the urban development process. By providing a comprehensive understanding of their views and needs, this study aims to foster inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development in Bishkek.

SESSION 2.3. Advances in Methods, Data, and Development Indicators

Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev – University of Central Asia

Navigating the Path to Sustainable Development: a Case Study of the Kyrgyz Republic

Gulnara Djunushalieva – *University of Central Asia*; **Ramona Teuber** – *Justus Liebig University Giessen*

The purpose is to provide a comprehensive examination of the role and effectiveness of the Constitution and strategic documents in promoting the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kyrgyzstan. The article aims to analyze the progress made in achieving the SDGs since 2015, identify the specific SDGs outlined in the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, assess the contribution of the medium-term strategy for 2022-2027 towards SDG achievement, and examine the long-term strategy for 2018-2040 in relation to the SDGs. Additionally, the article intends to investigate how policies cover the SDGs at both the goal and target levels and identify any gaps or areas not adequately addressed by the strategic documents. Methods used are text-mining techniques, SDG mapping and content analysis of the Constitution and strategic docs. The article seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations to policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders involved in sustainable development efforts in Kyrgyzstan, aiming to enhance the alignment of national policies and strategies with the SDGs and ultimately contribute to the country's sustainable development agenda.

The Survey Fingerprint Puzzle of Life Satisfaction

Alberto Prati – *University College London*; **Thomas Beuchot** – *Ecole Normale Supérieure*

In surveys, answers are inherently subject to measurement errors. If this is an acknowledged statistical fact, it is still not clear how bad the problem is. In theory, when studying data collected from different surveys, the distribution of answers in a given country at a given time should be the same.

In practice, these numbers will differ, due to sampling errors, different survey designs and random noise. But by how much? To answer this question, we conduct a meta-analysis of micro-data from more than a dozen national and international cross-sectional surveys. We compare estimates from different representative samples of the same population in the same year, to assess the level of undesirable variability in some key self-reported measures. We focus both on subjective (general life satisfaction, Cantril Ladder) and objective (income, unemployment) welfare measures.

The first contribution of this study is to assess the level of noise and biases in these survey-based measures. The second contribution is to estimate regression coefficients of standard models on different survey data sets and evaluate the amount of variability in the estimates. The third and last contribution is to investigate the causes of these differences across surveys and suggest some solutions to mitigate the issue.

First, authors focus on statistics collected in the last two decades from three Western countries: the USA, UK and France. Then, they compare European and inter-continental datasets. Finally, authors focus on Kyrgyzstan and other countries from Central Asia and compare how life in these countries is depicted based on the Gallup World Poll vs the Life in Transition Survey.

Ethnic Disparities in Conspicuous Consumption in Kyrgyzstan

Dina Mamadjanova – *German-Kazakh University*

This thesis investigates the presence of ethnic disparities in conspicuous consumption in Kyrgyzstan on a household level, motivated by the diverse ethnic composition of the country. Using micro-level data from the Life in Kyrgyzstan survey in years 2010-2013, 2016, and 2019, the effect of ethnicity on item-specific and aggregate conspicuous expenditures is estimated using Tobit and Hausman-Taylor models controlling for socioeconomic and demographic factors.

First, it is found that although the chosen conspicuous goods and services have significantly higher total expenditure elasticity of demand than such categories as clothing and shoes and personal care items, they are still normal goods in the context of Kyrgyzstan. The results suggest highly statistically significant evidence that households of the minor ethnic groups – particularly Uzbek and Dungan ones - spend more on most conspicuous items than comparable Kyrgyz households. The study proves the presence of the Veblen effect in Kyrgyzstan and sheds light on possible socioeconomic disadvantages of ethnic minorities in the country.

PLENARY SESSION 2

Keynote Speech 2: Food Security in Mountains of Central Asia: Down to Upstream Challenges Dr Arnaud Caiserman, University of Central Asia

Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev – University of Central Asia



Dr Arnaud Caiserman is Assistant Director and Senior Research Fellow at Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI-UCA). His research focuses on water cycle from its sources in the cryosphere of Central Asia and Himalayas to its use by agriculture, downstream. Through multiple publications and international projects, Dr Caiserman has been working on the recent changes of climate and their consequences on temperature-precipitation rate in high mountains, as well as hazards frequency using various remote sensing technologies and field expeditions. All of his research is articulated around the food-water-energy nexus in the Western-Central Asia area and aims to produce practical outputs for remote communities of this region.

Dr Caiserman has received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (France).

Food security in the mountains of Central Asia faces numerous challenges related to both food production and accessibility. While these challenges have been individually identified, a holistic approach is necessary to comprehensively understand the difficulties in both producing and accessing food in these regions and to prioritize policy-making and research. Food security is compromised not only due to unsustainable downstream agricultural strategies and financial poverty but also because of upstream geophysical challenges such as climate change and frequent destructive hazards. Some of these challenges can be addressed through immediate, albeit costly, measures, while others require long-term planning and policy development. The approach presented in this note, from downstream to upstream, aims to emphasize the benefits of in-depth research for improving food security in complex environments such as mountainous regions.

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) aims to address food security challenges in mountainous areas in terms of accessibility and productivity. MSRI primarily operates in three Central Asian countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, where food security is at risk. MSRI employs multidisciplinary approaches to understand the main challenges and seek practical solutions. Remote sensing techniques are utilized to detect cropland at risk from hazards and to identify vulnerable roads to avalanches. Weather station data and climate models are used to predict future climate conditions and recommend more suitable crops for arid climates. These data are collected through various projects in which MSRI is involved. On the ground, MSRI conducts surveys with farmers to understand their challenges and needs. Wheat variety trials have been carried out in mid-elevation areas over the past three years to select the most suitable and productive varieties for local conditions and needs.

The main results of this scientific research on food security address both food accessibility and productivity. In terms of productivity, based on years of research, MSRI recommends specific crops and species adapted to future climate scenarios and the current needs of communities. Additionally, MSRI contributes to food accessibility by advising relevant governmental stakeholders on mitigation measures to secure roads from snow avalanches, which play a key role in food supplies chain for remote villages.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

SESSION 2.5. Mercy Corps, WFP, WHO Session: Recent Interventions and Research on Health and Nutrition

Moderator: Elmira Shishkaraeva – World Food Programme

What are the main ingredients of a successfully implemented optimized School Meals Programme (hot and nutritious meals), what creates sustainability and how can success be replicated?

The main goal is to identify the opportunities and challenges in establishing and sustaining optimized School Meals Programme(s), based on which to promote replication and expansion pathways for SMP to function as a safety net during the global cost of living crisis. The Kyrgyz Republic is facing a complex challenge in improving nutrition. Despite having made significant gains in the past decade, impoverished households in the Kyrgyz republic continue to struggle with basic food and nutrition security and face a triple burden of malnutrition with individuals across all socioeconomic groups suffering from micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and non-communicable diseases. The importance of school meals and their effect on school children's attendance and learning outcomes has been widely reviewed and proved by many studies. The provision of school meals helps the governments not only to address the health and malnutrition issues but also to affect the populations' nutritional behavior and to review the social protection measures.

The Findings from the National Integrated Micronutrient and Anthropometric Survey (NIMAS)

Zhyldyz Artykbaeva – Ministry of Healthcare

NIMAS 2021 is being conducted to better understand the severity of micronutrient deficiencies and to help develop nutrition programs based on development evidence at the national level. The survey establishes a baseline against which future progress of various national nutrition programs can be measured and can be used. The first goal of the survey is to obtain up-to-date and reliable information on the current nutritional situation and micronutrient status among several (6) target groups of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic. The second goal is to measure nutritional and health status among key populations.

Accelerating Investments into SDG Objectives Leveraging Schools as Platforms

Aizhan Erisheva – World Food Programme

School meals programme (SMP) contributes directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing access to safe, adequate, and nutritious food all year around for school children including the most vulnerable (SDG2) with equal access for girls and boys (SDG5); increasing their dietary diversity, nutritional and energy intake (SDG3); contributing to the creation of conducive learning environment (SDG4) and improving water and sanitation services (SDG6). As well as SMP indirect contribution to the wider issues such as reduction of poverty (SDG1), reducing inequalities (SDG10), and promoting sustainable economic growth and decent work for all (SDG8). Notwithstanding its transformative potential, in the case of the Kyrgyz Republic - a lower-middle-income country, vulnerable to food insecurity, and with instable political environment - the sustainability of the optimized national SMP remains fragile due to the various socio- economic, political, legal, and cultural issues. Thus, the knowledge and experience received through the implementation of SMP by various stakeholders can be the important tool to make the investment case for necessary budget allocations, identify cost effective solutions and to direct mutual efforts to the areas of the greatest needs and impact.

Nutrition of School-Aged Children

Nazgul Aidaraliev – World Health Organization

The author presented WHO strategy on health and development of children, on factors affecting health + priority directions for action. Examples of organization of healthy school meals from dif-

ferent countries were provided. And overview of WHO surveys and studies on inappropriate food marketing for school aged children and food policies was presented. In terms of children obesity, childhood obesity surveillance initiative, Round 6 Kyrgyz Republic from November 2023 to February 2024 was also discussed.

SESSION 2.6. Impacts of Climate and Ecological Shocks on Living Standards and Human Health

Moderator: Maksim Kulikov – University of Central Asia

Climate Shocks and Energy Poverty in Kyrgyzstan

Nuraiym Talantbekova, Burulcha Sulaimanova, Aisha Manasova – *all OSCE Academy in Bishkek*

This study examines the effect of climate shocks on energy poverty in Kyrgyzstan using panel data from the “Life in Kyrgyzstan” survey for 2011, 2013, 2016, and 2019. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the impact of shocks affecting communities on energy poverty indicators of the households. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and vulnerabilities households facing and provide insights for economic, social, and environmental policies at reducing energy poverty and enhancing climate resilience.

Air Pollution in Winter in the Regions and Major Cities of Kyrgyzstan

Inna Brusenskaya – *MoveGreen*

In 2022, the monitoring network for fine particulate matter PM_{2.5} of the PA MoveGreen expanded to cover all regions of Kyrgyzstan. These data allowed for the first examination of air pollution during the winter of 2022-23 in the regions and major cities of Kyrgyzstan. In the major cities - Bishkek, Osh, and Jalal-Abad - the average monthly concentrations of PM_{2.5} during the cold winter months (December and January) ranged from 115 µg/m³ in Bishkek (3.3 MPC - Maximum Permissible Concentration, 35 µg/m³) to 197 µg/m³ (5.6 MPC) in Osh and Jalal-Abad. On certain days, the daily average concentrations of PM_{2.5} reached 565 µg/m³ or 16.1 MPC.

The most polluted areas in terms of PM_{2.5} were Osh and Jalal-Abad regions (monthly average concentrations of 64-264 µg/m³ or 1.8-7.5 MPC). In Chui and Talas regions, pollution levels reached 131 µg/m³ (3.5 MPC), while in Batken and Naryn regions, it was 66 µg/m³ (1.9 MPC). Issyk-Kul region had the least pollution, with levels comparable to 1.0 MPC. In the regions and major cities, all days of these months exceeded the MPC, with up to 15 days exceeding the maximum one-time MPC (160 µg/m³) during certain hours of the day. Such pollution is due to weather conditions that contribute to the accumulation of pollutants in the atmosphere (calms, temperature inversions, etc.) and the use of low-quality fuel by the population (high-ash coal, various types of waste, etc.).

Pesticides Pollution and Child Health in Central Asia

Igor Hadjamberdiev, Mohammed Nasimi, Ibragimjon Damulojanov – *Toxic Action Network Central Asia*

Authors did a wide study of POP (persistent organic pollutants) pollution of the main river basins of CA (Central Asia) – Syr-Darja Amur-Darja with a scope of the last ten years. They studied water, cliff soil (of pasture or veggie gardens), and vegetation. Reasons of obsolete pesticides pollution are: 1) old soil pollution (micro-planes DDT over pulverizing cotton and rice lands in 60th-80th); 2) non safety tailings ransacking by villagers; 3) old tailings should degrading and polluting by irrigating canals.

Methods. POP determination is done in accordance with recommendation of EPA US. Our devices: HP 5890 II Gas Chromatograph, Mass Spectrometer with HP MS Chemstation. Selective determina-

tion was done for chromosomal-crash test [Methods recommended by Genetic Institute, Moscow]. Kara-Darja river (Osh, Kyrgyzstan), irrigating canals in Aravan area (Kyrgyzstan), and in Vakhsh River (border Afghanistan-Tajikistan). Several samples contain high (plant and human- danger) concentration of chlorocyclohexane 1.45×10^{-2} mg / litre, Aldrin 9.0×10^{-3} , DDT-DDE 4.64×10^{-2} mg/ litre, alfa-GHZG (Gexa-Chlor-Ziclo-Gexane) 7.26 mkg for soil kg; beta GHZG – 1.9; gamma GHZG – 1.9; delta GHZG – 8.59 for soil kg. High toxic level of POP found in rice of Batken area. These factors lead to breast milk pollution and early child disorders. Laboratory data of early age children (between one and three years) in four polluted areas and control clear one, shows: inherited diseases high percentage, and erythrocytes low level, 8 immune proteins level decreased, chromosomal disrupted test show high level. It threatens with negative genetic load to the next generation in three countries.

The pollution process would increase due Global Warming and water balance disorder. We try to make a prognosis for POP pollution health in CA. Urgent actions of three CA countries are: water treatment facilities are needed to be installed, ban of polluted land rice grow and population behavior changing.

SESSION 2.7. Intra-Household Distribution and Female Well-Being

Moderator: Damir Esenaliev – IGZ/ISDC

Impacts of Energy Use for Cooking and Heating on Women's Subjective Well-Being and Health in Kyrgyzstan

Burulcha Sulaimanova, Zhibek Kasymova, Meerim Abdykalykova – *OSCE Academy in Bishkek*

The transition from dirty to clean energy has gained significant attention in mitigating adverse impact of climate change. However, in developing countries the gender implications of this transition have received less attention. This study aims to investigate the impact of household energy choice effects on women's subjective well-being and health outcomes in Kyrgyzstan, where women are more likely to be exposed to air pollution because they are responsible for heating and cooking the home. For analysis, this study "Life in Kyrgyzstan" panel survey data for the years 2011, 2013, 2016, and 2019 is used. By analyzing these data, the study aims to shed light on the relationship between the transition to clean energy and women's subjective well-being and health in the context of Kyrgyzstan.

The Role of Women During COVID-19 in Three Regions of Kyrgyzstan

Zalina Enikeeva – *University of Central Asia*

The COVID-19 pandemic had a bearing on many spheres of human lives: health, economic well-being, travel restrictions. The COVID-19 crisis has had a negative impact on the population labor income, especially affecting the most vulnerable categories, women and children, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Women of Kyrgyzstan are not the exception. My research examines how female citizens of different regions adopted to new realities during the COVID-19 pandemic, combining job duties (as many firms were transferred to the online mode of work) with household chores and distant education of their children, as well as other crisis outcomes.

The current research investigates the role of women in three different regions of the Kyrgyz Republic to assess different challenges they met during the lockdown and to learn the ways how they accommodated with them. Among the selected regions there are 1) Issyk-Kul oblast, the northern one, which is famous for its same-name lake and ethnically diversified communities, 2) Osh oblast, the southern and most traditional one, and 3) Bishkek city, the capital of the country, the most developed and economically active, and the most suffered because of strict isolation.

The current analysis is based on surveys and interviews with local female business owners, experts,

representatives of local authorities and female volunteers. Research findings help to evaluate how lives of women in three different regions changed economically, psychologically, and physically. Data will show whether they became more dependent on men, captured new opportunities and faced challenges caused by COVID-19. Research identifies the COVID-19 crisis consequences women of Kyrgyzstan experienced.

Gendered Nationalism: The Roles and Identities of the Kyrgyz Women in the Private Realm

Aisha Manasova – *OSCE Academy*

Kyrgyzstan has undergone several political, economic, and social changes since obtaining its independence in 1991. As a result of this transformation, the position of women in society has been greatly affected, raising tensions between nationalist gendered norms and more liberal discourses. While the existing literature has primarily focused on women in the public domain, this study investigates how such gendered nationalistic narratives influence women's identities and the ways women interact with these state discourses. Thus, this research seeks to understand how traditional and religious values, patriarchy and gender discrimination shape the socially expected roles of women as mothers and "privileged custodians of values", and consequently, their Kyrgyz identity. Through semi-structured interviews with fourteen Kyrgyz women, this research found that Kyrgyz women strongly correlate their identities to traditional and religious values, while patriarchy and gender discrimination are not considered as defining factors in shaping of their identity. Traditional and religious values reinforce and sustain a particular order in society by creating tacit rules and expectations. Such rules and the use of interpretation of Islam, which intersects with Kyrgyz national culture, create acceptable discourse for behavior of women and isolate those who do not adhere to these expected rules. Lastly, the study challenges the assumption that there is an increase in patriarchy by arguing that universal western definitions of patriarchy do not align with Kyrgyz women's experiences.

Exploring Social Norms and Social Services Affecting Domestic Violence Service-Seeking and Provision in Kyrgyzstan

Asel Myrzabekova – *FHI 360*

In 2022, Jigerduu Jarandar conducted a study to identify and understand social norms relating to GBV, the first exploration of its kind in the Kyrgyz Republic. The focus of this qualitative assessment was to discern social norms that affect speaking out about and seeking services for DV, as well as a variety of social sanctions, which vary in severity and are visited on women who do not follow these social norms. It serves as the initial exploration to inform understanding of DV social norms and subsequent development and evaluation of a norms-focused intervention for DV service provision as part of Jigerduu Jarandar's efforts to address gender inequities and DV.

Based on the findings, the project implemented interventions aimed at fostering positive changes in social behavior. After reviewing norms-shifting interventions, the Transforming Masculinities (TM) intervention, also known as Masculinit , Famille, et Foi (MFF), was chosen as the appropriate intervention to adapt for the target municipalities. This decision was based on its emphasis on promoting positive masculinity.

SESSION 2.8. Mountains of Sorrow: the Role of Art in Creating the Historical Narrative of the 1916 Uprising

Moderator: Baktygul Kapalova – Compass College

The forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China (Xinjiang region) between 1916 -1934 resulted in the deaths of thousands of women, men and children. It also destroyed many families and left massive emotional trauma for those who survived on both sides, Chinese and Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz people call this tragedy "Urkun", or the forced exodus. This relates firstly to the exodus from the Russian Empire

and later from the Soviet regime. Suggested Panel Session will discuss how Art reflects to 1916 events and how it helps to fill in the gaps in creating a historical narrative dedicated to this historical event that began in 1916 and led to the death of thousands and thousands of Kyrgyz. Panel session can be accompanied by an exhibition. “Mountains of Sorrow” is based on field data from a 3-year research of the events of 1916. Altyn Kapalova and Elena Kolesova have collected about 30 stories that contemporary artists have been converting into works of art. They have been preparing web gallery www.oozeki.com which will be launched October 2023. The web gallery will show stories accompanied by photos.

Ürkün in the Kyrgyz Literature: Two Periods, Two Interpretations

Gulzada Stanaliev – *Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University*

During the 100 years from the tragic event of 1916 to today's 2023, the writers of every era, every period, every generation addressed the theme of the 16th year through different destinies, different historical sources, different life events, and expressed its great historical lesson in artistic expression. Interpreted with their strength, they made it possible for Kyrgyz literature to have a place for the theme of the 16th year as a separate field.

The theme of the 16th year has been artistically developed as one of the main themes in Kyrgyz literature and will continue to be developed in the future.

Representation of 1916 Uprising in the Kyrgyz Contemporary Art

Nurperi Orunbaeva – *Museum of Female Arts*

Author's presentation is called “Munduu Toolor”. This is visual documentation based on the research of Altyn Kapalova, Baktygul Kapalova and Elena Kolesova about the Urkun of 1916, a tragic event in the history of Kyrgyzstan. The research became the basis for the creation of works by independent authors, artists, as well as for the 2023 art bike ride around Lake Issyk-Kul, in which many works and performances were made to honor the memory and tell newly heard stories. Stories are collected from the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of eyewitnesses and participants of Urkun. The tragedy touched the north of Kyrgyzstan and involved more than a million people, forced to save themselves and flee, along the way people got lost, lost loved ones, got sick, died, left behind frail and old parents, were left behind unable to feed the babies, expecting someone behind who had food and strength to adopt. Daughters were sold into slavery and marriage for a plate of food. There is still no news about the dead, abandoned and lost. This is the greatest tragedy of the people of the last century, and in our works, we talk about complex, difficult stories. All works are dedicated to the memory of the victims of Urkun.

Ürkün Memorial Processions as a Memory Activity

Gulzat Alagöz kyzy – *ESIMDE Research Platform*

The author presented on 1916 Commemorative experiences including about memorial days, memorials and memorial processions. Memorial processions were held in 1991, 2006 and 2016. The tour organized by the Esimde research platform was from Bishkek and around the Issyk-Kul lake for the period of 10 days with the overall length of 1283 km and the height of 3.400m. The author provided pictures of the state/official monuments, public monuments, by locals and individual initiatives

SESSION 2.9. Mitigation and Impacts of Climate Change

Moderator: Bernard Musyck – University of Central Asia

Impacts of Climate Change on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and Food Security of Mountain Communities in the Pamir Region of Tajik- and Afghan-Badakhshans

Aziz Ali Khan – *University of Central Asia*

Lying at the junction of Asia's mightiest mountain ranges – the Himalayas, Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Tien Shan – the valleys of the Pamir Mountains share a rich and common flora, fauna, and geography. The residents of the Pamirs, given their remoteness combined with high rates of poverty, have traditionally relied on local plants with purportedly medicinal value to treat sicknesses and food purposes. As traditional medicine provides health care for remote mountain communities in the Pamir region, the rapidly changing climatic conditions effecting medicinal plant populations in their natural habitats lends mountain communities more vulnerable to different ailments and food insecurity. There is evidence that climate change is triggering visible effects on plant populations, as well as their distribution in certain geographies. This study documents the impacts of climate change on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and food security of mountain communities in the Pamir Region, as well as listing available MAPs, preparations of medicinal recipes, food, and conservation-related issues of key MAPs in the study area. Field investigations and observations during a five-year period reveal that MAP populations are declining rapidly and shifting from lower to higher elevations as noted by the local respondents. Individual interviews, community discussions, and field observations confirmed that, while medicinal plant resources were abundant in the region 15 to 20 years ago, these resources are rapidly being depleted due to natural, climatic and anthropogenic factors, such as prolonged droughts and biotic pressures (i.e., over utilization by both humans and livestock). Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants is rapidly declining: local healers who produce these herbal remedies tend to pass along the descriptions orally to family members who are increasingly less likely to transcribe these remedies or pursue indigenous systems of healing and treating of human ailments. Given these findings, indigenous communities should be made aware of the potential importance of these MAPs, as well as the effects of their disappearance on traditional health and food systems of rural mountain communities. Such technology transfer will help preserve these medicinal plants from extinction and keep the practice of herbal medicine alive. Moreover, the government should be encouraged to implement policies to conserve medicinal plants and protect other non-timber forest products from over-exploitation. Finally, indigenous knowledge on the use and preparation of these medicinal plants should be recorded to ensure this important aspect of the endemic culture is preserved.

Climate Change and the Development of Winter Tourism in Central Asia

Bernard Musyck – *University of Central Asia*

The paper analyses the effect of climate change on alpine ski tourism in Central Asia with emphasis on Kyrgyzstan. It is based on empirical findings derived from semi-open interviews from several key informants in the sector as well as comprehensive interviews with the management of all the ski resorts which currently operate in Kyrgyzstan. The ski industry relies on specific climatic conditions that have been changing significantly in recent decades: shortened and more variable ski seasons and strong variability in the quality of snow resulting in a reduction of operating ski days. In the West, ski resorts have invested (sometimes massively) in snow making facilities coupled with a diversification of sports and leisure offerings during the summer season. The present study aims to understand how climate change has been affecting ski tourism stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan in reference to the rest of the world. The literature on climate change and ski tourism is extremely rich but focuses primarily on Europe and the US. To our knowledge, there are no studies that have been carried out in Central Asia with only very few studies covering post-soviet ski destinations (in Europe). Our aim is to fill this gap. Preliminary results indicate that the specificities of the ski industry in Kyrgyzstan are such

(extremely poor capital endowments) that measures to mitigate climate change in developed countries do not apply in Kyrgyzstan where the industry is growing steadily fueled by an emerging urban middle class.

SESSION 2.10. Digital Transformation of Education in Kyrgyzstan: Distant Reality or Matter of Fact?

Moderator: Jyldyz Doolbekova – Taalim-Forum Public Foundation

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent global issues have worsened the situation and caused huge upheavals in the world's education systems. Shifting to distance education and e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic created the preconditions for the development of digital technologies and resources in the education sector of Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan. The session presented the key findings of the research conducted in the framework of "Distance education to improve the quality and access to school education in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan" (2021-2023) research project <https://kix.taalimforum.kg/en/> implemented by Taalim-Forum Public Foundation with their partners in Mongolia and Tajikistan, in collaboration with experts from the PIL Research Company. The session focused on how the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected an accelerated digitalization of the school education system, the organization of distance teaching and learning in schools, and innovative teaching models.

Trends in Digital Transformation of Education in Kyrgyzstan: Challenges and Readiness

Jyldyz Doolbekova – Taalim-Forum Public Foundation

This presentation analyzes the main barriers to creating a digital learning environment in school education in Kyrgyzstan, including the low level of ICT competencies among teachers, lack of data measuring the readiness of educational institutions to use digital technologies, different interpretations of the terms of digitalization of education and confusion in their application. Conducted qualitative research allows us to share certain roles of key stakeholders - managers, parents, experts, volunteers, etc. in the organization and experiencing distance education during the school closures caused by COVID-19. Also to determine the readiness of teachers and students to adapt to change, their perception and readiness for innovations, knowledge mobility. The Impact of Migrants' Remittances on distance education in the post-COVID conditions.

The presentation presents an analysis of established models of pedagogy and institutional culture that ultimately condition both vulnerabilities and opportunities for innovation and resources to create, maintain, and manage digital learning platforms.

Infrastructural Factors and Models for an Innovative Approach to School Education System in the Kyrgyz Republic

Marina Glushkova, Gulnara Ibraeva – PIL Research Company

The presentation discussed the readiness of the Kyrgyz Republic for digital education in the post-COVID period and the prospects for the development of innovative pedagogical activities in school education in Kyrgyzstan. The analysis of the perceptions and the attitudes of teachers to educational innovations revealed multiple understanding of the concept. This variability of understanding is attributed to the fact that it is extremely challenging for educators to problematize pedagogical activity in order to change it and to "think of a different pedagogical reality" while adhering one's own social, communicative, economic and other attitudes and prejudices. Thus, authors propose a typology of innovative schoolteachers of the Kyrgyz Republic: from an innovative methodologist to a "missionary", from an innovator to a "life guide", etc.

The results of the study showed how the involvement of communities, students and parents con-

tributes to the formation of pedagogical innovation, and the democratization of school education becomes a key factor in securing innovation in the school.

Deeper analysis of the “geography” and political economy of pedagogical innovations, authors hypothesize that the key to creating a model of innovative pedagogical activities is not only the innovation leaders, but also the readiness of the managerial culture for the emergence and consolidation of innovations in the school and the “infrastructures” for disseminating innovations in school education.

How to Measure the Readiness of the Education System for Digitalization? Adapting, Validating and Implementing a Tool for Measuring the Readiness of School Teachers and Students for Online Teaching Post-Covid-19

Mehrigiul Ablezova – *PIL Research Company*

Online learning is by no means a new idea, but it recently gained attention after the COVID-19 outbreak. Educators around the world have faced both logistical and personal challenges switching to online platforms and modifying their curriculum. Measuring the capacity to gauge how prepared teachers and students are for online education with an index has several potential benefits for educators and policy makers. The primary benefit of using a Readiness to Online Education Index is that such an aggregated index allows to measure the readiness on a scale, not just as a binary measure and to capture a greater degree of details on concept's dimensions. Another benefit of using an index is that it allows to compare the Readiness to Online Education Index globally and across facilities and time. Thus, the presentation will focus on the findings of three-country surveys aimed to adopt, validate, and put into use an aggregated index that assess the teachers; and the student's preparedness for online instruction and learning in secondary schools of Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan.

Teaching in a Digital Learning Environment: Perceptions and Experiences of Distance Education of Teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Almagul Osmonova, Aigerim Jolchubekova – *Taalim-Forum*

Based on quantitative research among teachers, the presentation discusses the accessibility of digital learning environments and the professional skills of teachers from remote regions of Kyrgyzstan. The presentation updates the experience of using digital learning platforms and tools during distance education. Analysis of the research data reveals the problems and barriers to access to digital learning tools and resources and demonstrates the need for professional support for teachers. The presentation will consider the benefits of digital learning and recommendations for the using digital learning platforms for professional development of teachers. Digital learning platforms provide an opportunity to bridge the digital literacy gap and improve teachers' access to relevant knowledge, tools, and practical learning materials.

Annex I

PROGRAMME
DAY 1: Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Bishkek time, GMT+6

08:30-09:00	Registration of Participants
09:00-09:15	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Gerry, Dean, Graduate School of Development, UCA • Timothy O'Connor, President, AUCA • Naveed Hassan Naqvi, Country Manager, World Bank • Baktybek Kainazarov, Head of Office, UNFPA • Tilman Brück, Professor, Humboldt University, IGZ, ISDC
09:15 - 09:25	Group Photo
09:30-11:00	PARALLEL SESSIONS SESSION 1.1 The World Bank Session: Findings from the Recent Research on Kyrgyzstan Moderator: Aibek Ashirov, World Bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aibek Ashirov, World Bank <i>Findings from the Listening to the Kyrgyz Republic Survey</i> • Gohar Gyulumyan, World Bank <i>Systematic Country Diagnostic Update – From Vulnerability to Resilience</i> • Chiyu Niu, World Bank <i>Don't be Fooled: a Few Thoughts on Development Economics and E-commerce</i> SESSION 1.2 Entrepreneurship Dynamics in Central Asia and Social Impacts of Foreign Investments in Kyrgyzstan Moderator: Damir Esenaliev, IGZ/ISDC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philipp Schroeder, Nazarbayev University <i>Entrepreneurship Across Central Asia – A Look Back and Some Early Insights from an Ongoing Research in Applied Economic Anthropology</i> • Marika Miner, University of California (online); Pengshan Pan (University of Pittsburgh) <i>Salient Cleavages: The Effect of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Social Cohesion and Institutional Trust in Kyrgyzstan</i> • Pengshan Pan, University of Pittsburgh; Marika Miner, University of California <i>Golden Promises and Divided Communities: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan Kumtor Mine</i> SESSION 1.3 Recent Developments in Afghanistan Moderator: Marzhan Aikimbaeva, UCA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahmad Barlas, University of Greifswald (<i>online</i>) <i>Political Change and Poverty among Rural Households in Afghanistan: Evidence from Marmul District, Balkh Province</i> • Atefa Bahr, AUCA (<i>online</i>) <i>The Impact of Women's Education and Employment on Their Experience of Domestic Violence in Afghanistan</i> • Zainab Adib, AUCA (<i>online</i>) <i>The Short-run Effects of Active Labour Market Policies of Germany on the Employment of Syrian and Afghan Refugees</i>
11:00-11:20	Coffee Break

11:20-12:30	<p>EXPERT SESSIONS</p> <p>SESSION 1.4 The State of the Kyrgyz Economy: Expert Panel Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tchoro Seyitov, Ministry of Economy and Commerce <i>Challenges of Sustaining Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan</i> • Kanat Tilekeyev, UCA <i>Macroeconomic Effects from the War in Ukraine to Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia</i> • Stanislav Karpovich, Businessman & Board Member at Keremet Bank <i>Economic Growth and Investment Environment in the Dynamic External Environment</i> <p>SESSION 1.5 The Changing Dynamics of Civil Society in Central Asia: How We've Come to Where We Are? Moderator: Medet Tiulegenov, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aizharkyn Kozhobekova, UCA (online) <i>Navigating Complexity: Understanding Challenges and Trends in Kyrgyzstan's Civil Society</i> • Nargis Kuchakshoeva, UCA (online) <i>Civil Society in Tajikistan: Systematic Literature Review</i> • Medet Tiulegenov, UCA <i>Searching for Tectonic Shifts: Changing Attitudes of Kyrgyzstan's Citizens Towards Citizenship, Human Rights and Civil Society</i> • Erkina Ubysheva, Smart Zharan Association <i>Shrinking Civic Space and Challenges for the Kyrgyzstan 's NGO Sector</i> <p>SESSION 1.6 Green Economy Modeling in Kyrgyzstan Moderator: Tatiana Vedeneva, Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almaz Azimov, Kyrgyz Japan Center; Aigul Kulmatova – National Academy of Sciences of the KR; Tatiana Vedeneva – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development <i>Debt Swap on Green Initiatives</i> • Darika Sulaimanova, DEKA Group; Tatiana Vedeneva – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development; Nurila Ibraeva – Kyrgyz National Agrarian University <i>Reducing Coal Consumption for Heating Private Houses</i> • Sonunbubu Sayakova, National Academy of Sciences; Saikal Esenamanova, Kyrgyz Economic University; Elmira Djaparova – National Academy of Sciences; Tatiana Vedeneva – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development <i>Comparison of Electricity Generation Options</i> • Saikal Esenamanova, Kyrgyz Economic University; Azyk Orozonova – Kyrgyz National University; Tatiana Vedeneva – Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development <i>Comparison of Options to Support the Transition to Green Transport (Public and Private)</i>
12:30-13:30	Lunch

13:30-14:40	<p>EXPERT SESSIONS</p> <p>SESSION 1.7 Air Pollution and its Health, Social and Economic Impacts in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan</p> <p>Moderator Jules Hugot, Asian Development Bank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katja Lovén, Finnish Meteorological Institute <i>(online)</i> <i>Air Quality in Bishkek: Assessment of Emission Sources and Road Map for Supporting Air Quality Management</i> • Rufus Edwards, University of California, and Jay Turner, Washington University <i>Health And Social Impacts of Air Pollution on Women and Children In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Entry-Points for action</i> • Zulaika Esentaeva, International Organisation for Migration <i>Air Pollution and Its Health Impacts on Internal Migrants in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Assessment Report</i> <p>SESSION 1.8 Perceptions and Attitudes on the War in Ukraine on Central Asia</p> <p>Moderator: Bakhytzhon Kurmanov, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kasiet Ysmanova & Tlegen Kuandykov, Central Asia Barometer <i>The Russian-Ukrainian War: Perceptions in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia</i> • Rashid Gabdulhakov, University of Groningen <i>(online)</i> <i>Russian Propaganda in Kyrgyzstan</i> <p>SESSION 1.9 Representation of Women's Art and Women's Stories in Museums of Kyrgyzstan</p> <p>Moderator: Elena Kolesova, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baktygul Midinova, Osh Regional Museum of Fine Arts <i>Tobacco Industry of the USSR: the Labor of Nookat Women Represented in the Museum Space</i> • Diana Ukhina, Bishkek School of Contemporary Art/SYNERGY <i>(online)</i> <i>Weaving a Memory: a Curatorial Research of the Fine Art of Kyrgyzstan in the Practices of Women Artists of the XX Century Based on the Collection of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts named after G. Aitiev</i> • Aleksandra Filatova, Narkhoz University / MOFA+ <i>(online)</i> <i>A Women at the Museum</i> • Aida Alymova, Kurmanjan Datka Museum of Nomad Civilization <i>How to Display in the Museums Festive and Everyday Practices Related to Women</i> • Altyn Kapalova, UCA <i>(online)</i> <i>Museums, Women and Social change</i>
14:40-15:00	Coffee Break

15:00-16:30	<p>PARALLEL SESSIONS</p> <p>SESSION 1.10 Agricultural Productivity, Food Inflation, Migration Moderator: Anwar Naseem, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meher Angaiz, UCA (<i>online</i>); Safdar Jan – UCA; Anwar Naseem – UCA <i>The Relationship between Land Size and Agriculture Productivity in Kyrgyzstan</i> • Zainab Muborakshoeva, UCA <i>Gender-Based Disparities in Agricultural Productivity in Kyrgyzstan: A Crop Specific Investigation</i> • Nurbek Madmarov, AUCA; Talantbek Asan uulu; Bermet Talasbek kyzy; Fatema Qambary – all AUCA <i>Drivers of Local Food Prices Inflation in the KR</i> • Zukhriddin Juliev, University at Buffalo (<i>online</i>) <i>Return to Migration Experience in Kyrgyzstan</i> <p>SESSION 1.11 Human Mobility Feedback Loop: New Evidence from Kyrgyzstan Moderator: Christopher Gerry, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aksana Ismailbekova, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (<i>online</i>) <i>Chalma-Grad: Mobilization of Kinship in the Context of Migration</i> • Daniel Kashnitsky, Paris Cité University (<i>online</i>), Jainagul Bayzbekova, Ministry of Health of the KR <i>People Living with HIV among Labor Migrants from Kyrgyzstan - Barriers and Coping Strategies on Their Way to Survival and Recognition</i> • Asel Murzakulova, UCA <i>The Apricot Power: Human Mobility and Agrarian Change in Isfara River Basin</i> <p>SESSION 1.12 Do Political Quotas Work? Women's Political Participation in KR Moderator: Gulfia Abdullaeva, PIL Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulfia Abdullaeva, 6,35 ммPIL Research <i>What Figures Show: Equal Representation ≠ Equal Power?</i> • Gulnara Ibraeva, PIL Research <i>Mechanism of Gender Quota as Bricolage in Current Kyrgyz Politics</i> • Gulnara Ibraeva, PIL Research <i>Myths and Realities of Gender Quotas: Case Study of the Functioning of Quotas in the Saruu Local Kenesh</i>
16:40-18:00	<p>PLENARY SESSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote Speech by Dr Michelle Brock, EBRD <i>Correlates of Life Satisfaction: A Human Capital Perspective</i> <p>Moderator: Tilman Brück (Humboldt University, IZG, ISDC)</p>
18:00-21:00	<p>Reception at Park Hotel</p>

DAY 2: Thursday, October 12, 2023

08:30-09:00	Registration of Participants
09:00-10:30	<p>PARALLEL SESSIONS</p> <p>SESSION 2.1 UNFPA Session: Demography and Population Dynamics Moderator: Baktybek Kainazarov, UNFPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larisa Ilibezova, Center for Democratic Research Gender Equality and Gender Relations in Pilot Communities of the Spotlight Initiative Gulhumar Abdullaeva, Anara Kudakeeva, National Statistics Committee Preliminary Results of the Population and Housing Census of the KR Fotima Zarchabekova, AUCA Women's Stories of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narrative Analyses Aizada Erkinova, AUCA The Biopolitics of the Family and Demographic Policies for the 'Ideal' Representation(s) of the National Identity(-ies): The Case of the KR <p>SESSION 2.2 Public Perceptions and Political Behavior Moderator: Bakhytzhhan Kurmanov, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Razia Abdieva, Damira Baigonushova, Sezer Bozkus, Kahyaoğlu - all Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University <i>Citizen Perception and Participation in Local Government in Post-Soviet Countries: The Case of Kyrgyzstan</i> Bakhytzhhan Kurmanov, UCA <i>Unresponsive Autocrats: Exploring Citizens' Perceptions of Open Government in Tokayev's Kazakhstan</i> Damir Esenaliev, IGZ/ISDC; Anselm Hager - Humboldt University Berlin; Lukas Hensel - Peking University; Elnura Kazakbaeva - Evidence Central Asia <i>Common Knowledge of Social Norms and Political Behavior: Evidence from KR</i> Kasiet Ysmanova, Central Asia Barometer; Daria Gavriushchenko – Friedrich Ebert Foundation <i>Kalys Kalaa: Resident's Perception of Bishkek Urban Development</i> <p>SESSION 2.3 Advances in Methods, Data, and Development Indicators Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gulnara Djunushalieva, UCA; Ramona Teuber, Justus Liebig University Giessen <i>Navigating the Path to Sustainable Development: a Case Study of the KR</i> Alberto Prati, University College London; Thomas Beuchot, Ecole Normale Supérieure <i>The Survey Fingerprint Puzzle of Life Satisfaction</i> Dina Mamadjanova, German-Kazakh University <i>Ethnic Disparities in Conspicuous Consumption in Kyrgyzstan</i>
10:30-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-12:20	<p>PLENARY SESSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Keynote Speech by Dr Arnaud Caiserman (UCA)</i> Food Security in Mountains of Central Asia: Down to Upstream Challenges Moderator: Kanat Tilekeyev, UCA
12:20-13:30	Lunch

13:30-15:00	<p>PARALLEL SESSIONS</p> <p>SESSION 2.5 Mercy Corps, WFP, WHO Session: Recent Interventions and Research on Health and Nutrition</p> <p>Moderator: Elmira Shishkaraeva, WFP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhyldyz Artykbaeva, Ministry of Healthcare <i>The findings form the National Integrated Micronutrient and Anthropometric Survey (NIMAS)</i> • Aizhan Erisheva, WFP <i>Accelerating investments into SDG objectives leveraging schools as platforms</i> • Nazgul Aidralieva, WHO <i>School Meals and Nutrition of School-Aged Children</i> <p>SESSION 2.6 Impacts of Climate and Ecological Shocks on Living Standards and Human Health</p> <p>Moderator: Maksim Kulikov, UCA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuraim Talantbekova; Burulcha Sulaimanova; Aisha Manasova - all OSCE Academy in Bishkek <i>Climate Shocks and Energy Poverty in Kyrgyzstan</i> • Inna Brusenskaya, MoveGreen <i>Air Pollution in Winter in the Regions and Major Cities of Kyrgyzstan</i> • Igor Hadjamberdiev; Mohammed Nasimi; Ibragimjon Damulojanov – Toxic Action Network Central Asia <i>Pesticides Pollution and Child Health in Central Asia</i> <p>SESSION 2.7 Intra-Household Distribution and Female Well-Being</p> <p>Moderator: Damir Esenaliev, IGZ/ISDC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burulcha Sulaimanova, Zhibek Kasymova, Meerim Abdykalykova – OSCE Academy in Bishkek <i>Impacts of Energy Use for Cooking and Heating on Women's Subjective Well-Being and Health in Kyrgyzstan</i> • Zalina Enikeeva, UCA <i>The Role of Women During COVID-19 in Three Regions of Kyrgyzstan</i> • Aisha Manasova, OSCE Academy <i>Gendered Nationalism: The Roles and Identities of the Kyrgyz Women in the Private Realm</i> • Asel Myrzabekova, FHI 360 <i>Exploring Social Norms and Social Services Affecting Domestic Violence Service-Seeking and Provision in Kyrgyzstan</i>
15:00-15:30	Coffee Break

15:30-17:00

PARALLEL SESSIONS**SESSION 2.8 Mountains of Sorrow: the Role of Art in Creating the Historical Narrative of the 1916 Uprising**

Moderator: Baktygül Kapalova, Compass College

Language of the session is Kyrgyz

- Gulzada Stanaliev, Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University
Ūrkün in the Kyrgyz Literature: Two Periods, Two Interpretations
- Nurperi Orunbaeva, Museum of Female Arts
Representation of 1916 Uprising in the Kyrgyz Contemporary Art
- Elmira Nogoibaeva, ESIMDE Research Platform
What Do the Ata-Beyit Sculptures Say About Ūrkün?
- Gulzat Alagöz kzy, ESIMDE Research Platform
Ūrkün Memorial Processions as a Memory Activity

SESSION 2.9 Mitigation and Impacts of Climate Change

Moderator: Bernard Musyck, UCA

- Aziz Ali, UCA
Impacts of Climate Change on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and Food Security of Mountain Communities in the Pamir Region of Tajik- and Afghan-Badakhshans
- Darika Vildanova, Deka Group
Mitigation Measures for Climate Change in Kyrgyzstan
- Bernard Musyck, UCA
Climate Change and the Development of Winter Tourism in Central Asia

SESSION 2.10 Digital Transformation of Education in Kyrgyzstan: Distant Reality or Matter of Fact?

Moderator: Jyldyz Doolbekova, Taalim-Forum Public Foundation

- Jyldyz Doolbekova, Taalim-Forum
Trends in Digital Transformation of Education in KR: Challenges and Readiness
- Marina Glushkova, Gulnara Ibraeva, PIL Research Company
Infrastructural Factors and Models for an Innovative Approach to School Education System in the KR
- Mehrigiul Ablezova, PIL Research Company
How to Measure the Readiness of the Education System for Digitalization? Adapting, Validating and Implementing a Tool for Measuring the Readiness of School Teachers and Students for Online Teaching Post-Covid-19
- Almagul Osmonova, Aigerim Jolchubekova, Taalim-Forum
Teaching in a Digital Learning Environment: Perceptions and Experiences of Distance Education of Teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Annex II

Data Users Workshop "Life in Kyrgyzstan"

Date: October 20, 2023

Venue: University of Central Asia, st. Toktogula 125/1, Bishkek

Organizers: UCA, IGZ, ISDC

Instructor: Dr Damir Esenaliev, Senior Researcher, IGZ and ISDC

Programme

09:00-09:10	Greetings
09:10-10:40	Introduction to LiK
10:40-10:50	Coffee break
10:50-11:20	Food security indicator, FIES
11:20-11:50	Using LiK and climate data to study weather shocks - Kadyrbek Sultakeev, AUCA
11:50-12:10	Questions and answers
12:10-12:15	Completion
12:15-12:30	Coffee break

Information about the study Life in Kyrgyzstan

Web: www.lifeinkyrgyzstan.org

Twitter: @LiK_Study

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Photo 6. LiK Data Users Workshop

Annex III

JOURNAL ARTICLES BASED ON THE LIFE IN KYRGYZSTAN STUDY

(Sorted by year and alphabetically)

Egamberdiev, B., Bobojonov, I., Kuhn, L. et al. (2023). Household resilience capacity and food security: evidence from Kyrgyzstan. *Food Security*, 15, 967–988.

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Mercy Corps is a global team of humanitarians, working together on the front lines of today's biggest crises to create a future of possibility, where everyone can prosper. Our mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty and

oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Mercy Corps has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 1994 providing humanitarian assistance to people, communities and institutions across the country. For more than a decade, Mercy Corps has served as the implementing partner of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole (MGD) Food for Edu-

cation and Child Nutrition Program. Since 2012, Mercy Corps has provided more than 3,000 metric tons of supplemental commodities (fortified flour, rice, peas, lentils and oil) to organize nutritious hot meals to over 150,000 children in kindergartens and primary schools across Kyrgyzstan. In 2021, Mercy Corps launched a new five-year MGD Program with US\$25 million funding aimed at (1) improving the literacy of school-age children and (2) changing social norms and behavior in health, nutrition, and dietary practices among primary grade students and their communities. More information can be found at www.mercycorps.org.



The World Bank is an international organization dedicated to providing financing, advice and research to developing nations to aid their economic advancement. By giving loans, and offering advice and training in both the private and public sectors, the World Bank aims to eliminate poverty by helping people help themselves. Since the Kyrgyz Republic joined the World Bank in 1992, the Bank's financial assistance has amounted to over US\$2.1 billion. The World Bank support has helped the country to maintain macroeconomic stability, invest in strategic infrastructure, and improve access to social services. More information can be found at www.worldbank.org.



UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Its mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA presence in the Kyrgyz Republic dates back to 1992, and it has assisted the country by supporting the preparation of the first national census, by delivering reproductive health commodities, and by building national capacity in integrated SRH and youth-friendly health services, in the development of policies in youth and gender equality areas, and on data collection and analysis. More information can be found at www.unfpa.org.

