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4 The Inadequate Drinking Water Supply as a Rural Disadvantage: A Case Study from Kyzyl-Jyldyz Village

Introduction

Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest countries among the former socialist states of Central Asia. More than 25 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the consequences of political, economic and social transformations have a remarkable effect on the people's lives. With the decline of transfer services and subsidies facilitated through the Soviet system, the economic situation of private households worsened drastically after independence in 1991 (Schmidt 2006: 18). Households had to adapt their livelihood strategies in independent Kyrgyzstan. In most cases, this resulted in attempts at diversification of income sources in order to cope with the new uncertainties, compounded by increasingly dysfunctional public utilities (Rost et al. 2015: 866). This resulted in an overall deterioration of living standards, with rural populations being more affected than urban dwellers. This can be exemplified by looking at the situation of access to safe drinking water, which in rural Kyrgyzstan poses an ongoing problem. While access to safe drinking water is considered a human right and a long-standing development goal, 70 % of the country's water supply networks are in need of repair or replacement. Most of the water obtained in rural areas is surface water, making its users vulnerable to catch diseases and leading to overall unsatisfying living conditions (UN 2009: 16). Against this background, the present study looks at the means and strategies of accessing rural drinking water with the aim to shed light on the interlinked problems for rural dwellers in Kyrgyzstan. The argument is based on a case study in the settlement of Kyzyl-Jyldyz located in Naryn Oblast', and its interrogation based on the following research questions: What is the shape of current livelihood strategies of the rural dwellers? How do rural households supply themselves with drinking water and what problems arise from the lack of functioning water infrastructures? By attempting to provide answers to these questions, the problems of implementing a functional drinking-water supply system will be highlighted in the contexts of prevalent government activities and community mobilisation in Kyzyl-Jyldyz.

Access to clean drinking water within the global development agenda

Universal access to safe drinking water is a long-standing development goal codified by the New Delhi Statement from the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation held in 1990. In the statement adopted by participants from 115 countries, it is proclaimed that "Access to water and sanitation [is] not simply a technical issue; it is a crucial component of social and economic development. Sustainable and socially acceptable services can be extended by using appropriate technologies, adopting community management and enhancing human resources. Political commitment is essential and must be accompanied by intensive efforts to raise awareness through communication and mobilization of all sections of society" (UN 1990: 2). Ten years later, the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations integrated access to safe water in the Millennium Development Goals as Target 7.C: "Halve,

by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation". According to the United Nations, this target has been met five years ahead of schedule. However, targets that are more ambitious have been set in the framework of 'Sustainable Development Goals': "By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all". In 2015, an estimated number of 663 million people, i.e. about 9 % of the world population, still need to use unimproved water sources or surface water. Moreover, it has to be considered that not all sources classified as 'improved' are also safe, as it was also estimated that in 2012 at least 1.8 billion people had to satisfy their demand for drinking water from sources contaminated with faecal matter (UN 2016: 10).

Insufficient supply with drinking water as an 'urban bias'

Supply with adequate drinking water is globally characterised by an 'urban bias'. Bain et al. (2014) show that there exist profound inequalities in terms of access to drinking water between rural and urban areas. These inequalities are reproduced through global development agendas focusing on cities. Even though the proportion of people in rural areas with an access to improved drinking water sources has significantly increased since 1990 from 62 % to 84 % in 2015, it is still substantially lower than in urban areas where the proportion is stagnating at around 96 % (UNICEF/WHO 2015: 17). However, during this period the global urban population grew six times faster than the rural population. This means that within 25 years around 1.5 billion people gained access to improved sources of drinking water in urban areas, while in rural areas one billion people were able to establish access (Bain et al. 2014: 510-511). Further, the classification of improved and unimproved access used to guide the implementation of the UN-targets and their monitoring does not comprise dimensions like water quality, affordability, reliability and sustainability (Clasen 2012: 1178; Shaheed et al. 2014: 283). 'Access' is also an elastic term potentially concealing rural-urban inequalities. About 79 % of urban dwellers worldwide have access to piped drinking water in their houses, but this is the case only for 33% of rural dwellers do (Bain et al. 2014: 510; UNICEF/WHO 2015: 17). Time allocation for the collection of water in rural household is therefore subject of several academic inquiries, because it has an impact on the use of time available for reproductive and productive work activities, especially for female household members (Koolwal & Van De Walle 2010; Ilahi & Grimard 2000). Because of missing access to adequate water infrastructure certain reproductive chores, such as washing dishes or cleaning the home, become more laborious and are more time intensive (Meeks 2012: 21). Generally, the quantity of water used by a household is linked to the amount of time needed to collect it (Cairncross & Cuff 1987: 51).

Drinking water scarcity in rural Kyrgyzstan

In spite of its large freshwater resources, Kyrgyzstan faces challenges in supplying its rural population with potable water (Isabekova et al. 2013: 2). Undoubtedly, this related to the fact that most parts of the drinking water infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan was built 40 to 50 years ago. Under Soviet rule, the agricultural farms, namely *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy*, were responsible to operate the water supply systems in rural areas. Local people were usually not involved in the construction, maintenance or repair works and the supply was free of charge (Topbaev 2015: 14). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the

responsibility for water supply systems were transferred to the local governments, the Aiyl Okmotu, which had neither the expertise nor the funds to keep them in an adequate condition (ADB 2012: 1).

Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan is the only former Central Asian Soviet Republic meeting the Millennium Drinking Water Target by 2015. Between 1990 and 2015, the population's access to safe drinking water improved from 75 % to 90 % (UNICEF/WHO 2015: 65). However, such aggregated numbers conceal regional disparities and differences in water quality (World Bank 2015: 6).

When looking at the data from the Joint Monitoring Programme of the WHO and UNICEF, the 'urban bias' clean drinking water supply in Kyrgyzstan becomes evident. 97 % of the urban population has access to an improved water source, of which 88 % are piped onside the premises. In rural areas, 86 % of the population was classified as having access to an improved source, but only 42 % have it piped onto their premises. Moreover, approximately 10 % of the rural population still use surface water for their supply of drinking water (UNICEF/WHO 2015: 65).

There exist altogether 1,074 centralised water supply systems in the country, mostly relying on access to groundwater but as many as 133 supply systems are fed by surface water alone. Poor condition of these systems lead to water losses between 20 % and 50 % (UN 2013: 104). According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration, about 11 % of the existing drinking water resources do not meet sanitation and hygiene requirements while in nearly 30 % of rural settlements there exists no centralised water supply system at all (Department of Water Management and Melioration 2013: 12).

The resultant insufficient drinking water quality in combination with poor sanitation in rural areas causes a high rate of dangerous gastrointestinal infections, such as typhoid fever, paratyphoid fever, bacillary dysentery and hepatitis A, particularly among children (Department of Water Management and Melioration 2013: 13; UN 2013: 104).

The government of Kyrgyzstan has certainly acknowledged the poor situation in terms of access to clean and potable water in rural areas but is still struggling to mitigate the problem. For example, Kyrgyzstan's 'Law on drinking Water' which was adopted in 1999 states that when communities are organizing themselves in order to receive a water supply network the state is required to build and put into operation such infrastructure in the course of three years. However, in reality this legal proposition is widely ignored. The Aiyl Okmotu as the self-financed and decentralized state body is in charge of practically implementing the Law on Drinking Water in its area of administration, but the needed financial support from the central government is more often thant not insufficient, even to maintain already existing supply networks (UN 2013: 105). Likewise, in contexts of rural unemployment and hardship the capacity of people to pay for water supply services is very limited. They need to pay for services of much lower quality when compared to the free high quality supply during the Soviet era. Increasing tariffs for poor service often lead to problems, even though the average expenditures on rural water supply were estimated as only 0.4 % of available household incomes (ADB 2012: 2; Department of Water Management and Melioration 2013: 13).

In 2002, the Kyrgyz government started to put more effort into improving the water situation in rural areas. This needs to be seen in contexts of development assistance, such as provided by the International Development Association of the World Bank and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development who jointly implemented a 'Rural water supply and sanitation' project. Also, the Asian Development Bank financed a project on 'Provision of infrastructure services at the locality level' (UN 2013: 105). These donor-driven projects are better known under the name 'Taza Suu', i.e. 'clean water'. One essential goal of the project was to establish 'Community Drinking Water Unions' as new democratic institutions responsible for the supply with potable water on the village level (World Bank 2015: 6). The Taza Suu initiative was implemented in about one fourth of all rural settlements in Kyrgyzstan, while the Aiyl Okmotu continued to function as the responsible institution in the remaining majority of rural settlements (Topbaev 2015: 62). By the end of 2007, water supply systems had been built or rehabilitated in 367 settlements, reaching a population of 614,000 people. However, the achievements of the project stayed far behind its initial aim to implement functioning infrastructures in 730 settlements. The project implementation was accompanied by many difficulties. Kyrgyz NGOs criticized the expensive yet inappropriate or poor quality construction-material that was used. An internal investigation by the Asian Development Bank itself concluded that there was large evidence of corruption and fraud, which led to a shutdown of the project (Isabekova et al. 2013: 4-5). Altogether, 101 million USD were allocated for the 'Taza Suu' programme that achieved some progress in the rural water sector, but also revealed persistent problems, such as weak sector governance and ineffective service provision (Asian Development Bank 2012: 1).

Methodology

In light of the questions guiding our research we examined both how rural dwellers deal with the drinking water problem at a household level, and collectively within the settlement. We applied a combination of social science research methods. During two weeks of field research, we performed 32 semi-structured interviews with members of 25 rural households, representing about 10 % of all households in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. The sample included households of every social status. In addition to the interviews, we investigated the functioning of social institutions in the settlement. Interviews were carried out with the mayor (Aiyl Bashy) and the chairwomen of the women's association of Kyzyl-Jyldyz, the nurses at the medical station, the head of the village club house, the director of the kindergarten and with school teachers and shopkeepers. Informal conversations and street observations formed another important part of the research design, as well as mapping and photographic documentation of the rural village setting.

The settlement of Kyzyl-Jyldyz: An introduction

The settlement of Kyzyl-Jyldyz is located 26 kilometres north of Naryn Town., located at an altitude of 2,150 m a.s.l. in the fluvial valley of the On Archa River. Together with the hamlets of Jalgyz Terek and Jergetal, it forms the rural municipality of Jergetal. Kyzyl-

Jyldyz is the Kyrgyz translation of the former collective farm "Red Star" that operated during Soviet times. Visible traces of the Soviet era are found at the "entrance" of the village where a signboard still welcomes every visitor. Even though Kyzyl-Jyldyz is still the official name used on maps, documents and passports, all residents of the village prefer the original name Kara Chii (Black Hay) and refer to their settlement accordingly.

The settlement consists of 260 households and has a population of approximately 1,300 people; statistically that leads to an average household size of five persons. Looking at the settlement's structure, the Soviet legacy becomes apparent. In the village centre the kindergarten, the school, the medical station and the clubhouse containing a theatre with 150 seats and a small library can be found, making Kyzyl-Jyldyz an exemplary planned settlement from the Soviet era. The village mosque was built eleven years ago with financial support from Saudi Arabia and is nowadays an important meeting place for (male) dwellers. Wide agricultural fields are located in the immediate surroundings of the built-up area, representing a sizeable and important part of the settlement. In a majority of cases, these fields are used as hay meadows. In September 2015, a project implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation aimed at the improvement and extension of the agricultural irrigation system and expanded the total irrigated area of the village to 278 hectares.

Current livelihood status of the dwellers

The livelihood approach is a human-centred approach and looks at individual households in order to assess their objectives and capabilities The approach intends to highlight the proactive role of households and individuals in shaping their livelihood situations rather than seeing them as passive victims of structural frame conditions (De Haan & Zoomers 2005: 28). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent redetermination of the political and economic system as well as the radical change in property rights in the aftermath of 1991 has to be taken into account to understand current livelihoods in rural Kyrgyz contexts. There is a broad agreement that rampant privatisation, a lack of subsidies and neoliberal reform policies had and continue to have varied effects on people's livelihoods in Kyrgyzstan (Steimann 2011: 28). In the past as well as today, mixed mountain agriculture combining animal husbandry with crop cultivation is a central pillar of rural livelihoods in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. A detailed insight into the livelihoods of the households of Kyzyl-Jyldyz is essential to understand the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of a drinking water supply system in the village.

Concerning the population structure in Kyzyl-Jyldyz in 2016, the number of children under 14 years was 370, 146 residents where retired and only 56 dwellers were engaged in off-farm labour and could draw a salary from the state. Those people where teachers, nurses, kindergarten teachers or occupied in the village administration. Many of the remaining 721 people described themselves as farmers or being jobless. These numbers underline that access to paid non-agricultural employment is still very difficult. This circumstance makes subsistence farming linked with animal husbandry essential to make a living in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. Therefore, access to arable land, pastures and livestock is a crucial point for many people's well-being. There are only six tractors in the village, and the lack of mechanisation makes agricultural labour time consuming and often requires work of the entire household. During the summer, farmers spend every day on the fields to harvest their crops as well as to help

their kin with these tasks. That is why on some days the settlement seems almost empty, and farmers on their ways to the fields told us: “If you want to see how we really live you have to come to the fields”. Nevertheless, many households rely on various different sources of income such as transportation, small retail shops and pensions. Furthermore, remittances from family members in other places have an important impact on the financial situation of most households and hence livelihoods become multi-local.

Livestock

Livestock is an essential component of the livelihood strategies of rural households in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. Animal husbandry can have a variety of favourable impacts. On the one hand, meat, dairy-products and wool secure a degree of self-sufficiency for many households. Even dried animal faeces are used as heating material (Güng) during the winter. On the other hand, as most families have no access to a permanent monetary income, livestock can be sold and consequently be used as a source of financial income at any time. Beyond the commodification of animals for self-sufficiency and financial income, livestock is used to maintain social bonds between and within families. Depending on the closeness of the kin relationship (cows or horses for close relations and sheep or goats for distant relations), relatives are gifted at funerals, birthdays or weddings.

The official numbers given from the Aiyl Bashy of Kyzyl-Jyldyz in 2016 point out that residents own a total of 609 cows, 4,364 sheep, 1,470 goats, 449 horses and 75 donkeys. As such, sheep and goats are the most important livestock in the village.

Arable land

In our study sample it is evident that there is an interrelation between landownership and flock size as well as over-all well-being. Four of the five households identified as large farmers owned between three and five hectares of land. Most of the smallholders owned less than one hectare and only very few were landless. Only one case was observed where land was leased from a relative. A possible explanation for these disparities in ownership of land could be found in the proceedings of privatisation and distribution of former *kolkhoz* property, as well as the subsequent modes of heritage (Steimann 2011: 80). Independent of size, land was mainly used to grow grass and barley to assure fodder for private livestock. In cases where households owned comparatively large areas of land but only a low number of livestock they were able to sell their surplus grass within the settlement.

Apart from stratified landownership all households make use of small private gardens for growing vegetables for private consumption, mostly potatoes but also carrots, onions, garlic and beets. These products are harvested through household labour and stored in big holes in the ground for conservation. Harvests can be stored and might suffice for a whole year, making people almost self-sufficient. In most cases, vegetables and primarily potatoes will also be distributed within the wider family living outside Kyzyl-Jyldyz, especially to children studying in Bishkek.

The broad engagement in agriculture shows that water is abundant for animal husbandry and crop cultivation but due to its insufficient quality it is not usable as drinking-water.

Financial incomes

Throughout this study it became clear that the post-Soviet transformation with its radical reconstruction of all political and economic spheres and subsequent massive unemployment shaped the livelihoods of rural dwellers in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. The previous chapters showed that somehow every household is engaged in agriculture yet with varying degrees of success. This results in a diversification of livelihood strategies. The village dwellers thus consider different ways to obtain financial income in order to sustain their households.

The highest wage that could be found during our field research was 19,000 Som per month, a salary drawn as head of the kindergarten, which should be seen as exception rather than the rule. Teachers in Kyzyl-Jyldyz could earn between 8,000 to 10,000 Som per month. The interviewed nurses earned between 9,300 and 10,500 Som per month from their work in the medical station. The salary of the Aiyl Bashy was comparatively low with 7,500 Som. None of the interviewed households reported that they sustained themselves through regular salaried jobs alone, as this would not suffice to make a living.

Social support in the form of child allowances, old age or disability pensions and remittances from family members play an important role for the majority of the studied households. Pensions and child allowances as forms of governmental support are calculated individually for each family depending on their respective land ownership, number of children, financial incomes etc. and varied from 5,000 Som to 6,800 Som.

Selling agricultural produce and the sale of animals in particular, is used by almost every household as source of financial income, which can amount up to 200,000 KGS a year. On rare occasions dairy products, vegetables (esp. potatoes) and hay was sold within the settlement and on local markets. Farming in the latter sense is not a significant form of financial income. Some respondents considered themselves businesspersons since they made money with transportation services (mostly bringing livestock to the markets). As owners of a car, truck or tractor these people seemed to have various opportunities to improve their financial situation. The interviews with three of the rural shopkeepers showed that incomes from small retailing amounted to up to 6,000 Som a month. The mentioned widespread subsistence farming make most families almost self-sufficient. As such, groceries that have to be purchased are limited to flour, oil, sugar, salt, tea and fruits to make compote. These products are generally not purchased in the shops of Kyzyl-Jyldyz as prices are lower in Naryn city or other places, and thus shop keeping becomes a business of limited lucrativeness.

Altogether, purchasing power among rural dwellers remains low and people did not become powerful market participants yet (Steimann 2011: 215). Since a drinking-water supply system is a rather costly project that often needs co-payment, the difficult monetary situation of most households could form an obstacle for implementation.

The inadequate drinking water supply in Kyzyl-Jyldyz

The current situation in the settlement

"This is the worst village in the whole of Kyrgyzstan" one resident stated right at the beginning of our field research. It turned out that the man was referring to the conditions of the local drinking water supply. In contrast to the majority of rural settlements in Kyrgyzstan a subsurface water supply network is completely missing in Kyzyl-Jyldyz.

Therefore, one will search in vain for the typical standpipes by the wayside that are common in other rural places within the region. Only in the northeastern part of Kyzyl-Jyldyz there is one hand-operated standpipe which was functional during our field visit and is also marked in the map (Fig. 1), and shown in the picture (Fig. 2).

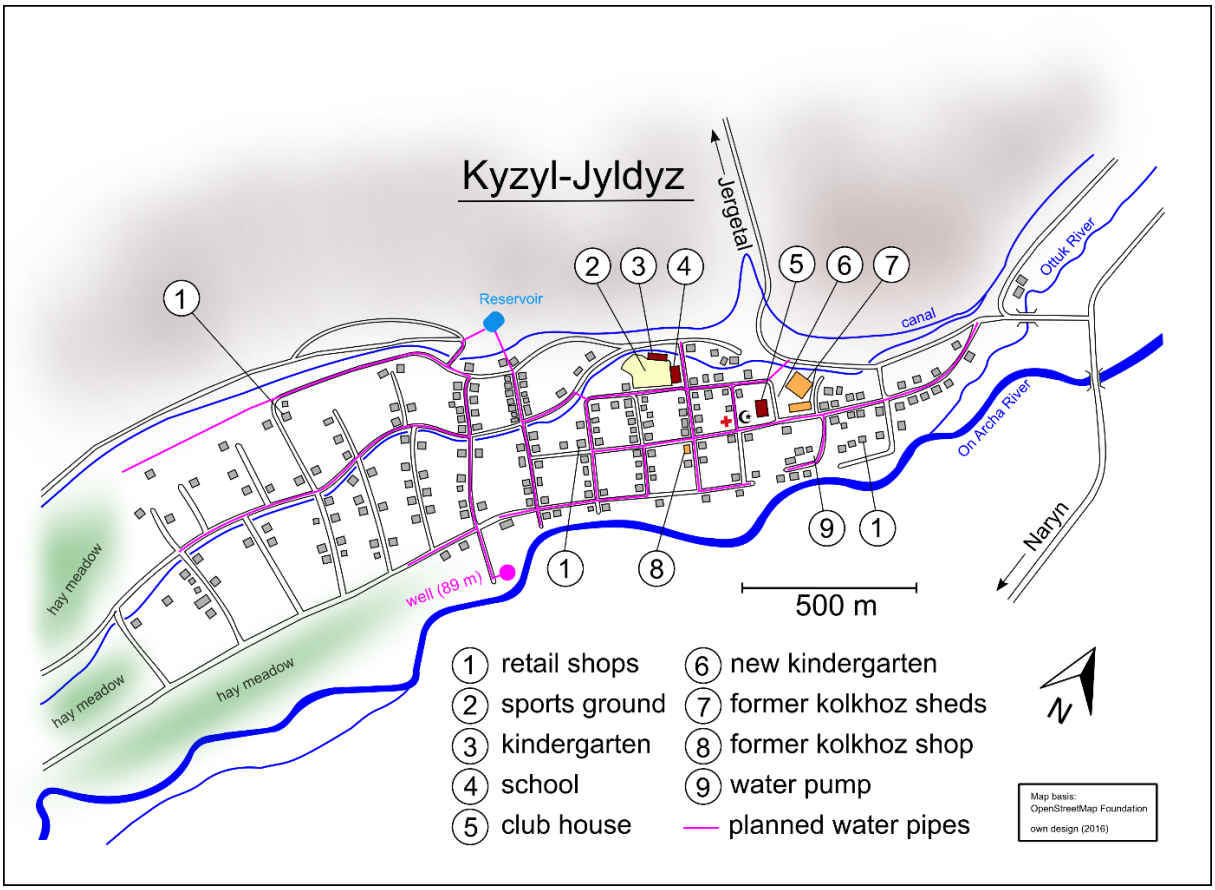

Fig. 1: Map of the settlement of Kyzyl-Jyldyz. Design: Stabler & Schubert, 2017

However, only a few households situated closeby seemed to use it regularly. Furthermore, interviewees explained that the quality of the water from this pump is not satisfactory and that it is usually out of order during the winter. According to the results of our household level survey, the majority of the residents use open surface water as their source for drinking water for most of the year. This surface water comes either from the On Archa River or the irrigation canals which are fed by the small river Ottuk. The river Ottuk flows into the On Archa River at the north-eastern end of Kyzyl-Jyldyz. The On Archa River, a tributary of the Naryn River, originates in a mountain rage about 30 km north-east from the settlement out of the small rivers Solton Sary and Kök-Torpok. Especially in springtime, the water from the river has too much suspension, which means that people are more likely to take on long distances in order to collect water. Since the settlement extends over 4.5 kilometres it depends on where the individual household is located if the water is either fetched from the standpipe in On Archa, a place situated outside the settlement in south-western direction, or in the north-eastern part of Kyzyl-Jyldyz. In these cases, mostly handcarts or donkeys are used for the transportation. A woman from the northeastern part of Kyzyl-Jyldyz stated that in her area, people usually do not own a donkey since they live close to the standpipe but people living remotely are more likely to have one.

There were also cases observed where a car is used for fetching water. For example, one resident stated that he would drive five kilometres to On Archa or six kilometres to the neighbouring settlement of Echki-Bashi. Moreover, it turned out that people who are using their own car to go to Naryn Town regularly take the opportunity to bring tap water in jerrycans from their relatives in the city. However, most of the year the majority of the residents relies on the surface water from the river or the canals. Members of each household do two to four round trips a day to fetch water. According to our survey, in most households the responsibility for fetching water seemed to lie with men.

Fig. 2: Hand-operated standpipe in the nort-eastern part of Kyzyl-Jyldyz. Photography: Schubert, 2016

Nevertheless, we noticed during our observation on the streets that also older children, mostly boys, were hauling fresh water. In general, there are no specific practices for water purification. Most of the observed households just let the water sink for several hours until the suspended load remains as residue on the ground before they consume it directly or use it for other purposes such as cooking, serving tea or washing. The virtually non-existing access to adequate drinking water in the entire settlement has its consequences on the health of the residents. According to the statements of the nurses in the medical station of Kyzyl-Jyldyz, about 70% of their patients have health problems that can be attributed to the consumption of impure water. In most cases, these persons are suffering from gastrointestinal infections that result in diarrhoea and fever but also skin rash. Especially in spring and summer, the morbidity of these diseases is high. Since 2016, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is offering training courses for medical staff locally but also in Naryn Town dealing with hypertension, which is in the case of Kyzyl-Jyldyz only the second biggest health issue. Since there is just basic medical treatment on site, patients are often referred to Naryn Town and sometimes to Bishkek. Due to the bad drinking water quality no hot lunch is served for the approximately 360 students at the school of Kyzyl-Jyldyz, unlike in most Kyrgyz schools. Instead, only bread, marmalade and Kefir are provided. During our household level interviews it became clear that without exception people see the inadequate or rathernon-existing supply with potable water as the biggest disadvantage of life in the settlement. Certainly, among older persons there seems to be a bigger acceptance of the issue since they are used to the situation for many decades. It also turned out that the information people have about the ongoing planning process of a water supply network varies, which also leads to different assessments of its success. Some of the interviewees were clearly optimistic that the project will be implemented in the following year whereas others resigned and did not believe in an imminent improvement of the situation.

An attempt under the Soviet system

Unlike in most of the rural settlements in Kyrgyzstan, no water supply system has been built during the 1960s or 1970s in Kyzyl-Jyldyz, when it used to be a *kolkhoz*. Only just before the end of the Soviet era some effort was made. From 1990 to 1991 building operations took place in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. The plan was to pump groundwater from a well close by the river up into a reservoir that would feed a piping network providing three standpipes with water in each crossroads of the settlement. However, the project's implementation supposedly failed because the pump was too weak to channel the water across the distance from the well to the reservoir that goes uphill. During the change of the political and economic system in the early 1990s, no progress was made to solve the problem. On the contrary, local people took the opportunity to illegally sell the still unused building material including the standpipes to Chinese traders. Therefore, the establishment of a water supply system in Kyzyl-Jyldyz went into far distance.

The progress towards a water supply network in the post-Soviet era

Due to the ongoing lack of an adequate supply with drinking water, a user group was founded by residents which consists of 15 participants who are all representatives of the different 'tribes' living in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. This group managed to submit a project proposal to the Community Development and Investment Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic (ARIS) in 2013. According to the statements of the head of the village and the chairwoman of Jergetal Aiyl Okmotu the project is fully planned. Each household of Kyzyl-Jyldyz had to contribute 1.000 Som to the planning costs. The plan includes a supply network that will provide water access on premises for the majority of the households. From the documents provided by the Aiyl Bashy, we could learn where it is planned to erect the subsurface pipes and added this information to the map (Fig. 1).The estimated costs for the whole project would amount to 64 million Som, which equals to almost one million US Dollars. Not least because the well has to be drilled deep, the project turned out to be relatively cost-intensive. There already exists a twelve metres deep well close by the river in the western part of the settlement (see Fig. 1). However, laboratory samples have shown that the water from it is bacterially contaminated. Since Kyzyl-Jyldyz has no sewerage system, the common sanitation facilities are pit latrines in the gardens. Therefore, the groundwater is likely to be impure until a certain soil depth. It was assumed that the well that will feed the drinking water supply network should reach a depth of 89 metres. For the last four years the Aiyl Okmotu of Jergetal as the body in charge for the water supply requested the funding of the project from the Department of Water Management and Melioration of the Kyrgyz government. Up to our field visit in July 2016 this remained a futile attempt. The Aiyl Okmotu itself, which has a fiscal revenue of 2.8 million Som annually, does not even closely have the financial means to implement such a comprehensive project. Moreover, in the main municipal settlement of Jergetal only about 35 % of the 3,200 residents are provided with adequate drinking water. In Jalgyz-Terek, the third settlement within the municipality, access to drinking water is provided everyday between 9 am and 3 pm only.

Conclusion

In terms of the supply with clean drinking water, our case study represents a drastic example. It has shown the failure of the decentralisation process in coping with the provision of basic public services. Even though the community administration, the Aiyl Okmotu, is the responsible body for providing the residents with potable water, it simply has neither the financial nor the technical capacity to act. Other examples show that even the maintenance of already existing supply networks overcharges the local state bodies (Rost et al. 2015). Simultaneously, the government in Bishkek does not meet its legal obligation, which delays the process to an indefinite period. In the case of Kyzyl-Jyldyz, it is hard to determine a leading cause of the ongoing deficit. Different projects for the communities' development, for example the construction for the new kindergarten for 17 million KGS this year, have been implemented successfully. However, the construction of a supply network is comparatively expensive since almost one million US Dollars have to be allocated to facilitate access to clean drinking water. Assuredly, the adverse geographical circumstances contribute to the difficulty of the realisation, a fact that also explains the failure of potential attempts during the Soviet era. The necessity of this investment remains nevertheless crucial, since the residents of Kyzyl-Jydyz invariably see this issue as the biggest obstacle in their daily lives. In light of the Millenium Development Goals the complete lack of clean drinking in the village water remains also problematic, even though this agenda more generally fails to sufficiently address the rural-urban inequalities (Bain et al. 2014). Finally, it must be noted that the inadequate supply with potable water is only one out of several disadvantages for the lives of rural dwellers in Kyzyl-Jyldyz. The insufficient supply with medication, small wages, and the narrow range of locally available job opportunities, supply with goods and the lack of infrastructure are further cases in point.

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