

Uzbekistan



UZBEKISTAN

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

**East and Central Asia Regional Department and
Regional and Sustainable Development Department
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It is hoped that the report will also be useful to government and nongovernmental organizations and to individuals working in the field of gender and development.

¹ For convenience, a full list is given in the Appendix.

Abbreviations

ADB	—	Asian Development Bank
BWA	—	Business Women's Association
CAR	—	Central Asian Republic
CEDAW	—	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGA	—	country gender assessment
CIS	—	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSP	—	Country Strategy and Program
DOTS	—	directly observed treatment short-course (tuberculosis treatment)
DSSP	—	(UNDP) Development Support Services Programme
EBRD	—	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
GAD	—	gender and development
GAP	—	gender action plan
GDI	—	gender Development Index
GDP	—	gross domestic product
GECU	—	Gender Equality Coordination Unit
GEM	—	gender empowerment measure
HBS	—	Household Budget Survey
HDI	—	Human Development Index
HDR	—	Human Development Report
HES	—	Health Examination Survey
HIV/AIDS	—	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICT	—	information and communication technology
ICWC	—	Interstate Coordination Water Commission
IDU	—	injecting drug user
ILO	—	International Labour Organization
IOM	—	International Organization for Migration
I-PRSP	—	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IT	—	information technology
LSA	—	living standards assessment
LSS	—	living standards strategy
MDG	—	Millennium Development Goal
MLSP	—	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
NGO	—	nongovernment organization
ODA	—	overseas development assistance
OSCE	—	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPP	—	purchasing power parity
PRSP	—	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SME	—	small and medium-sized enterprises
SSC	—	State Statistical Committee
UNAIDS	—	Joint United Nations Program for HIV/AIDS
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Programme
URM	—	Uzbekistan Resident Mission (of ADB)
WISP	—	Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper
WUA	—	Water Users' Association

Glossary

Dekhan	—	household (farm)
Viloyat/oblast	—	region (12 plus Tashkent city, which has the same status as a region, and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan)
Mahalla	—	a small (village-level) traditional assembly of citizens: these have been revived as community organizations during the transition period
Mardikhor	—	informal labor market
Raion	—	district
Shirkat	—	joint stock forming enterprise

Currency Equivalents

Local Currency	—	Uzbekistan soum (SUM)
US\$1.00	=	Sum1,130.74

NOTE

In this report “\$” refers to US dollars.

Contents

Abbreviations	v
Executive Summary	xi
Chapter 1: Background and Development Context	
A. Gender and Development	1
B. Demographic Background	1
C. Uzbekistan's Human Development Indicators	2
D. Gender and Uzbekistan	4
E. Sources of Information	9
F. Structure of the CGA	10
Chapter 2: Gender and Poverty in Uzbekistan	
A. Economic Growth and Living Standards	11
B. Income Poverty	13
C. Nonincome Poverty	15
Chapter 3: Government Response and International Commitments	
A. Gender Issues and the Country-Specific Millennium Development Goals for Uzbekistan	19
B. Data Problems and the Challenges of Setting and Achieving National MDGs	21
C. Uzbekistan's National Millennium Development Goals	22
D. Gender Issues and Uzbekistan's Living Standard Strategy and Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper	23
E. Treatment of Gender Issues in the Living Standards Strategy and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy and Programs	24
F. The Living Standards Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals: Toward Gender-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategies	27
Chapter 4: Gender and Employment	
A. Male and Female Employment	29
B. The Competition for Jobs	32
C. Employment in Rural Areas	33
D. Summary and Recommendations	34
Chapter 5: Gender, Productive Assets, and Access to Social Protection	
A. Access to Land	37
B. Access to Water and other Utilities; Women's Time Poverty	40
C. Access to Credit and Markets	43
D. Access to Social Protection	45

Chapter 6:	Gender Dimensions of Human Development	
	A. Health Sector Reform in Uzbekistan	49
	B. Gender and Health Care Indicators	51
	C. Maternal Mortality	52
	D. Gender Issues and the Incidence of Diseases.....	53
	E. Gender Issues in Education.....	55
	F. Gender Issues in Preschool Education.....	57
	G. Gender Issues in Basic and Secondary Education	57
	H. Gender Issues in Tertiary Education.....	59
	I. Women and Information and Communication Technology	59
Chapter 7:	Further Gender Equality Concerns	
	A. Domestic Violence.....	63
	B. The Growing Importance of Mardikhors.....	64
	C. Migration	65
	D. Trafficking of Persons	66
	E. Gender and HIV/AIDS	68
Chapter 8:	National Legal, Policy, Institutional Framework for Promoting Gender Equality	
	A. Legal framework.....	71
	B. Policy and Institutional Framework.....	72
	C. Women's Voice in Politics and Decision Making.....	76
	D. Nongovernment Organizations	77
	E. Development Partners.....	80
Chapter 9:	Summary of Emerging Gender Issues	
	A. Changes Since 2001	83
	B. The Emerging Gender Issues	85
Chapter 10:	Addressing Key Gender Issues in Ongoing and Planned ADB Projects	
	A. The Current Country Strategy and Programme Priorities.....	91
	B. Gender Mainstreaming in Strategic Programme Areas	92
	C. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Increasing Employment and Income-Generation Opportunities in the Private Sector	92
	D. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Agriculture/ Rural Development (Including Water Infrastructure).....	93
	E. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Education	95
	F. General Recommendations for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in ADB Activities and Projects.....	96
	G. Other General Recommendations	96
	H. Recommendations for Interventions Concerning the Different Sectors	97

Bibliography	109
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Appendix: List of Persons/ Institutions Consulted	112
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List of Tables

Table 1.1	Demographic Trends 1995–2003.....	2
Table 1.2	Human Development and Gender Development Indicators for Uzbekistan, 2002.....	3
Table 2.1	Gross Domestic Product Index in Central Asian Republics 1989–2004	11
Table 2.2	Growth of GDP and Employment.....	12
Table 2.3	Poverty Rates (Headcount) for Uzbekistan, 2001–2002 and 2002–2003	13
Table 3.1	Draft Proposals for Uzbekistan’s Country-Specific MDGs.....	20
Table 3.2	Gender in the Living Standards Strategy and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy and Program.....	26
Table 4.1.	Numbers of Employed and Unemployed in 2002 and 2003	30
Table 4.2	Distribution of the Employed Population by Branch in 2002 and 2003	31
Table 5.1	Women Farmers in Uzbekistan, 2004.....	38
Table 5.2	Survey Estimates of Share of Households in Urban and Rural Areas with Access to Selected Public Utilities, 2002	41
Table 5.3	Time Budget of Working Women and Men	42
Table 5.4	Entrepreneurs Receiving Microcredit	44
Table 6.1.	Life Expectancy at Birth for Women and Men.....	51
Table 6.2	Death Rate among Working-Age Population by Sex, According to Cause of Death.....	54
Table 6.3	Drug Abuse and Mental Disorders, 2000.....	54
Table 6.4	Numbers and Share of Men and Women Students in Higher Education	59
Table 6.5	Distribution of students in Higher Education by Branch Specialization, 2003	59
Table 7.1	Officially Registered Migration Abroad 2000–2003	65
Table 8.1	Uzbekistan’s International Commitments.....	71
Table 8.2	The Development of the Government’s GAD Machinery	73
Table 8.3	Share of Men and Women in Managerial Positions by Branches of the Economy	77
Table 8.4	Territorial Distribution of NGOs	77
Table 10.1	Achievements and Constraints in Gender Mainstreaming.....	102

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report is one of a series of country gender assessments (CGAs) undertaken by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide background information and analysis on gender and development issues in ADB's developing member countries. The primary purpose of the series is to provide input to the formulation of country strategies and programs and project design and implementation. This CGA for Uzbekistan updates information contained in an earlier publication, the Country Briefing Paper *Women in Uzbekistan*, published by ADB in February 2001.

The gender profile in Uzbekistan is influenced by many factors, but three dominate: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic difficulties of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions.

Uzbekistan inherited from the Soviet period aspects of gender equality that were more advanced than many other countries in the world. Women and men had equal access to education, health care, and employment. Literacy rates were—and still are—high, and social protection benefits were provided equally to men and women. Women's representation in top political and economic positions was much less than that of men, but there their presence was real. The predominant share of unpaid work, mainly home and child care responsibilities, however, was taken on by women; and the fact that women had to combine employment with child care responsibility led in practice to a certain gender segregation, with women tending to be concentrated in the lower-pay and lower-status sectors and jobs.

Although Uzbekistan avoided some of the more drastic collapses in social and economic indicators experienced by other countries in transition, the population at large has nevertheless felt the effects. Strains on the budget for health and education have affected men and women's access to basic social services and the quality of these services; employment is no longer guaranteed for men and women; most public kindergartens have disappeared, adding to the traditional time burden of women; and equality in access to productive work and to assets is less prevalent. Despite government efforts to protect the vulnerable sections of the population, new forms of vulnerability have emerged for men and women.

Uzbekistan has retained throughout the Soviet and transition periods its own strong cultural traditions. These place a high value on community and the family, and have in some ways been reinforced in the transition period as part of the rediscovery of the Uzbek national identity. In rural areas, large families are the norm, and women bear the prime responsibility for children and home. Lack of public utilities in rural areas and higher birth rates increase the time burden on women. The high birth rates in the 1980s and early 1990s have led to an increase in the pressure on the country's labor market and resources.

Background and Key Issues

It is estimated that Uzbekistan has a poverty rate of circa 27%. Sixty percent of the population, and 70% of the poor population, live in rural areas; over 30% of both men and women are employed in the agricultural sector; and over 30% of the rural population is living under the poverty line (compared to 22.5% in urban areas). It is difficult to get clarity on regional differences in poverty/vulnerability. While the Government's Living Standards Strategy (LSS) of 2004 and the World Bank's Living Standards Assessment (LSA) of 2003 suggest that poverty is more prevalent in the southern and northern regions, the preliminary results of the 2003 Household Budget Survey (HBS) give a completely different regional picture. The results of participatory discussions suggest that each region has its particular vulnerabilities. Apart from Tashkent City (which is relatively advantaged), it is difficult to say that any regions are better/worse off than others, at least in terms of employment and income-generating opportunities.

Preliminary poverty results for 2003 suggest that income poverty has decreased slightly, but the overall employment and wage-income situation is deteriorating. This is partly a demand-side problem, because the policy orientation toward creating a more favorable environment for private sector and small and medium-sized enterprise development has still not been felt on the ground, while other developments, such as the restructuring of *shirkats* (joint-stock farming enterprises) in the agricultural sector, has led to a further decrease in formal sector employment opportunities.

Economic insecurity and demographic trends have led to an abundant labor supply, mainly, but not only, of low-skill labor. Lack of employment opportunities mean that sections of the population, men and women, are withdrawing to small subsistence farming, or are becoming more vulnerable in the informal labor market, particularly in the system of *mardikhors* (informal labor exchanges). Economic insecurity is contributing to an increase in other insecurities and vulnerabilities, such as domestic violence and human trafficking.

The key gender issues emerging from the literature review and participatory discussions carried out for this assessment are as follows:

1. *Economic Opportunities and economic insecurity*: Available information suggests that employment and income-generation problems are becoming more acute for many sections of the population, and one of the outcomes has been an increase in informal and formal migration. This has welfare implications for families—men, women and children—and increases the vulnerability of those involved. Overall gender segregation in the labor market is still notable: women are still concentrated in lower-paid, lower-status jobs.
2. *Rural Development*: The available evidence suggests that women are not benefiting equally from the recent shift toward private farms, that they are disadvantaged in access to key productive resources (such as land, water, and credit), and that they are underrepresented in the bodies concerned with the management and distribution of these key resources. Lack of utility infrastructure and poor maintenance of existing infrastructure mean that the supply of safe drinking water is not guaranteed. This has

health consequences in some regions, and in others leads to an increase in women's time burden. The restructuring of shirkats, without a parallel development in other agricultural and nonagricultural rural employment, has had a detrimental effect on women's access even to low-skill seasonal employment and to noncash payments through the shirkats (e.g., cotton stems for fuel). Employment opportunities for women are also more limited because of their traditional child-care and other home functions. Fertility rates have fallen in recent years, but in rural areas still tend to be high, and cultural factors encourage families to have many children. This, coupled with the decrease in public preschool facilities that has accompanied transition, add another constraint on women's access to employment opportunities.

3. *Capabilities—Education:* Uzbekistan inherited good education indicators and has made efforts to ensure that they are maintained. Universal access to basic primary and secondary school education (grades 1–9) has been maintained, and literacy rates are almost 100% for men and women. Signs of differences in the quality of school education offered across regions and income groups can be observed, however. One of the main targets of global Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #3 (promote gender equality and empower women) is guaranteeing gender equality in primary and secondary education. Some evidence has emerged that upper secondary-level enrolment rates are decreasing for both boys and girls, but more steeply for girls. The fact that education reform envisages that general secondary schools will stop at 9th grade means that girls, especially in rural areas, may be less likely to go on to 10th–12th grades in academic lycea, in part because of existing gender stereotypes, and also because these classes tend to be offered at schools further from their place of residence. Girls will be more likely to attend the less prestigious vocational colleges. This will intensify the already existing gender gap in higher education and reinforce existing gender segregation in the labor market. It is important that reform efforts to improve the quality of teaching and the school curriculum tackle the issue of gender stereotypes in textbooks and school materials. Changes are taking place in school management, with more opportunities for community participation. It will be important to monitor whether women and men have the opportunity to take part in these new management/ advisory structures.
4. *Capabilities—Health:* Uzbekistan inherited a relatively well-developed health care system at the beginning of transition, but it could not be maintained. Most health care indicators deteriorated, including maternal and child mortality, and infectious and respiratory disease levels rose. The Government has embarked on introducing changes in the health care system's organization and structure, with the aim of ensuring access, while making delivery of services more cost effective. There concern has been to ensure that women's particular health care needs are met, especially in the area of reproductive health. However, the need to make formal and informal payments for almost all health services has led to inequities in access and differentials in the quality of services provided. A rise in maternal mortality rates in the late 1990s/early 2000s points to an overall deterioration in health status of women. This has several reasons. First, poverty and low living standards appear have had an effect on nutrition levels for the more vulnerable. Women's heavy time burden, especially in rural areas, has also contributed to their poor health status. Estimates derived from the 2002 Health Examination Survey suggest that 6% of

women and 4% of men are undernourished. Second, while reforms have been undertaken to ensure availability of local services, the quality of these services is not uniform. Third, the prevalence of informal payments may deter poorer women from using available services. It is important that both women and men have a voice in the types and quality of health care services provided, and that mechanisms be in place through which they can demand accountability from providers. Such mechanisms are currently lacking.

5. *Leadership and Legal Rights:* In May 2004, a new Presidential Decree was issued on “additional support of the activity of the Women’s Committee in Uzbekistan.” Basically, the decree allows for the same institutional structure, and the same ambiguous juridical status (the Committee is a “social organization,” which has the same status as a nongovernment organization [NGO], but is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister), but changes its activities, which may have a short-term impact on the capacity of women’s national machinery to deliver the government policy and strategy for advancement of women’s issues. The legal picture remains mixed: the overall major laws clearly set out gender rights (the framework), but the various legal decrees, regulations, and instructions issued by the Presidential Apparatus, Cabinet of Ministers, and line Ministries—which determine how the major laws are implemented—display a lack of gender sensitivity. Women and men need to be empowered to demand accountability from institutions.
6. *Statistics:* As can be seen throughout this report, the lack of data and limited access to data remain a problem for conducting gender analysis and identifying critical issues and priority interventions. This issue is not limited to gender, however, and concerns a bigger issue of how to achieve a restructuring of the statistical data collection mechanisms and how to reorient the prevalent attitude to statistics among government agencies (which is still predominantly based on a Gosplan-type reporting approach).

Government Strategy

Since the beginning of the transition period, the Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing women’s issues. This is given clear expression in national legislation, including the Constitution, as well as in the Government’s active participation in international initiatives, including the Beijing Platform, and the ratification of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1996. The treatment of gender as crosscutting in all policy areas, however, is still relatively new, but one which is being undertaken now as part of the discussions of the country’s national development plan for improving living standards, and in the context of the discussion of the country’s MDG targets.

The country is now in the process of defining its country-specific MDGs and preparing its first national MDG report. Two interlinked processes—formulation of a full poverty reduction strategy and defining the country’s own national MDG targets—are providing the vision and framework for the country’s development. While the MDG process is providing the vision for improving living standards, work on the country’s medium-term living standards strategy (LSS), and more recently its Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP), has provided the mechanism for translating the vision into concrete policy priorities, and most important, linking

these to the country's budget. In the LSS and the I-PRSP, gender aspects are treated as crosscutting issues, but gender mainstreaming has to be improved.

In order to reduce income poverty, the country will not only have to improve rates of economic growth, but also achieve growth that is labor-intensive and allows broad sections of the population to benefit from growth through increases in opportunities for men and women to engage in productive paid employment. Under MDG #3, a target of increasing the share of women in wage employment other than agriculture is being discussed. The Government has identified policy priorities in its education and health care programs and in the development of the agricultural sector on the basis of a small business and private enterprise reform program. These need to be incorporated into the PRSP work and, through this, more clearly linked to necessary budget allocations to support implementation.

Activities of Other Development Partners

In August 2004, a "Gender Equality Coordination Unit" (GECU) was created, in order to coordinate activities and technical assistance projects among development partners. The Unit includes representatives from ADB, the International Research and Exchanges Board, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Swiss Embassy, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development, and World Bank. UNDP has been active in provision of microcredit and income-generation initiatives; providing capacity-building support, especially to the Women's Committee; highlighting gender issues through the MDG discussion; and supporting gender statistics. The World Bank has mainstreamed gender, particularly in its health, water supply, and sanitation projects. Most bilateral development partners support gender mainstreaming through capacity building and pilot programs on microcredit, education, antitrafficking initiatives, legal and political literacy, human rights and women's rights, health care, and alternative childcare services.

ADB Experience

As part of efforts to improve gender mainstreaming in ADB programming and operations, a national gender consultant has been working since October 2000 in ADB's Resident Mission in Tashkent; attempts have been made to facilitate the consideration of gender issues at all stages of project development and implementation. ADB has been most successful in its efforts to mainstream gender issues into its agricultural/rural development projects, women's health issues, education, and microcredit. In the education sector, some work has been done on gender stereotypes in school textbooks, but this remains a vast area where follow-up and support is required. Gender and development issues have also been addressed in the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction project on innovative poverty reduction in Karakalpakstan. ADB provided technical support and participated actively in the formulation of the country's first living standards/poverty reduction strategy, the LSS. ADB has also been supporting UNDP in guiding the process of formulating the country's MDG targets and indicators.

ADB has pilot-tested an innovative approach to providing training for women entrepreneurs and farmers and unemployed rural women. ADB, together with other development partners and NGOs, published the statistical handbook *Men and Women in Uzbekistan*, which represents a valuable handbook of available sex-disaggregated statistics. ADB has been active in supporting and contributing to development partner coordination through its participation in GECU to coordinate activities and technical assistance projects among development partners.

ADB Strategy

Maintaining gender equality in access to education, health care, microfinance, employment opportunities, and legal rights is the key strategy to achieve poverty reduction and inclusive development. ADB's gender strategy recommends that gender equality should be addressed through a broad-based approach at the policy, institutional, sector/program, and project levels.

The overall approach to gender mainstreaming has been successfully applied to a series of ADB projects in Uzbekistan. It should be extended to include ongoing and future infrastructure (energy sector and transport) projects.

ADB continues to participate and contribute to gender mainstreaming within the PRSP process. The ongoing discussion of MDGs and their localization at the regional level is also an important vehicle for raising gender awareness and building gender capacity. The PRSP framework could provide capacity-building opportunities for key stakeholders, including the Women's Committee, to participate in the formulation process, and link the development of their new National Action Plan to the PRSP.

It is recommended that project initiatives that require government agencies and NGOs to work together be supported. This would help promote a more sustainable impact and contribute to opening up the gender debate in the country.

Further specific recommendations for areas of possible ADB intervention include the following:

Employment Opportunities:

- In order for women to be competitive in the labor market, and to be able to take advantage of new opportunities in the private sector, further support is required for measures aimed at increasing women's qualifications and skills, including business skills.
- Evaluate and possibly support plans by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MSLP) to promote more employment opportunities for women, including family-based businesses.
- Support the MSLP in its efforts to develop regular labor force surveys to understand better the employment situation of men and women.

- Better document the effects of shirkat restructuring on rural employment for men and women and carry out a needs assessment for *dekhan* (household) farmers, especially women. The needs assessment should take into account the significant interregional and intraregional differences.
- Explore the possibility of developing and restructuring regional vocational training centers as institutions to provide training in appropriate skills for men and women being made redundant in the process of shirkat privatization and restructuring. On the basis of the needs assessment for dekhan farmers, tailor specific courses for women.
- Evaluate the extent to which existing legal and social protection rights discourage the employment of women, and assess the right mix of legal rights for women in the formal sector.

Access to Productive Assets:

- The needs assessment of women dekhan farmers (see above) should also pay attention to the problems facing women and men due to the loss of social support systems previously provided by collective farms and shirkats, and look at ways in which they can be compensated within the existing institutional and budget framework.
- Awareness raising and development of gender expertise should be carried out among local authorities to counteract cultural stereotypes, which tend to work against the equal allocation of land and other inputs to women and men. Work could be done with the Ministry of Agriculture on this.
- Work with the MLSP, Ministry of Agriculture, and NGOs should be carried out to ensure that women have the agricultural knowledge and marketing and business skills necessary to work as small- and large-scale farmers.
- Further promotion of legal support services for women is needed, so that they know their rights and how to defend them with regard to land and other agricultural inputs.
- Support should be given to the introduction of a quota system to ensure representation of women in the management of organizations that influence the allocation of key resources in agriculture, in particular the Association of Farmers and Dekhan Farmers and Water Users' Associations.
- It would be worthwhile continuing to support work on raising awareness on gender issues relating to water management in rural areas, and provide further support to the regional gender and water network.

Access to Social Protection:

- Study the effect of the changing pension system on women's and men's pension rights and coverage in more detail, to ensure that the current working generation has equal opportunities to qualify for retirement pensions.

- Providing preschool facilities is not part of the social protection system, but efforts need to be made in conjunction with the Ministry of Education to develop community and other alternative types of child care support, which can provide elements of early childhood development, and also help reduce women's time burden.

Health Sector:

- Support the Government in ensuring that the ongoing primary health care reform includes policy measures that address women's specific health needs and ensures access to affordable health services throughout the country. Conduct better tracking of regional differences in maternal mortality rates and other key health indicators, to identify where reform efforts should be prioritized.

Education:

- The current redesign of the curriculum and textbooks is an opportunity to ensure that gender stereotypes are not reinforced through school education materials and develop standard criteria for evaluating the gender content of materials.
- Support the Government in its efforts to introduce elements of information and communication technology (ICT) into school curricula. Investigate possibilities of supporting access for women to ICT training courses in *mahallas* (traditional village organizations), as part of the needs assessment of female dekhan farmers. Such courses could be particularly tailored to girls in the upper secondary school age groups.
- It is still difficult to monitor equal access to equal quality of education: data on attendance rates are lacking, as are assessment systems for teaching processes and learning outcomes. This is a problem also being faced in setting concrete MDG baselines and targets. These data gaps have to be addressed.

Domestic Violence, Trafficking, Informal Labor Exchanges, Migration:

- Encourage the Women's Committee to work with development partners and NGOs to establish crisis centers and other forms of help to victims of domestic violence and trafficking.
- Support small awareness-raising projects among community leaders and women's committees in mahallas to help them intervene to help victims in concrete ways.
- Provide training to law enforcement bodies to ensure that gender stereotypes and traditions do not negatively affect reactions to victims of domestic violence (i.e., to assume that such cases are private, family matters).
- Encourage the Government to develop clearer legislation concerning domestic violence.
- Women need to know their legal rights in order to ensure that they can protect themselves from unscrupulous middlemen in the mardikhors; small projects with

NGOs could be used to provide legal and other advice; support services should be made available on the sites of mardikhors, especially for women arriving from rural areas.

- Stress the importance in local communities of young women's continuing their education after obligatory school, in order to broaden their employment choices; carry out awareness raising on the risks of mardikhors (and traffickers) in the upper grades of secondary schools and in the mahallas.
- Development partners should support the Government in its efforts to work with trafficking destination countries.

Legislation and Institutions:

- Explore the possibility of providing gender training at the training academy of the Presidential Apparatus and introducing it into the regular training courses offered for government officials.
- Continue (or start) efforts to build up capacity building within the Women's Committee and its various branches. This should be done in close coordination with UNDP, which is already offering support to the new management.

Statistics:

- Systematic work on statistics is required. One clear gap is a time use survey, which would provide more data on the differences in women's and men's time burdens. Capacity building for government counterparts is also required to show how the data can be used for monitoring project outcomes and to better inform policy decisions. Work on statistics should be closely coordinated with UNDP, the World Bank, and Britain's Department for International Development, which are currently discussing different aspects of support in this area.

Chapter 1 **Background and Development Context**

This report is one of a series of country gender assessments (CGAs) undertaken by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide background information and analysis on gender and development issues in ADB's developing member countries. The primary purpose of the series is to provide input to the formulation of country strategies and programs (CSPs) and to project design and implementation. This CGA for Uzbekistan updates information contained in an earlier publication, the Country Briefing Paper *Women in Uzbekistan* (ADB 2001).

A. Gender and Development

Until 1992, ADB had a policy on Women in Development. The approach was to look at women as a special target group and design a series of concrete activities/projects within ADB's operational programs that were aimed specifically at supporting women. Since 1992, a change in approach has taken place: gender (rather than women) is treated as a crosscutting issue relevant to all social and economic processes. The background to the change in approach is the recognition that unequal treatment of men and women with respect to employment opportunities, access to production resources, social protection benefits, education and health care services, etc., is first, economically inefficient and not in the interest of the country's development; and second, not socially acceptable or just. The long-term effects of excluding any sector of the population from the benefits of economic growth and development will be negative for the economy and society. In practice, this means that in all policy areas, attention is paid to the way in which policy affects the rights and opportunities of both men and women, and that gender considerations are addressed in all sectors and all stages of project work with development partners.

With regard to ADB's operations in Uzbekistan, this CGA aims to provide inputs to ensure that gender issues relevant to the country are addressed in the CSP, which will be drafted in 2005.

B. Demographic Background

Uzbekistan had an estimated population of 25,707,400 in 2003/2004, of which women made up 50.1%. Over one third of the population (36%) lives in urban areas and 64% in rural areas. Uzbeks make up 77.2% of the population, with the remainder being Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Tatars, and other smaller ethnic groups. The country is landlocked and shares borders with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Administratively the country is divided into 12 *viloyats* or *oblasts* (regions), plus the capital city of Tashkent (which, with a population of over 2 million, is considered the equivalent of a region), and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan.

In 2003, the birth rate was 19.8 per 1,000, and the annual natural population growth rate was 14.5 per 1,000. Natural population growth in rural areas is considerably higher (17 per 1,000) than that in urban areas (10 per 1,000), and 37% of the population is under 16 years of age. In the period 2006–2010, the urban population is forecast to increase by 3.2% and the rural population by

7.6%. Although the birth rate has been falling in recent years (14.5 in 2003 compared with 29 per 1,000 in 1995), the effect of population growth since the 1980s will continue to exert pressure on the country's resources and create supply pressure on the labor market for the foreseeable future (Table 1.1). It has been estimated that the population will reach 40.5 million by the year 2050 (United Nations 2003).

Table 1.1 Demographic Trends 1995–2003

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population (millions at year end)									
Total	22.9	23.4	23.8	24.2	24.5	24.8	25.1	25.4	25.7
Urban	8.8	8.9	9.0	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.3	9.3	9.4
Rural	14.1	14.5	14.8	15.1	15.3	15.6	15.8	16.1	16.3
Annual Population Growth Rate (%)									
Total	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1
Urban	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3
Rural	2.5	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.5
Average Family Size									
Total	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.1	5.1
Urban	5.2	5.0	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.3
Rural	5.6	5.9	6.0	6.1	6.1	6.0	5.9	5.8	5.7

Source: UNDP Forthcoming. Statistical Annex.

C. Uzbekistan's Human Development Indicators

The United Nations' (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) for Uzbekistan was 0.709 in 2002, compared to an average value for the Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region of 0.796 (Table 1.2). It ranked 107th out of the 177 countries for which the HDI was calculated (for comparison, Tajikistan has an HDI value of 0.671 and ranks 116th; Kazakhstan ranks 78th; Kyrgyz Republic 110th). The Gender Development Index (GDI) value for Uzbekistan was calculated at 0.705 for 2002, and it ranked 85th out of the 144 countries for which this index was calculated². (For comparison, the Russian Federation had a GDI value of

² The UN uses the HDI to measure the average achievements of countries in three basic dimensions of development: (i) lifespan and health; (ii) knowledge (adult literacy rate and gross enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education); and (iii) standard of living as measured by estimated income in PPP\$ equivalent. The GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in these dimensions. The greater the gender disparity in basic human development indicators, the lower a country's GDI relative to its HDI. The Gender Empowerment Measure focuses on gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision making. It captures seats in Parliament held by women, women administrators and managers, women professional and technical workers, estimated women's earned income, and the ratio of women's earned income to male earned income. Data are not available for Uzbekistan on the share of women administrators and managers or women professional and technical workers. Note that due to disagreements on the calculation of the \$PPP rate for Uzbekistan, the estimates of the country's HDI and GDI given in the National Human Development Report for 2004 (UNDP forthcoming) differ from those given in the global Human Development Report for 2004. Here we quote the values given in the global HD Report.

0.794, and ranked 49th, while Tajikistan had a GDI value of 0.668, and ranked 93rd). Lack of data means that the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) cannot be calculated for Uzbekistan (UNDP Forthcoming).

In the summary HDI index, it is the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita indicator that pulls Uzbekistan back. Its rating for life expectancy and education/literacy are comparatively good: for life expectancy it ranks 97th out of the 177 countries, for education enrollment ratio it ranks 61st, but for GDP per capita it ranks 141st.

Table 1.2 Human Development and Gender Development Indicators for Uzbekistan, 2002

Human Development Indicators, 2002		Gender Development Indicators, 2002	
Life expectancy at birth (years)	69.5	Life expectancy at birth female (years)	72.4
Life expectancy index	0.74	Life expectancy at birth male	66.7
Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)	99.3	Adult literacy rate female; ages 15 and above	98.9
Youth literacy rate (% ages 15–24)	99.7	Adult literacy rate: male, ages 15 and above	99.6
Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary secondary and tertiary schools (%) 2001/02	76	Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary level schools, female (2001/02)	75
Education index	0.91	Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary, and tertiary level schools, male (2001/02)	78
GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	\$1,670	Estimated earned income, female (PPP US\$)	\$1,305
		Estimated earned income, male (PPP US\$)	\$1,983
GDP index	0.47		
HDI index	0.709	GDI index	0.705

GDI = gender development indicator; GDP = gross domestic product; HDI = human development indicator; PPP = purchasing power parity.

Source: UNDP Forthcoming.

Education and literacy indicators for the country remain relatively high, despite some decline in secondary school enrolments (see Chapter 6). This is because basic school (grades 1–9, recently extended to 1–12) is compulsory, and, as in the Soviet period, strict controls are still maintained on enrolment and attendance of school-age children. However, the high enrolment rates mask quite dramatic falls in the quality of education provided at schools in the transition period, and growing levels of inequality in the school education provided. The infrastructure, curriculum, and teaching methods were inherited from the Soviet period, but falling budgets have meant that the quality of all of these elements has declined.

Figures for infant and maternal mortality rates are supplied by local health clinics, which have incentives to underreport because their superiors can hold them responsible for deaths. Official data are also based on the Soviet definition of live births, which differs from the standard

World Health Organization (WHO) definition and also contributes to an underestimation of the problem. Survey data supplied by the 2002 *Health Examination Survey* (HES) (Government of Uzbekistan 2002), provide much higher estimates: infant mortality of 62 per 1,000 live births (compared with the official rate of 16.7); and for maternal mortality, 32 per 100,000 live births (compared with the official rate of 26.9), suggesting little or no improvement in the transition period. (More details on maternal and infant mortality rates are given in Chapter 6.)

As to access to public utilities, the UNDP reports that 89% of the population had sustainable access to improved sanitation in 2000, and 85% to an improved water source. According to the country's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) (Government of Uzbekistan 2005: 16), 75% of households have access to central water supply, and 78.2% to natural gas. As in all post-Soviet countries, electricity is available to most households. However, these figures do not give a realistic picture of access to utility services, since supplies of water and gas are often irregular and subject to frequent interruptions; having pipes in the dwelling, which can bring centralized supplies of water or gas into the home, does not guarantee actual supply of these utilities. The quality of centrally supplied drinking water is especially problematic in Karakalpakstan and Khorezm, the areas which have been most adversely affected by the environmental effects of Soviet agricultural policies.

D. Gender and Uzbekistan

The GDI value for Uzbekistan is given in Table 1.2. Of the GDI indicators, the main gender differences are in life expectancy, where men have a lower value than women (66.7 years compared with 72.4 for women); and per capita income, where women have a lower value than men. Literacy rates and school enrolment indicators are roughly equal.

The current gender profile of Uzbekistan is influenced by many factors, but three dominate: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic difficulties of the transition period, and traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions. These are discussed below.

1. Gender in the Soviet System

Uzbekistan inherited from the Soviet period aspects of gender equality that were more advanced than many other countries. Women and men had equal access to education, health care, and employment. Literacy rates were high, and social protection benefits were provided equally to men and women.

Throughout the Soviet Union, employment was a right and duty for both men and women, and social services were largely based on the workplace rather than the household. This led to a high labor force participation rate for men and women. In fact, in Soviet ideology, gender equality was largely equated with equal labor market outcomes for men and women. But in practice, distinct patterns of segregation in the labor market were established: women tended to be clustered in low-paid industries and in the health care and education sectors. Overall, women had lower skill ratings, and they earned on average about 30–40% less than men (Davies 1989: 85).

The social protection system was based on the assumption that all working-age adults were employed, which meant that women in households were treated as individuals rather than as wives or mothers. Employment for mothers was facilitated through a combination of child care subsidies and leave. Although earnings and length of work service defined pension entitlements, (meaning that women's entitlements were often lower than men's due to time taken off work for child care), women could retire earlier, and due to their longer life expectancy, they received benefits over a longer period (Paci 2001).

However, gender equality within the household achieved less progress. Men were seen as the main breadwinners, and they did not in general take on an equal share of household responsibilities. Women were given primary responsibility for nurturing the family. As a result, women performed paid work in the labor market, and did long hours of unpaid work at home. The fact that the predominant share of unpaid work was taken on by women, and the fact that women had to combine employment with child care responsibilities, contributed to the labor market segregation described above. Since Soviet ideology equated gender equality with equal participation for men and women in the labor market, women often had very negative attitudes to gender equality: it was associated in their minds with the obligation (not the choice) to work, and the resulting double burden of paid work and unpaid household work.

The Soviet hunger for labor resources (the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by growing labor shortages) and for army recruits meant that several policies were designed to promote fertility and to help women balance employment and child bearing. Apart from the extensive system of child-care facilities, women were entitled to 3 months' paid maternity leave, a one-off maternity benefit paid at the time of birth, and up to 3 years' unpaid leave. Propaganda was used to encourage "mother-heroines" to have three or more children. The drive to promote high fertility rates matched well with the traditional cultural practices in rural Uzbekistan, which favored large families. (Average family size in Uzbekistan in 1989 was 5.5, compared to the Soviet average of 3.5). As a result, birth rates soared in Uzbekistan in the 1980s.

Women's representation in top political and economic positions was much smaller than that of men, but they nevertheless had a certain presence. This was largely due to Communist Party recommendations that women represent "quotas" of around 30% in top party, state, and economic positions. These quotas were never spelled out in legal documents, but were strongly recommended in unofficial party and state communications. Women hardly ever reached the 30% representation, but the quota system did help to promote their presence, which, given the prevailing gender stereotypes—especially in Central Asia—would not otherwise have been possible.

However, it is important to remember that the Soviet Union enjoyed distinct regional differences. Uzbekistan and most of the other Central Asian countries differed from other Soviet republics, *inter alia* in the status and position of women in rural areas, which in fact represented a large sector of Uzbekistan's female population. In 1989, 59% of the overall population lived in rural areas, compared with 26% in Russia, and 38% of the working-age population was employed in agriculture, compared with 14% in Russia (Marnie and Micklewright 1992).

The constitutional right to employment (the citizen's right and duty to work) was interpreted quite loosely in Uzbekistan with regard to women, partly because, unlike other parts of the Soviet Union, large labor surpluses existed, particularly in rural areas. The inability of Soviet planners to provide jobs for the growing working-age population, coupled with the traditional lack of mobility and attachment to family and communities, meant that many women were not in fact guaranteed employment. As noted, birth rates in Uzbekistan, particularly in rural areas, rose in line with the propaganda to promote higher fertility rates and with improved access to health care facilities providing maternal and infant care. Due to this combination of factors, 22.8% of the working-age population in Uzbekistan was not employed in the late 1980s, and most of those not employed were rural women. Only 46.3% of working-age women were employed by the state, compared to a national average of 84.9% for the Soviet Union (Marnie and Micklewright 1992)³.

While rural women usually lived in households on the territory of collective or state farms, they were not usually employed on a full-time basis. Most of the work was seasonal, and many did not work at all; they worked on their personal plots for household production. As a result, women's wages in Uzbekistan were also lower than elsewhere in the Soviet Union: 44.1% of working women earned less than 120 rubles per month in 1990, compared with 17.3% in Russia and a national average of 23.7% (Marnie and Micklewright 1992).⁴ (For comparison, the unofficial subsistence minimum for the Soviet Union in the late 1980s was 78–87 rubles per capita per month). The lack of employment and low-wage employment also influenced their pension rights and benefits.

While pre-school facilities were more prevalent than now, they were never as widespread as in other parts of the Soviet Union. In 1989, only 37% of preschool-age children attended kindergartens in Uzbekistan, compared to 69% in Russia (Sotsial'noe Razvitie SSSR 1991: 325–328).

Thus, in the case of Uzbekistan, women in rural areas started off the transition period in a relatively disadvantaged position compared to their counterparts in most of the other Soviet republics. One of the Soviet legacies in rural Uzbekistan is a growing unemployment and underemployment problem, which continues to affect particularly women in rural areas today.

2. Changing Status of Women in Transition

Although Uzbekistan avoided some of the more drastic collapses in social and economic indicators experienced by other countries in transition, the population at large has nevertheless felt the effects of transition. Strains on the budget for health and education have affected men's and women's access to basic social services and the quality of these services; employment is not as strictly guaranteed to either men or women; public kindergartens have almost disappeared, thus adding to the time burden of women; equality of access to productive work and to assets has

³ The figures were 84.2% for Russia and 71.9% for Kazakhstan; 12% of working age women in Uzbekistan were employed in collective farms, making the total share of employed among working-age women about 58.3%.

⁴ At least 27% of working women earned less than 100 rubles, compared to 6.1% in Russia.

diminished. Despite government efforts to protect the vulnerable sectors of the population, new forms of vulnerability have emerged for men and women.

Before transition, Uzbekistan received the equivalent of 20% of its GDP in subsidies from the central Soviet Government. With the loss of these subsidies, the country had to struggle to maintain expenditure on social services. This, together with the drop in the real value of salaries in the health care and education sectors, meant that the quality of the services deteriorated. Life expectancy has also fallen, especially for men; maternal and infant mortality figures and the incidence of infectious diseases have increased.

Child-care facilities, which were previously provided by state enterprises and collective farms, could no longer be maintained. The social support systems for the elderly also suffered. All this led to an increase in the time burden for women, who took on more unpaid work in the form of caring for young and elderly family members.

The closing of state enterprises and former collective farms meant losses of jobs in the formal sector for men and women, for which the emerging private sector has not been able to compensate. In the formal sector, women's rights to maternity benefits and leave were retained, making women less attractive than men to private sector employers. Economic hardship meant that women could not on the whole just withdraw from the labor force. Instead they have tended to look for income-generating possibilities in the informal sector, where they are more vulnerable, and have lost their social protection rights (to pension, maternity leave, sick leave, etc.).

In rural areas, the collective farms were replaced first by shirkats (joint-stock farming companies) and more recently by private farms, which employ far fewer people than the collective farms and shirkats. As argued above, rural women already had limited opportunities in the Soviet period. In the transition period, the opportunities have become even more restricted, and women have been more and more squeezed into household or small plot production. Previously, the household could supplement its income by consuming the produce of the individual plot, and also by selling extra produce; in the transition period, it has become the only source of income for many households. It is now possible to acquire the right to use an extra small plot (not necessarily next to the household dwelling), which can be used for commercial purposes (called *dekhan*, or household, farming), but the earning potential of the plot depends on the quality of the land and the local marketing possibilities.

Although rural women tended to do low-skill seasonal work on collective and state farms, and suffered from low wages and pensions, they did benefit from the social support services offered by collective farms.⁵ In the transition period, they have lost this social support system, without benefiting from new jobs in the private sector. In the allocation of land plots for *dekhan* farming that followed the breakup of the collective farms, women and men formerly had equal rights to land, but qualitative evidence suggests that women have been disadvantaged in this process.

⁵ Collective farms provided local control over the quality of schools and health services; in some cases provided pre-school facilities; and, within the paternal tradition of Soviet management, could help members gain access to deficit goods and services.

As noted, outside the agricultural sector, women were mainly employed in the health care and education sectors and in light industry. This segregation remains today, and wages in these sectors have suffered further relative declines. The low wages have meant that most men who were employed in these sectors have left, and women have also had either to leave for informal sector employment or seek secondary jobs (e.g., teachers taking on private tutoring).

A combination of economic hardship and a conscious change of government policy with regard to demography and fertility rates have led to a decrease in birth and fertility rates. (See the section above on demography: in the late Soviet period; the number of births in Uzbekistan was 30,000–40,000 per year, whereas in 2003 the number had fallen to 20,800. Annual population growth fell from 2.2% to 1.2% in the 1991–2002 period) (UNDP Forthcoming: Ch. 3).

The decrease in employment opportunities, the wipe-out of savings in the beginning stages of transition, and the fact that households have sold off many of their assets have led to increasing vulnerability for men and women. Uzbekistan retained a strong social policy, and early in the transition period (1994) introduced a system of targeted social assistance for the poor. This was followed in 1998 by a reform of the child benefit system, so that it too was targeted on the needy. However, the decline in the real value of these social benefits and cuts in social expenditure have meant that in practice they provide limited protection against poverty. While education and health care services continue to function, the quality of services provided has dropped, inequalities in the quality of services by region are growing, and adjustments in budget allocations to allow for more pro-poor spending are slow. The transition period has also seen the widespread practice of informal payments for education and health care services, partly due to the drop in real wages for those employed in these sectors. These informal payments represent a larger proportion of expenditures for poor households, and have affected the equal access to quality in basic health care and education services.

All of these consequences of the transition period have increased economic vulnerability and led to a drop in capabilities. They have also meant that, as men and women in various areas have become more desperate to find ways of increasing their family incomes, they have become more vulnerable to exploitation in the informal labor markets, and sections of the female population have become more vulnerable to human traffickers. The transition period has also seen the demise of the previous Soviet quota system, which promoted women's representation in top political and economic positions.

3. Re-emergence of Traditional Values

Throughout the Soviet and transition periods, Uzbekistan has retained its own strong cultural traditions. These place a strong value on community and the family, and have in some ways been recently reinforced, as part of the rediscovery of the Uzbek national identity. In rural areas, large families are the norm and women have the prime responsibility for children and home. The lower number and quality of public utilities in rural areas and higher birth rates increase the time burden on women.

The re-emergence of traditional norms, coupled with the increasing expenditure associated with education, has meant that parents are less likely to invest in girls' education. In the longer term, this is leading to a loss of capabilities, limiting women's employment choices, reducing their rights to work-related social security benefits, and giving them less authority and ability to affect decisions in the family and community. Dependence on parents or husbands, coupled with ignorance about legal rights and lack of access to legal aid, increases women's vulnerability.

Several studies have suggested that the strains of transition have led to an increase in domestic and other forms of violence against women. A combination of Soviet-style secrecy and local traditions have meant that very little open discussion of this problem has taken place, and no data on the problem have been collected. Domestic violence in particular is considered a private family matter, and even if women apply to law enforcement agencies for help, the latter are often reluctant to intervene.

In the Soviet period, divorce was registered, and alimony payments were deducted from the man's salary in order to ensure that women and children received the payments due to them. With the fall in formal sector and state employment, this system no longer works. Studies have suggested that cases of unregistered divorces or separations, where women have no legal rights to demand alimony from their former husbands, are growing. Mahallas (traditional local assemblies of citizens) have been explicitly asked to help prevent divorces. This may work against women, if they are forced to stay in family situations where they are subject to abuse and violence. Reports have been made of a number of illicit marriages, polygamous in nature, and of men having second families.

E. Sources of Information

This report is based on secondary sources (no special survey or study was undertaken). It has benefited from updated administrative data supplied by the State Statistical Committee (SSC). A series of participatory discussions/consultations was carried out in December 2004 with various of the country's stakeholders, including representatives of the Government, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and the international development partner community. A final meeting was held to discuss the main conclusions emerging from this assessment. This report also draws on the results of these discussions. (A list of institutions consulted for this study is provided in the Appendix.)

However, as with the development of the Living Standards Strategy (LSS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) documents, the CGA assessment has also found that the lack of appropriate and regular data sources remains a major problem for evaluating and designing policies in Uzbekistan. Both the LSS and the MDG discussion processes have brought to light and reconfirmed the lack of reliable and regular data sources on which to base poverty analysis and strategy formulation, and also to monitor the successful implementation of the future PRSP and achievement of the national MDG targets. The MDG discussion process has also shown that establishing baselines for targets, as well as suitable/meaningful monitoring indicators, are the main challenges for the country in defining its MDG and poverty reduction targets. In the case of this

report, lack of sex-disaggregated data for employment, access to resources, and lack of access to other existing data sources, such as the database of the annual Household Budget Survey (HBS) and the Ministry of Labor's ongoing labor force surveys, has limited the analytical base for defining the key gender issues, identifying trends, and evaluating the effect of existing policies.

F. Structure of the CGA

This report attempts to update the information given in the 2001 Country Briefing Paper, *Women in Uzbekistan* (ADB 2001). As in the 2001 publication, this report reviews the situation of men and women in Uzbekistan with regard to economic opportunities, rural development, capabilities (health care and education), and participation in decision making. Chapter 2 looks at gender and economic growth and poverty in Uzbekistan. Chapter 3 summarizes the government response and international commitments, in particular the country's progress in formulating national MDGs and its poverty reduction strategy. Chapter 4 looks at gender and employment opportunities, while Chapter 5 looks at access of men and women to productive assets and services, including land, water, credit, and social protection. Chapter 6 looks at the gender dimensions of human development, examining in particular gender issues in health care and health sector reform, maternal mortality, and incidence of disease. This chapter also looks at gender issues in education, and touches briefly on women and information and communication technology (ICT). Chapter 7 looks at other issues affecting the vulnerability of women and men, namely domestic violence, informal labor exchanges and labor migration, trafficking in persons, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Chapter 8 looks at the legal, institutional, and policy frameworks to support and address gender issues in the country, and summarizes the activities of NGOs and international development partners relating to gender issues. Chapter 9 gives a brief summary of the emerging gender issues, while Chapter 10 looks at how these have been addressed in ADB project work.

A. Economic Growth and Living Standards

It is generally accepted that poverty cannot be reduced without economic growth, but that economic growth does not translate automatically into faster poverty reduction. The trick is to ensure that growth leads to an increase in productive employment and that the poor have access to this employment.

Uzbekistan has followed a fairly unorthodox approach to economic reform. Unlike, for example, neighbouring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic, its approach has been very cautious, and has been the subject of considerable criticism by international analysts. The “orthodox” approach can be characterized by rapid price liberalization, removal of all consumer and producer subsidies, budgetary austerity, and trade liberalization and privatization. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, adopted a policy characterized by gradual price liberalization, continuing enterprise controls and subsidies, tight monetary supply control, limited trade liberalization, and slow privatization. It placed a strong emphasis on social policy, by retaining for much longer than its neighbors subsidies on basic goods and services, relatively high levels of social expenditure, and introducing, as early as 1994, a new system of targeted social assistance.

The evaluation of the results of this approach, and of the country’s economic growth performance, is mixed. A recent UN study points out that the country’s growth performance during 1992–2001 was the best of the former Soviet Republics (UN 2003: 2–3). By 2001, its GDP was 3% above the 1989 level, making it the first former Soviet republic to surpass its 1989 GDP level. The latest national Human Development Report also reports that for the period 1991–2003, Uzbekistan achieved the best cumulative growth results of all the CIS countries. (GDP in 2003 is reported to be 111.3% of its 1991 level, compared to 83.6% for Russia, 106.2% for Kazakhstan, and 54% for Tajikistan [CER 2004: Table 2.1].) However, while Uzbekistan experienced the smallest decline in GDP in the 1991–1995 period among the Central Asian Republics (CARs), its annual rate of growth of GDP in the 1996–2003 period was 3.5–4.0%, which was lower than in other CARs (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.1 Gross Domestic Product Index in
Central Asian Republics 1989–2004 (1989 = 100)**

	1989–1995	1995–2003	2003–2004
Kazakhstan	61	142	109
Kyrgyz Republic	50	143	105
Tajikistan	41	151	108
Turkmenistan	51	160	107
Uzbekistan	84	126	107

Source: Cornia forthcoming 2006 (based on information from Economic Intelligence Unit and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD] for data up to 2001); see also chapters by David Kotz in CER (2003).

Table 2.2 Growth of GDP and Employment
(Percentage Annual Growth Rate)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
GDP	1.7	5.2	4.2	4.4	3.8	4.5
Employment	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.7

Source: Ministry of Economics, quoted in CER (2003): ch. 6.

In terms of economic policy and growth, the transition period in Uzbekistan can be divided into the macroeconomic stabilization period of 1991–1995, the import substitution phase of 1996–2003, and the post-2003 phase, which shows some first signs of a turn toward a more orthodox approach.

During the first phase of transition (1991–1995), Uzbekistan was subject to the same external shocks as other republics, but the figures on economic growth suggest that with its “cautious” approach, it managed to cushion itself to a certain extent from drastic economic decline and falls in living standards. In the second, “import substitution phase” (1996–2003), the focus was on using state control over economic choices and allocation of resources to achieve self-sufficiency in oil and grain, followed by attempts to develop import-substituting industries (automobile, chemical) led by large enterprises over which the government retained influence.

In practice this import-substituting policy required a transfer of resources from agriculture to the small capital-intensive section of industry. The transfer of resources was achieved by retaining state control over cotton production and exchange rates (state orders, production quotas, and procurement prices set well below world market prices; centralized exports; and a dual-exchange rate mechanism). Revenue from cotton exports was used to finance imports for protected industries.⁶ Agricultural growth remained positive, but state controls on prices, production quotas, and inputs and the implicit transfer of resources from the agricultural sector to support industrial development resulted in low agricultural wages and their decline relative to other sectors,⁷ as well as wage arrears.

What has been the effect of economic policy on living standards? The Government has been successful in maintaining macroeconomic stability. It has been less successful in obtaining growth rates high enough to be translated into higher standards of living and employment generation. Growth has been concentrated in capital-intensive industries (such as energy and transportation), rather than labor-intensive sectors. The policy of taxing agriculture to finance the development of capital-intensive and urban-based industries did little to increase employment and income-generation opportunities for the working-age population, especially in rural areas. Growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has been slow, and poor workers generally do not have the skills, access to credit, or productive resources to be able to participate in private sector growth (CER 2003: ch. 6). Between 1996–2001, growth in employment lagged behind economic growth, and employment

⁶ It is estimated that in 1999, the cotton sector transferred approximately 6.7% of GDP to the import sector. Cornia, forthcoming 2006: 12.

⁷ The average agricultural wage declined by 50% relative to the national average in the 1991–2000 period.

growth has also not been equal across sectors and regions. The strict control over the exchange rate and money supply led to restrictions on the amount of money in circulation, which has on occasion penalized the poor. Rural areas in the late 1990s basically operated a noncash economy. Further, the Government was not able to maintain expenditure on social transfers: in 1996–2002, expenditure on social transfers is reported to have dropped from 4% to 2% of GDP.

B. Income Poverty

Lack of data means that it is difficult to track poverty rates from the 1990s onward, but the available evidence suggests that poverty grew in the first years of transition (1991–1995), then stabilized in the mid-1990s (CER 2003: ch. 6).⁸ In the second phase of transition (1996–2003), as the effect of policies aimed at transferring resources out of agriculture and rural areas began to be felt, poverty rates began to climb. From 1995 onwards, inequality is thought to have increased.

The World Bank in its *Living Standards Assessment* (LSA) (World Bank 2003), and the Government's LSS use the 2001 HBS results and a poverty line based on a minimum consumption basket for food products to estimate poverty levels in the country. It is estimated that 27.5% of the population was living below the poverty line in 2001 (Table 2.3).⁹ Nine percent are estimated to have been living in extreme poverty.

Table 2.3 Poverty Rates (Headcount) for Uzbekistan, 2001–2002 and 2002–2003

	2000–2001	2002–2003
Urban	22.5	22.0
Rural	30.5	28.7
Male head of household	28.0	27.2
Female head of household	25.0	22.2
<i>Economic Zones</i> ^a		
Tashkent	13.3	16.8
Mirzachul	21.3	37.0
Fergana	28.6	30.3
Northern	33.5	27.8
Central	21.4	24.7
Southern	47.4	26.4
Total Uzbekistan	27.5	26.2

^a = Mirzachul includes Tashkent, Syrdarya, and Dzhizak oblasts (regions); Fergana includes Namangan, Andizhan, and Fergana oblasts; Northern includes Karakalpakstan and Khorezm; Central includes Navoi, Bukhara, and Samarkand; and Southern includes Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya.

Source: Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 6.

⁸ Poverty estimates are not available, due to the fact that the SSC continued with the old Soviet Household Budget Survey (HBS) until 2001. This was carried out on a regular annual basis, but was based on a sample of 4,000 households (no rotation) that was not nationally representative. Data from this household survey were available only in limited tables on incomes and expenditures. The country also has had no official poverty line. A one-off survey of 20,000 households was carried out by the SSC in 2004, but the data and details on the sample were never made available. The information provided in this section derives largely from CER (2003), and Cornia (forthcoming). A new HBS, based on a nationally representative sample of 10,000 households (rotating monthly) was introduced in 2001 with technical assistance from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the World Bank. This provides the basis for estimates of income poverty given in the next section. It is important to remember that Uzbekistan started the transition period with higher poverty levels than most of the other ex-Soviet republics. The share of the population with per capita monthly income below 75 rubles in 1989 (the unofficial poverty line) was 11.1% in the USSR, 5% in Russia, and 43.6% in Uzbekistan as a whole (only Tajikistan had a higher poverty headcount). See Marnie 1992.

⁹ The poverty line used is one based on the cost of a minimum food basket that would provide 2,100 calories per day (World Bank 2003).

This is the first official estimate of income poverty in the country, and represents an important first step in opening up the debate on poverty.¹⁰ Work is currently being carried out by the SSC, within the framework of the PRSP, and with the support of the World Bank, to update the poverty estimates for 2003. Preliminary estimates suggest that the overall level of poverty fell slightly to 26.2% in 2003.

The 2001 HBS results suggest that around 70% of the poor population lives in rural areas. The poverty rate there in 2001 was 30.5%, compared with 22.5% in urban areas; 28.7% in rural and 22.0% in urban areas in 2003. However, other surveys have also suggested that the poverty risk is high for the population living in small towns, where employment opportunities have decreased (due to, for example, the nonfunctioning of former monoenterprises), and access to land is more limited.¹¹

The 2001 results suggest that poverty risks differ according to region of residence (the southern and western regions having a higher risk), and size of household. However, the preliminary 2003 results show a strikingly different distribution of the poor by region of residence, and it is therefore not possible at the moment to make strong statements about the extent and character of regional differences in poverty levels.

Households with an unemployed head of household are more likely to be poor, but over 50% of the poor live in households where the head of household is actually employed. So the problem of poverty is not linked just to unemployment, but to underemployment and low wages. Low wages in the public sector (where wages are 60% of the national average) and agriculture (50% of the national average) contribute to poverty among the employed.

It is possible, but not useful, to disaggregate the poverty data by gender, as the household is used as the unit of analysis and the household is assumed to be “gender neutral.” Individuals are ranked as being above or below the poverty line on the basis of the average per capita consumption expenditure level of the household where they live. Since the male and female samples are more or less evenly distributed throughout the overall sample of households, they will automatically have an equal rate of poverty.

The HBS can be used to look at the relative poverty risk of male and female-headed households, but it is not possible to look at the intrahousehold distribution of resources. The 2001 results suggest that 28% of male heads of household were living below the poverty line, compared with 25% of female heads of household (27.2% and 22.2% in 2003). However, it is not clear whether the poverty risk differs between, for example, women pensioners and women single parents with children.

Poorer households are larger and have more children (four or more) and adults. The poverty risks for households where the head works in industry are higher than those where the head of household works in agriculture, although wages in agriculture tend to be lower, suggesting that

¹⁰ See footnote 18.

¹¹ See for example, Djizhak oblast survey conducted as part of the preparation for the LSS (Tahlil Sociological Research Company 2003).

household plots of land in rural areas still provide a certain safety net (World Bank 2003). However, over 60% of families receiving targeted social assistance benefits have access to land plots, suggesting that the productivity of these plots is not always sufficient to allow profitable agricultural activity. In fact, a study by the CER using the 2001 HBS data shows that although 95% of the poor have access to land, and 97.8% of the nonpoor (i.e., the difference in access between poor and nonpoor is small); 53% of the land of the poor is uncultivated, compared to 35.3% of the land of the nonpoor; and 63.7% of the poor use the land for their own consumption and 16.8% for consumption and sale, compared with 52.4% and 29.9% for the nonpoor (CER 2003: ch. 3). Thus, access to land in itself does not guarantee protection from poverty.¹²

The World Bank claims that the 2001 HBS data do not permit estimation of inequality in consumption or income (World Bank 2003), but some evidence shows that inequality has grown considerably over the transition period. The Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality) is estimated to have grown from 0.31 in 1995 to 0.42 in 1997, before falling to 0.39 in 2000. However, the available data are thought to underestimate income from property and entrepreneurial activity, meaning that overall inequality has probably grown to a greater extent than the data suggest. The Gini coefficient based on distribution of wage earnings rose from 0.26 in 1991 to 0.42 in 2001 (Cornia forthcoming: 16–20). The share of wages in total monetary household income dropped substantially (from 57.0% in 1991 to less than 28.2% in 2003), but the dispersion has widened significantly: in 1991–2000, the richest fifth of workers experienced a rise in their share of wage income from 39% to 49%, while the share of the poorest fifth declined from 11% to 6.5% (CER 2003: ch. 6).

To summarize: as in other countries of the CIS, Uzbekistan suffered a decline in most economic and social indicators in the first years of transition (1991–1995). However, the decline in economic output was arguably less severe than in other CIS countries: levels of social transfers were kept relatively high and subsidies on basic goods were removed gradually. Since 1995, the country has had positive economic growth, but at fairly low levels. The evidence suggests that growth so far has not translated into improvements in living standards or employment generation. The government's overall strategy has been to diversify the economy from cotton monoculture to a more industrialized pattern and achieve energy and food security to protect the population from major external shocks. The approach to reform has been gradual, maintaining a strong regulatory role for the state. While the country has been successful in achieving self-sufficiency in energy and wheat, the strategy to develop industry has been less successful, and has not helped improve living standards. Industrial employment increased by less than 1% per year in the late 1990s. The policy of taxing agriculture to finance the import substitution strategy has contributed to declining wages in agriculture, which is dominated by low-productivity and low-skill jobs, and to declining living standards in rural areas, where an estimated 70% of the poor live.

C. Nonincome Poverty

The above analysis has focused on income poverty. However, poverty is usually treated as “multidimensional,” including both income and nonincome dimensions. These different dimensions tend to reinforce each other, and a “mix” of parallel policy actions is required to tackle the different

¹² This is also stressed in the Government's I-PRSP (Government of Uzbekistan 2005: 7).

dimensions and help the vulnerable exit from poverty. The various dimensions of poverty can affect men and women differently; therefore, policy responses have to take into account the different factors contributing to poverty for men and women. And if poverty is to be addressed for men and women, men and women have to have equal rights and opportunities under poverty reduction programs.

The various dimensions of poverty are usually summarized under the following four broad categories. Each one is related to gender rights and equality.

1. Lack of Opportunities

This dimension is related to economic opportunity, the opportunity to participate in the labor market and have access to productive employment and decent wages, but also relates to access to production assets, such as land, health care and education services, and basic services such as water and sewerage. Unequal opportunities for men and women in the economy (employment, income opportunities, access to productive assets and resources, social benefits) mean that a large part of the population cannot enjoy the benefits of economic development. This is not economically efficient; moreover, it can hinder economic growth and limit poverty reduction. Unequal opportunity for women in education means that a sector of the population is unable to benefit from job opportunities; contribute skills to the economy; or work, earn, and contribute to family welfare. Unequal access to health care services will also ultimately limit women's potential to contribute to economic growth and family welfare.

2. Low Capabilities

This dimension relates mainly to health care and education indicators. Low education attainment, illness, and malnutrition all contribute to income poverty (and vice versa). Better-educated women are more likely to have healthy and well-educated children. It is important to look at the health issues/risks for both sexes, in order to ensure that both have access to suitable treatment and health care services: lack of investment in the human capital of both men and women will mean that large sections of the population are less able to contribute to economic and social life. Lack of, or limited access to, safe water and energy means that women, who usually have primary responsibility for household chores, spend more time fetching water, or gathering firewood or other materials for heat and cooking. This means that they have less time to invest in paid productive activities, education, etc.

3. Low Level of Security

The most obvious manifestation of this dimension is economic insecurity, linked to lack of income-generating opportunities. But this dimension is also linked to risks that may arise at the national or local level. Some are predictable, such as seasonal risks in agriculture connected to harvest and nonharvest seasons. But some are caused by less predictable risks, such as macroeconomic shocks, or natural disasters. Mechanisms must be in place for societies to protect their most vulnerable men and women from economic and other insecurities, and from different forms of violence.

4. Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the extent to which poor people can participate in and influence decision-making, and thus ensure that their problems and priorities are taken into account at various decision-making levels. Lack of representation and/or equal rights for men and women to participate in the political life of the community and society implies lack of influence over decision-making and less likelihood that the factors contributing to their poverty will be addressed.

In Chapters 4–8, we look at the available evidence on how these different aspects of poverty have affected men and women in the transition period, and make tentative policy recommendations on measures required to tackle them.

Since the beginning of the transition period, the Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing women's issues and improving living standards in the country. This has been given clear expression in national legislation, as well as in the Government's active participation in international initiatives, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996. However, the treatment of gender as a crosscutting issue in all policy areas is still relatively new, one that is being undertaken now as part of the discussions of the country's national development plan for improving living standards (LSS and PRSP) and in the context of the discussion of the country's MDG targets.

A. Gender Issues and Country-Specific Millennium Development Goals for Uzbekistan

In September 2000, 191 nations adopted the Millennium Declaration. This is a global program aimed at ensuring peace, security, and development in the world. In order to implement the program, a set of eight goals were identified:

- halving extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieving universal primary education;
- promoting gender equality;
- reducing under-5 mortality by two thirds;
- reducing maternal mortality by three quarters;
- reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis;
- ensuring environmental sustainability; and
- developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade, and debt relief.

These are general objectives, within which each country has been asked to set its own targets. The United Nations has given a set of 18 targets and 48 indicators for each country to use in developing its own MDG targets and indicators for monitoring achievement of these targets by the year 2015.

By signing the Millennium Declaration, the President of Uzbekistan, like other heads of state, recognized that his Government had a responsibility to work toward achieving the challenges. Uzbekistan is thus committed to ensuring that the Millennium Declaration challenges are addressed in its national development plans and that the MDGs are met within the target schedule of 2015.

The country is now in the process of defining its country-specific MDGs and preparing its first national MDG report. ADB has participated in and actively supported the MDG discussion process in the country. It has been participatory, with representatives from government bodies,

NGOs, and other representatives of civil society, as well as the development partner community, taking part. In November 2004, the government approved the final formulation of the country's MDG goals (Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP 2005), but the discussion of concrete targets, baselines, and indicators is still ongoing. The latest proposals¹³ are summarized in Table 3.1. Although MDG #3 deals specifically with gender equality, and MDG #5 has a clear gender focus (improving maternal health), the intention is to mainstream gender issues in all the other goals.

Table 3.1 Draft Proposals for Uzbekistan's Country-Specific MDGs

Uzbekistan's Millennium Development Goals and First Proposals for Targets		
MDG	Baseline value and year	Target 2015
#1 Improve living standards and reduce malnutrition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty Level: 27.5% of total population (2003) • Extreme Poverty: 9.7% (2001) • Malnutrition: 19% of children under 3 years moderately or severely stunted (measure of height for age) (1996) 	14% 5.85% 9%
#2 Improve the quality of education in primary and secondary schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary enrollment: 99 % • Secondary enrolment: 95.5 (2001) 	Achieved 100%
#3 Promote gender equality and empower women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female primary enrolment rate: 100% • Share of women in wage employment other than agriculture: 47% (1990) • Economic participation and representation of women in legislative bodies: 7% (2002) 	Achieved 63% 14%
#4 Reduce child mortality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-5 mortality rates: 26.4 per 1,000 live births (2001) • Infant mortality rate: 24.2 (1996) • Proportion of 1-year-olds immunized against measles: 91.5% • Anaemia morbidity (children under 5 years old): 61% 	19% 99% 40.7
#5 Improve maternal health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal mortality: 34.1 per 100,000 live births (2001) • Total rates of induced abortion: 0.7% 	22.7 0.4%
#6 Combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other diseases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV prevalence among pregnant women: 0.5% • Percent of people living with HIV/AIDS with access to antiretroviral therapy: 0% • Tuberculosis incidence: 58 per 100,000 people • Tuberculosis death rate: 17 per 100,000 people • Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected under DOTS: 33% • Proportion of tuberculosis cases cured under DOTS: 79% 	Maintain at less than 1% 100% 29% 8.5% 85%

¹³ These proposals were drawn up as part of the draft of Uzbekistan's national MDG Report, which is currently being finalized.

Uzbekistan's Millennium Development Goals and First Proposals for Targets		
MDG	Baseline value and year	Target 2015
#7 Ensure environmental sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share of population with access to safe drinking water and sanitation: 94% (urban) • Share of population with access to safe drinking water and sanitation: 79% (rural) 	100% 90%
#8 Develop a global partnership for development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of ODA for basic social services: 23% • FDI 	To be determined

DOTS = directly observed treatment-short course; HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; ODA = overseas development assistance.

Source: Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP 2005.

B. Data Problems and the Challenges of Setting and Achieving National MDGs

The Government has demonstrated its political will to meet the MDG challenges, first by signing the Millennium Declaration, and second by embarking on the LSS/PRSP process, since the MDGs are reflected in and aligned with the poverty reduction strategy. As with the LSS, although the intention of gender mainstreaming all the MDGs has been adopted, it still needs to be strengthened in the course of the ongoing discussion process.

The formulation process is not yet complete, and setting the country's MDG targets has created challenges. The main one has been setting baselines and quantifiable targets. While the baseline for global MDGs is 1990, Uzbekistan is not able to use 1990 consistently as the baseline year. This is due in some cases to changes (and improvements) in the way in which data are collected. For example, the Household Budget Survey (HBS) represents the main source of regular data on income poverty in the country, and the first available year for nationally representative data is 2001. In the case of infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis, (Goals #4, #5, and #6), 1990 is not considered an appropriate baseline year, even if the data were available, because it antedates the social problems associated with the first years of transition; its use as a baseline year would lead to the setting of an overambitious target and/or an underestimation of the achievements of the country in overcoming the difficulties.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, particular problems surround the reliability of infant, child, and maternal mortality figures, because official data are generally thought to underestimate the extent of the problems. Administrative data are collected by the Ministry of Health and the Statistical Office. The Ministry of Health collects the data from its local clinics. Local staff has incentives to underreport deaths, in order to avoid any accusations of negligence from higher authorities. The Statistical Office collects data from the local registry offices, where deaths are registered. However, in the transition period, travel and other costs associated with registration have meant that not all deaths are registered, and therefore underreporting is also a risk here.

If baselines for Goals #4 and #5 are set using existing administrative data, and if improvements are made in the future in the collection methods and definitions used for this data, then it is likely that figures for the extent of these problems will go up—because of better collection methods, and not because of a deterioration in the country's situation. Monitoring using improved

data would imply that no progress was being made in meeting country-specific targets. These data problems (administrative and survey) are well documented and known to exist not just in Uzbekistan, but throughout the region.¹⁴

C. Uzbekistan’s National Millennium Development Goals

Under MDG #1, Uzbekistan has set itself the target of halving poverty and reducing malnutrition among children (a proxy indicator for extreme poverty). In order to reduce income poverty, the country will not only have to achieve improved rates of economic growth, but achieve growth that is labor-intensive, and which allows broad sectors of the population to benefit from growth through increases in the opportunities for men and women to engage in productive paid employment.

Uzbekistan has adapted the global MDG #2 on education from “achieving universal primary education” to “improving the quality of education in primary and secondary schools.” This is an attempt to achieve an “MDG plus,” since it is recognized that the country has obtained (and has managed to maintain) full access to primary and secondary education. The problem is improving the quality and guaranteeing equal access to equal quality at all levels. However, the country team discussing the MDGs for Uzbekistan has encountered difficulties in establishing quantifiable targets (and indicators) for improving the quality of education. This will require the introduction of standardized learning achievement tests and other indicators for monitoring the quality of teaching, curricula, textbooks, physical infrastructure of schools, and other school amenities.

One of the main targets of global MDG #3 (Promote gender equality and empower women) is guaranteeing gender equality in primary and secondary education. This is also considered to have been achieved in Uzbekistan, although it is agreed that trends have to be monitored, because female attendance in upper secondary schools shows some signs of declining. Improved monitoring requires systematic collection and publication of sex-disaggregated data on attendance in secondary education. Discussion has taken place on whether to introduce a target for reducing gender disparity in higher education. Higher education is considered an important contributing factor for empowering women and improving their representation in top positions in economic, social and political life.

MDG #3 also includes a target for increasing the proportion of women employed outside the agricultural sector. In the short term, however, it would be better to establish a target that improves women’s employment *within* the agricultural sector. Women are employed predominantly in low-skill, low-productivity, and low-wage jobs that are often seasonal in nature; and they have lost out in the recent stages of agricultural restructuring, with many being pushed back into household production (see Chapters 4 and 5). Uzbekistan has set itself the preliminary target of increasing the share of women in wage employment other than agriculture from 47% in 1990 to 63% in 2015. This may be possible if efforts to improve women’s access to training and resources are coupled with reforms that promote private sector development.

¹⁴ A good summary and discussion of the data problems can be found in (UNICEF 2003).

With regard to the health care-related targets in MDGs #4, #5, and #6, it will be important to take into account regional differences in health care indicators; for example, anaemia rates among women are reported to be considerably higher in Karakalpakstan and maternal mortality rates show a high degree of regional variation. (See Chapter 6 for discussion of health care indicators.) It would therefore seem advisable to take the MDG debate further, and develop regional-specific targets, which could then be linked to the MDG costing exercise and used as a basis for reviewing and prioritizing budget allocations.

Under MDG Goal #6, a target for halving the tuberculosis incidence and death rate has been set. No target has been set for malaria, which is currently not considered a health threat connected to poverty. Two targets for HIV/AIDS have been set (maintaining HIV prevalence among pregnant women at less than 1%, and achieving 100% coverage of HIV/AIDS patients with antiretroviral therapy). Uzbekistan has not seen the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS that was experienced by some of the other post-Soviet republics (for example, Ukraine and Russia), but the number of reported cases among vulnerable groups (particularly injecting drug users [IDUs]) has increased significantly in recent years, and it is important that the country take preventive measures to stop the spread to the general population. According to the definitions of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), if prevalence among pregnant women remains under 1%, incidence can be classified as being “concentrated”, i.e., not prevalent among the general population. (See Chapter 7 for more details).

Uzbekistan’s prospects for meeting its MDG targets in Goals #4–#6 will depend on the extent to which efforts to reform primary health care are supported by revision of the way in which the health budget is allocated, improved regulation of the process of privatizing certain health care services, and eliminating informal payments, which act as a barrier to the poor to accessing quality health care.

The target set under Goal #7 for improving access to drinking water and sanitation in urban and rural areas will depend on the success of utility sector reform and improved management of the country’s water resources. These are included in the LSS, and need to be strengthened in the PRSP. In the discussion so far, little attention has been paid to the gender aspects of access to water. Water is an important productive asset in Uzbekistan (irrigation in agriculture), and access or lack of access to piped water can have a significant effect on women’s time burden (see Chapter 5).

D. Gender issues and Uzbekistan’s Living Standard Strategy and Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Since the end of the 1990s, international organizations have been reconsidering the best ways to promote economic growth and reduce poverty in the countries with which they cooperate. This has resulted in (i) efforts to promote more action in domestic policy making to produce nationally effective strategies, and (ii) more efforts to ensure better coordination of external assistance. It is generally agreed that poverty reduction and an increase in living standards should be the final aim of all policies. These strategies are fundamentally statements of national

governments' commitment to poverty reduction. They have become the basis/prerequisite for development partner support, and the focus for coordination of development partner support to individual countries. In line with the current gender and development (GAD) approach outlined in Chapter 1, gender is usually treated as a crosscutting issue, and addressed in all policy directions of the strategy.

In the period 2003–2004, with technical assistance from ADB, the Government of Uzbekistan developed the LSS (Government of Uzbekistan 2004), which identifies the policy priorities for further reforms aimed at improving living standards and reducing poverty for the period up to 2010 (ADB 2005). This strategy was developed in consultation with civil society, and drew on major studies prepared by the World Bank (2003) and CER (2003). This strategy document has since been used as the basis for the preparation of an Interim-PRSP (Government of Uzbekistan 2005),¹⁵ which will then be followed by a full PRSP (due to be finalized by the end of 2005).

While the MDG process is providing the vision for improving Uzbekistan's living standards, work on the country's medium-term LSS, and more recently its I-PRSP, has provided the mechanism for translating the vision into concrete policy priorities, and, most important, linking these to the country's budget. Development of the LSS and I-PRSP has been going on parallel to the discussion of the country's MDGs, thus ensuring a broad alignment between them.

E. Treatment of Gender Issues in the Living Standards Strategy and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy and Program

In the LSS, an attempt was made to treat gender issues as crosscutting, but in fact they have been addressed only in some sections of the strategy. The LSS has a separate section on maternal and child welfare, and the I-PRSP has a short section summarizing the main legislative acts relating to gender equality. The LSS sets out, as one of its main directions, the need to “ensure gender equality and full participation of women in public and economic processes.” However, few concrete policy actions in the various sections point to how this goal will be achieved. The document in general has few concrete quantifiable targets, due largely to the same problems encountered when setting MDG targets: the lack of reliable baseline data, especially sex-disaggregated data, for setting targets.

Chapter 1 of the LSS highlights some gender aspects of poverty, looking in particular at occupational segregation and the fact that women are concentrated in the low-paying sectors of the economy. Enrolments in secondary and vocational education are gender disaggregated, and maternal mortality is touched upon. However, no attempt is made to use other indicators to look at the different health outcomes for men and women, or to look at the way in which environmental factors affect men and women's health.

¹⁵ This document is officially called “The Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2005–2010”, and abbreviated as “WISP”. For simplicity, we use the term I-PRSP throughout this report.

The section on economic policy sets out broad objectives for maintaining macroeconomic stability and removing barriers to development in the private sector. One key objective of the LSS is to increase opportunities for employment, including self-employment. (Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 10). The strategy places considerable emphasis on the role of the private sector, and particularly SMEs, in increasing employment and income-generating opportunities. The LSS also places significant emphasis on the development of the agricultural sector, again on the basis of small business and private enterprise (18), and confirms that the restructuring of shirkats will continue. (21). It mentions that measures will be taken to extend reforms in the agricultural sector and to stimulate small business development in rural areas, especially in the area of processing agricultural produce, and to improve the rural credit system. The LSS also mentions the need to reform the system of water use, with gradual transfer to payment for water consumption in agriculture, and to improve the system of irrigation.

The employment section notes the growth in vulnerability of women in the labor markets, due to existing social security regulations that make them less competitive (Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 25). It emphasizes the importance of access to credit for setting up small businesses to promote income generation, and the need to provide access, particularly to the rural population and rural women. The employment section also points to the need to try to find employment solutions for women with children, including the development of home-based employment. However, it does not set specific targets for increasing female employment or female participation in private sector development.

In human development, the policy priorities of improving the quality of school education and health care services, including reproductive health care, are set out. The health care section mentions the need to improve the quality of medical assistance provided to women of fertile age. Maternal welfare is also addressed under a separate section on child welfare.

The I-PRSP, a slightly expanded version of the LSS, adds a separate subsection on gender equality. The section lists the priority policy objectives mentioned in the recent (2004) Presidential Decree “On Additional Measures to Support the Activity of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan” (see discussion in Chapter 6). This stresses the need to give priority to supporting maternal and child care; improving women’s health status; improving employment opportunities for women, especially in rural areas, and their participation in entrepreneurial activities; and developing links between the Women’s Committee and national NGOs working on women’s issues. It states that special measures will be taken to improve employment for women, promote women’s business activities, and improve their competitiveness in the labor market; strengthen the work of reproductive health centers in the regions; and increase the public, political, and social participation of women through the introduction of quotas for women’s representation in public authorities. The gist of the LSS and I-PRSP are set out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Gender in the Living Standards Strategy and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy and Program

Sections	Issues addressed
LSS	
Chapter 1. Assessment and Main Characteristics of Poverty in Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and maternal welfare indicators • School enrolments for boys and girls • Employment and labor market segregation; and Women in private sector
Chapter 2. Main Goals, Objectives, and Directions of the Living Standards Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to guarantee equal benefits of results of economic growth to all sections of society, and provide protection against economic discrimination, including gender-based discrimination • Need to ensure gender equality and full participation of women in public and economic processes
Chapter 3. Priorities of Economic Policy: Accelerated Economic Growth and More Employment and Income-Generating Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of vulnerability of women on labor market, and their lack of competitiveness due to social protection rights • Need to improve access to microcredit for small businesses, particularly those in rural areas and those employing women • Need to create conditions and incentives for home-based work, particularly for mothers with many children
Chapter 4. Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment rates for girls and boys in primary education • Need to improve gender equality in education; particularly in vocational education • Need to improve vocational guidance to eliminate mismatch between supply and demand in labor markets, including gender aspects of the mismatch • Need to improve quality of medical assistance provided to women of fertile age • Section on child welfare including references to need to improve maternal health
Chapter 7. Environmental Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mention of increased morbidity rates, especially among women in fertile age, due to environmental pollution (water, air, and soil)
Policy Matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to strengthen women's health care and improve maternal mortality figures
I-PRSP	
Chapter 4, section 4.6. Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to maternal and child care; strengthen work of reproductive health centers in the regions • Improve employment opportunities for women especially in rural areas • Increase women's participation in private sector activities and improve their competitiveness on the labor market • Develop links between Women's Committee and national NGOs working on women's issues; increase participation of women in social and political life by introduction of quotas for women's representation

Source: Government of Uzbekistan 2004, 2005.

F. The Living Standards Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals: Toward Gender-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategies

The two interlinked processes of defining the country's own national MDG targets and formulation of a full poverty reduction strategy are providing the vision and framework for the country's development. In both processes, the principle of gender mainstreaming has been adopted, but needs to be strengthened.

As stated above, ADB supported the formulation of the LSS. During the formulation period ADB also worked with UNDP and a team of national experts on a Baseline Study, which provides the basis for discussion of the MDGs in Uzbekistan (MDG National Team 2004). UNDP has been guiding the MDG discussion and working with the team of national experts to define national targets and indicators. It has also produced a *Gender Kit*, to help the national team understand and address gender issues (UNDP 2005). The World Bank has more recently been helping the Government to develop the LSS into an I-PRSP, which was submitted in February 2005 for approval by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

While the LSS and I-PRSP do touch on most of the main gender concerns, work is needed on more precise policy measures to address these concerns, to look in a more systematic way at the expected effect of all the proposed policy goals and measures on men and women, to set concrete targets for addressing gender concerns, and to set baselines and monitoring indicators using gender-disaggregated data.

At present, the policy matrix attached to the LSS does not include specific measures to address gender aspects of employment, rural development, education, health care, social protection, or the environment. Chapter 8 on monitoring does not provide indicators for monitoring the effect of the proposed policy measures on men and women. In particular, measures are needed to strengthen the way in which the employment problems of women in agriculture and rural areas are addressed; include more specific proposals on how to improve women's participation in private sector growth; and pay more attention to the gender aspects of social protection, reform of health care and education services, regional reforms, and environmental policies.

It would be advisable to include the Women's Committee in the PRSP formulation process, and in this way ensure that the new National Action Plan being drawn up by the Committee is fully incorporated and aligned with the country's PRSP. This would also be a good way of ensuring that the measures envisaged in the Committee's Action Plan are costed and linked to the country's budget possibilities. Costing the MDGs and linking the PRSP to the budget are still at an early stage, but it will be important to introduce the practice of looking at the gender impact of public expenditure policies and national budget allocations.

A. Male and Female Employment

The World Bank has estimated (using the HBS data) that about 45% of the Uzbekistan population between the ages of 16 and 64 years¹⁶ participates in the labor market. Using the official definition of the working age produces a slightly higher proportion of participants, about 48% of the working age population. The labor force participation rate among men is estimated at 60% and among women, 31% (World Bank 2003: 23–25). These estimates do not include those doing unpaid work in family work or home production, i.e., those on small subsistence plots.

Similar results were obtained from the 2002 Health Examination Survey (HES), a sample survey carried out by the Ministry of Health, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): this survey puts the estimate of employed women at 44%. The results of this survey showed that 44% of women interviewed were employed at the time of the survey, and 60% of men; 72% of women with higher education were employed, compared to 26% with primary or middle education.

On the basis of government definitions and administrative data, labor force participation for both sexes is much higher than that estimated by the World Bank and the HES (Table 4.1). According to Ministry of Labor figures, the labor force participation rate is 78%, although it is not clear whether this is participation for working-age groups (men 16–59 years and women 16–54 years), or for all those over 16 years.

Clearly, different surveys and the state administration use different definitions and methodologies to calculate employment levels, so that comparison of the data and clear estimates are difficult to achieve. In Chapter 1 it is noted that circa

Table 4.1 Numbers of Employed and Unemployed in 2002 and 2003

	2002		2003	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	%
Economically Active Population (thousands)	9,367.8	—	9,621.2	
<i>of whom</i>				
Women	4,123.8	—	4,233.1	—
Men	5,244.0	—	5,388.1	—
Employed (thousands)	9,333.0	(99.6%)	9,589.0	(99.7%)
<i>of whom</i>				
Women	4,102.4	(99.5%)	4,214.9	(99.6%)
Men	5,230.6	(99.7%)	5,374.1	(99.7%)
Unemployed (officially registered; thousands)	34.8	(0.4%)	32.2	(0.3%)
<i>of whom</i>				
Women	21.4	(0.5%)	18.2	(0.4%)
Men	13.4	(0.3%)	14.0	(0.3%)

— = not available.

Source: State Statistical Committee.

¹⁶ International Labour Organization definition of working-age population.

58% of women (including those working on collective farms) were estimated to be economically active at the end of the Soviet period. It seems that the share of women in paid employment has fallen to 31–44%, but regular labor force surveys would be required to get more precise estimates. At present, administrative data include temporary work, and surveys may well fail to capture temporary and informal employment (discussed below).

The drop in the numbers of economically active people has not been reflected in unemployment figures. The Ministry of Labor estimates that about 6% of the active population is unemployed, including hidden unemployment (meaning those who are on involuntary leave) (Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 24). Without hidden unemployment, the estimate is 3.6% in 2003. This compares to the rate derived from the officially registered unemployed, which is 0.4% for women and 0.3% for men. The World Bank's LSA (World Bank 2003: 24) estimates that unemployment in 2001 was 6.7% for men and 4.4% for women, and that only 8% of the total number of unemployed were officially registered.¹⁷

The low number of registered unemployed reflects the fact that the incentives to register as unemployed are low: the level of unemployment benefits is low, the transport costs associated with the distance required to travel to the *raion* (district) labor office to register are high, and most job seekers see the labor office as able to do little or nothing to help them find employment.¹⁸ Thus, although women predominate among the registered unemployed, this says very little about their position in the labor market.

As noted in Chapter 2 in the discussion of income poverty, employment does not necessarily protect the population from poverty, since 50% of the poor are estimated to live in households where the head of household is employed. In fact, the problem is underemployment rather than unemployment: the employed who work on a part-time basis, in seasonal or temporary work, or in low-productivity jobs (e.g., in agriculture). A lot of unemployment is still hidden (an estimated 5% of the industrial workforce is on unpaid leave each quarter [UNDP Forthcoming: ch. 3]).

The drop in participation rates and the low unemployment figures show that many women and men have moved into the informal sector, since very few workers can in fact afford to be unemployed or to withdraw completely from the labor market. They may be unemployed temporarily, but they

¹⁷ Thus 31% or 44% of women are employed (according to LSA and HES survey estimates, respectively), while 4.4% are unemployed, meaning that they are actively seeking employment. The remaining share of the female population of working age (over 50%) is considered to be not participating in the labor force, i.e., not employed or actively looking for employment.

¹⁸ The unemployment benefit provides 50% of the average wage (of the previous 12 months) to workers with previous work experience. Benefits are provided for 6 months. Workers with no work experience receive the minimum wage. Registered workers can participate in active labor market programs. Only 16% of the registered unemployed actually received benefits in 2001. In 2001, the level of benefit was the lowest of all social protection benefits, and represented only 8.2% of household food consumption (See World Bank 2003, 120–125.). Thus, one disincentive to apply is the low level of benefits. Another problem is that those who have been in informal employment do not qualify for any more than the minimum benefit. A further problem is that those registered do not qualify for benefits if they refuse what are considered “suitable jobs” of participation in public work schemes by the employment offices. The wages for public work schemes are not much higher than unemployment benefits, and the employment offices may only have low-skill and unattractive jobs on offer.

have to have some source of income in order to survive. Much of this employment is temporary, seasonal or part-time. According to data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, approximately 29% of the economically active population is estimated to be employed in the informal sector (2.9 million). Another report claims that 1.2 million women are working in the informal sector (UNDP Forthcoming: ch. 3). While informal sector employment provides an alternative source of income for men and women, it also increases the vulnerability in the labor market of those who are poorer and more disadvantaged. It deprives them of legal rights and rights to social security benefits.

The administrative data available from the SSC on the distribution of those employed in the formal sector by branch show that over 30% of the active population from both sexes are still employed in the agricultural sector, i.e., this is still the branch of the economy where the largest section of the economically active are employed. The key gender differences in branch employment show that the patterns of labor segregation established in the Soviet period have largely continued (higher male employment in construction; higher female employment in health care and education). According to the LSS (Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 9), women represent 75.5% of those employed in health care, and 72.5% of those in education (Table 4.2). These (together with agriculture) are also branches where wages tend to be lower than the national average.

Table 4.2 Distribution of the Employed Population by Branch in 2002 and 2003 (%)

	2002		2003	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total Employed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Industry	12.5	12.9	12.4	13.0
Agriculture	31.4	33.6	30.8	32.8
Construction	2.5	12.0	2.6	12.2
Transport and Communications	1.9	6.4	1.9	6.6
Trade, catering etc	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.6
Housing and Communal Services	2.4	3.3	2.4	3.4
Health, Sport and Social Protection	11.5	2.9	11.7	3.0
Education, Culture, Science	21.4	6.3	21.8	6.3
Finance, Credit And Insurance	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5
Other	7.5	13.7	7.4	13.6

Source: State Statistical Committee.

Wage discrimination is forbidden by law, in that men and women are guaranteed equal wages for equal job categories and qualification levels. The problem is that overall, women tend to be concentrated in the lower-status sectors, and the lower job categories within the branches. This occupational segregation leads to women being in low-wage jobs.¹⁹ In agriculture, women tend to do the low-productivity manual work such as cotton picking. This type of work is also often seasonal in character. The LSA (World Bank 2003) estimates that seasonal unemployment is high, especially in rural areas. It is estimated, for example, that unemployment increases by circa 50% in the April–June period.

¹⁹ The World Bank estimates that women earn about 70% as much as men. However, if adjusted and examined in terms of hourly earning, the difference is only 7% (World Bank 2003).

B. The Competition for Jobs

Uzbekistan is still feeling the effects of the demographic boom of the 1980s. In 2003, there were 350,000 new entrants to the labor force, and 220,000 exiting. As shown in Chapter 2, growth in employment has been slow, hindered partly by the policy priority given to promoting capital-intensive industries. In 2003 it was estimated that labor supply outstripped demand by almost two times—i.e., 855,200 people were seeking work and 482,000 jobs were available—so job creation has to double in order to match supply and meet the demand. These overall figures on supply and demand also mask the mismatch between the skills of the job seekers (mainly few), and the skills demanded by employers (workers with more than general secondary education), which makes placement of new entrants and redundant workers more difficult. It has also been estimated that for 2005–2010, 348,000 women will enter the labor force, while 135,000 will be made redundant, including 47,000 from agriculture, so the need is to create 667,000 jobs for women (UNDP Forthcoming: ch. 3).

The urgent need to create employment will continue until at least 2008, particularly in rural areas. In theory, the private sector should be creating these employment opportunities. The nonstate sector represents 75% of all employment, but despite the emphasis currently being given to private sector and SME development in official policy (particularly in the LSS and I-PRSP), they have not yet had any visible employment effect.

The competition for available jobs is thus considerable, and the available evidence suggests that women are facing particular difficulties. No data are available to analyze the employment of women and men in the emerging private sector.²⁰ However, certain protectionist aspects of labor and social security legislation affect women's employment. For example, women are less likely to be employed in the formal sector due to the existing social security regulations and particularly the generous maternity rights, which make female workers more expensive for employers: they have to pay female employees with a child under 2 years old a maternity benefit equal to 1.5 times the minimum wage—and retain the mother's job. This makes women more likely to be exposed to the insecurities of the informal market, or to fall back on small plot household production.

The existing legislation also forbids the employment of women in certain categories of jobs that are considered dangerous, or where work conditions are considered “unfavorable.” Although designed to protect women, such legal provisions in fact discriminate against both men and women, since they limit women's choices and do not protect men from unsafe work conditions. In fact, the number of deaths due to accidents is much higher for men (see Chapter 6).

Women with young children are much less likely to participate in the labor force, or more likely to have their employment choice limited to household production activities (small plots). Women's opportunities to participate have been further limited by the drop in the availability of child care facilities. And due to traditional roles, women are primarily responsible for household tasks and children. This means that they usually have a greater time burden than men, and this limits the energy and time they can devote to upgrading or changing their skills.

²⁰ In 2000, only 14% of entrepreneurs were women (CER 2004: chapter 6).

Even within the informal sector, women's options have been restricted in recent years. Informal trade activities had become an income-generating option for both men and women in the transition period, particularly for women. However, these options were curtailed when new and strict import regulations were introduced in 2002, making it illegal for retailers to use middlemen, i.e., they had to acquire goods directly from licensed importers. This negatively affected the "shuttle" or "suitcase" traders, many of them women, who brought in goods from Kazakhstan, Russia, and other foreign countries.

C. Employment in Rural Areas

In Uzbekistan the rural population is spread across all regions, and it is estimated that 70% of the country's poor population (4.5 million) live in rural areas. Improving agricultural productivity and earnings could have a substantial effect on raising living standards. However, while the overall productivity of agriculture is improving, employment opportunities are decreasing.

Agriculture accounts for one third of all employment (down from 41% in 1996), but about 49% of employment in rural areas (World Bank 2003: II, 8). According to official administrative data, 30% of the female workforce is working in agriculture, but survey data put the share higher: 45% of women interviewed in the 2002 HES were employed in agriculture (44% of those under 20 years).

The rural population, and especially the poor, are highly dependent on agriculture.²¹ The limited availability of nonfarm rural employment opportunities, combined with much higher population pressure in rural areas, has led to higher rural unemployment and underemployment, greater youth unemployment, and greater seasonality of employment opportunities. Since Soviet times, rural areas have experienced a surplus of labor (see Chapter 1). This surplus has increased due to demographic trends, the slow development by the private sector and SMEs of nonagricultural activities, and the restructuring of former collective farms into private farms.

Women's employment in rural areas has been particularly adversely affected by the decline in employment opportunities in the formal sector due to the restructuring of former collective farms. In the period 1993–1998, collective farms were re-formed as shirkats, mainly specializing in the strategically important crops of cotton and grain. This already represented a loss of social support systems previously supplied by the collective farms. Since 1998, the shirkats have been gradually transformed and split up into private farms, with each farm having the right to lease land of 20 hectares for up to 50 years, and to hire workers to work on it. The private farmers tend to be men—i.e., farm management has become an almost exclusively male occupation—and they hire far fewer permanent workers. These workers tend to be men, while women are employed on temporary contracts, or withdraw into household plot production. Private farms are more productive, but also employ fewer people than the shirkats. Many private farms have also moved from cotton into wheat production, which is less labor-intensive.

²¹ Between 1991 and 2000, the rural population increased from 60% to 63% percent of the total, reflecting more rapid declines in fertility rates in urban areas and greater external migration from urban areas. In the first half of the 1990s, internal migration was to rural areas, although this was reversed in the latter half.

Those who are not employed by the new farms are officially classified as dekhan farmers, and work on the small plots allocated to them in the process of land distribution. Dekhan farmers have an average plot size of 0.12 hectares, and do not have the right to hire workers: only family members can work on the plots, which are given to the dekhan farmers on a lifelong lease and can be passed on as inheritance to their children. In the period 1998–2000, a total of 30,000 people annually joined the ranks of dekhan farmers (in 2003 alone, the number was 15,000). Thus, although unemployment did not rise in this period, most of the redundant workforce became dekhan farmers.

Although small plot production has always been important for nonstrategic crops, (in 2000, they accounted for almost 65% of total output; 40% of crop output and 90% of livestock output), without a parallel development in improving access to agriculture inputs and nonlocal markets, it will be difficult for the large numbers of new dekhan farmers to make a decent living from their plots, and many will be engaged in no more than subsistence farming.

Thus, agriculture has had to absorb most of the country's growing labor supply, but it has resulted in more productive jobs for a few and low-wage, low-productivity and temporary jobs for many. Employment opportunities have declined, especially for women, most of whom have had to fall back on household production using small plots. Overall, wages in agriculture have plummeted in value: whereas at the beginning of the transition period they were slightly above the national average, by 2001, they represented just 50% of the average (CER 2003: ch. 6).

D. Summary and Recommendations

With the available data, it is difficult to get the full picture on labor supply and demand, but it seems safe to assume, especially in rural areas, that the supply of labor, including female labor, is abundant, and that shirkat restructuring has led to a drop in demand and significant redundancies in the last 3–4 years. The surplus labor has been absorbed by the so-called dekhan farms. While some dekhan farmers make a profit, lack of skills and access to credit and key agricultural inputs mean that most of the agricultural population made redundant through restructuring is now employed on small plot production or temporary low-wage jobs. The difference between the official statistics on participation rates and the survey data seem likely to be due to the decision to categorize dekhan farmers, including women household members, and temporary workers as participants in the labor market, whether or not they have a permanent income from this work.

While measures should be taken on the supply side, for example, to improve skills and access to productive resources, the key problem now is on the side of increasing demand for productive labor. Employment in low-productivity, low-wage agricultural work is not a long-term solution. The Government recognizes this. Some evidence can be discerned of a move away from the emphasis on prioritizing capital-intensive industries, and one key objective of the LSS is to increase opportunities for employment, including self-employment. (Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 10). The strategy places considerable emphasis on the role of the private sector, and particularly SMEs, in increasing employment and income-generating opportunities. However, the policy orientation toward creating a more favorable environment for private sector and SME development has still not been felt on the ground, while other developments, such as shirkat restructuring, have led to a further decrease in the

employment opportunities in the formal sector. The available evidence suggests that so far few women have been able to benefit from private sector employment opportunities.

Lack of employment opportunities means that sectors of the population, men and women, are becoming more vulnerable in the informal labor market, and particularly in the system of *mardikhors* or informal labor exchanges. Economic insecurity also contributes to other insecurities and vulnerabilities, such as domestic violence and human trafficking (discussed in chapter 7). Women's reduced access to paid employment contributes to a reduction in their ability to influence decision making in the household and community. Economic hardship is also forcing more and more people, men and women, into migration, both internal and foreign. For men, this is mainly labor migration to Kazakhstan or Russia; for women, it is linked to the increase in trafficking problems (see Chapter 7). Whether the migration flows are largely from rural areas is not known, but this seems likely to be another result of the shrinking employment opportunities since *shirkat* restructuring.

The following recommendations are put forward:

- In order for women to be competitive in the labor market and to be able to take advantage of new opportunities in the private sector, further support is required for measures aimed at increasing women's qualifications and skills, including business skills. As discussed in the next chapter, they also need to know their rights as to access to credit, land, and other resources. They need to be empowered to gain more choices than small plot production or unskilled work in the informal sector.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) should be supported in its efforts to develop regular labor force surveys to understand better the employment situation of men and women. To have real policy value, the data from these surveys should be available to all stakeholders (development partners and NGOs, as well as the Government), and open discussion of the results should take place. Systematic work is required to define and estimate the numbers of men and women employed, underemployed, and unemployed, and what incentives are required to draw them into more productive activities, preferably in the formal sector. This would be relevant to the targets being discussed under MDG #1, and is work that could be brought forward under the PRSP framework.
- The effects of *shirkat* restructuring on rural employment for men and women need to be better documented, and a needs assessment carried out for *dekhan* farmers, especially female ones. The needs assessment will have to take into account the significant interregional and intraregional differences. (The LSS, for example, mentions that the rural population in remote and mountainous areas is particularly disadvantaged in employment and income-generating opportunities).
- The possibility of developing and restructuring regional vocational training centers, as institutions that could provide training in appropriate skills for men and women being made redundant in the process of privatization and *shirkat* restructuring, should be explored. On the basis of the needs assessment for *dekhan* farmers, specific courses could be tailored for women.

- The MLSP has been working on employment options for women that take into account women's child care responsibilities and their lack of assets and credit. Providing incentives for setting up family businesses is mentioned in the LSS. The advantages for men and women of supporting and providing incentives for family-based businesses should be investigated.
- An evaluation is needed of the extent to which existing legal and social protection rights discourage the employment of women, together with an assessment of the right mix of legal rights for women in the formal sector. Discussion of this has already begun, and some changes made (see Chapter 8). The impact of these changes should be tracked.

However, these types of interventions will have limited effects if they are not accompanied by measures to improve the demand side, particularly measures aimed at creating a favorable environment for private sector development in all regions of the country. The private sector still faces many uncertainties, and interference from state officials is common.

The ability of the poor to find productive employment in the changing labor market is influenced by their ability to access key productive assets, such as land, water, and credit. The extent to which men and women have equal access to these assets is influenced by the presence of both sexes in the bodies that manage and control allocation of these key resources. The following sections look at the available evidence regarding equality of access by men and women in Uzbekistan to productive assets. The last section looks at equality of access to social protection benefits and services.

A. Access to Land

As explained in the previous chapter, the agricultural sector has been going through restructuring, from collective farms to shirkats to private farms. Shirkats and private farms are the two main types of farms dominating the production of cotton and grain, the country's major source of export revenue. However, private farms employ far fewer workers than the former collective farms and shirkats, and the surplus labor has been absorbed by the small dekhan farms.

The types of farms now dominating agricultural production demonstrate advantages and disadvantages. The large private farms have much greater influence, due to their size and earning potential, but since they play a role in the production of "strategic crops," they have also been subject to planned production quotas for these crops and to compulsory state procurement at fixed prices. While the rules on compulsory purchasing are gradually being liberalized, private farms are still vulnerable to state interference. Private farmers have often been subject to arbitrary decisions on the part of local authorities; they can have their land taken away and reallocated if they do not comply with local authorities' decisions about its use. They do, however, have flexibility in the hiring of labor and access to other inputs (often subsidized, and allocated not through the market, but via centralized mechanisms). The private farms are a minimum of 10 hectares, with an average size of approximately 20 hectares (in 2000). All agricultural land is still technically owned by the state and is not tradable or transferable. Leases of private farms are in principle valid for a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 50 years.

Dekhan farmers, on the other hand can make their own production and input decisions, but often have limited access to inputs and markets. The maximum legal size for a dekhan farm plot is 0.35 hectares, but the average size is approximately 0.12 hectares. Land use rights for dekhan plots are lifelong and can be inherited. However, in many cases they amount to subsistence farming. If the households have excess produce that they would like to sell, this is often complicated in a situation where access to markets (transport, refrigeration, etc.) and agricultural inputs are still limited (the latter being state subsidized and centrally distributed).

For the moment, private farmers appear to have more rights and influence, although, as with other enterprises in the private sector, they remain subject to central interference. Since early 2004,

private farms have been officially identified as the priority type of production unit for agriculture, and the primary source of agricultural production. As of 1 October 2004, the country had about 102,000 private farms, producing 50% of country's raw cotton and 43.3% of its grain. While the share of private farmers in total agricultural output in 2002 was 9.9%, in 2003 it reached 14.4%.

There are signs that state control over (and taxation of) agricultural production is being diminished. Since 2002, the Government has introduced important changes (with support from ADB and the World Bank) into the system of state pricing and purchasing for the key agricultural products (cotton and grain) and allowing farmers more flexibility in the choice and marketing of crops. For example, 50% of the cotton harvest is at the farmer's disposal, and can be sold freely in the local market or through trade agents for export. The Government is committed not to impose arbitrary increases in the planned amount of cotton to be sold to the state (which in the past has penalized the farmers by reducing the amount at the farmer's disposal), and the state monopoly over buyers of raw cotton has been lifted.

How have men and women fared in this process of restructuring? The available data suggest that women represent only 4.8% of private farmers (Table 5.1). Farm management appears to have become a male occupation. This implies that women are being excluded not only from key employment opportunities in the restructuring process, but also from positions of authority that could help empower them in local communities. Their low representation among private farmers seems likely to be due partly to lack of appropriate agricultural and business skills, and also to cultural stereotypes, which are particularly strong in rural areas and which tend to work against women's holding positions of authority.

Table 5.1 Women Farmers in Uzbekistan, 2004
(by oblast)

Region	No. of Farms	No. of women	Share of women (%)
Andizhan	3,580	279	7.0
Bukhara	7,761	152	2.0
Dzhizak	12,547	330	2.6
Fergana	8,150	516	6.3
Karakalpakstan	6,657	296	4.4
Kashkadarya	13,262	263	2.0
Khorezm	7,786	1,020	13.1
Namangan	5,140	188	3.9
Navoi	4,828	209	4.3
Samarkand	9,705	852	8.8
Surkhandarya	5,440	69	1.3
Syrdarya	7,141	162	2.3
Tashkent	7,719	508	6.6
Total	100,116	4,854	4.8

Source: National Women's Committee.

Shirkat employment before restructuring was also not ideal. Their profitability was limited, due to the central controls on the amount of cotton and wheat planted and harvested, the purchase price for cotton, the cotton gins, the market for produce, and the supply of key inputs (fertilizers, etc.) for agricultural production. Employment was in many cases seasonal for women, in predominantly low-skill manual work, and without social security rights. Average wages were low and wage arrears common.

However, the participatory discussion suggests that the shirkat restructuring has resulted in even greater vulnerability, especially for women. Although wages were not high and often paid in arrears, the shirkats offered some access to noncash benefits and resources to sections of the rural

population. It is the loss of the informal support systems of the collective farms, and their role not only as employers, but as providers of various forms of social support services, that is a major factor influencing the increase in vulnerability. The collective farms and shirkats retained certain social elements of Soviet employment policy: low-wage, low-productivity employment was a form of social protection, and the farms were to a certain extent responsible for the welfare of their employees and their families, helping the collective with access to health care and education services and public utilities, as well as to scarce goods and services. Restructuring has meant not just the loss of employment, but also the loss of this social support system.

Summary and Recommendations. The current policy is to promote private farms as the main production unit for agriculture. They are more productive, employing fewer workers to achieve the same or better production levels. The restructuring process has thus meant the loss of employment for many unskilled agricultural workers, most of whom have become small dekhan farmers with limited rights and limited access to key inputs. It has been hypothesized that women have suffered more from the process of agricultural restructuring than men. Clearly, large-scale private farmers are the ones with more land, more access to resources, and a greater presence in decision-making bodies that control the distribution of resources; just as clearly, fewer women than men are private farmers (Table 5.1). Some evidence indicates that women have lost out in the land distribution process, but more systematic study is required.

Sex-disaggregated data on the numbers of dekhan farmers are not available. Although all dekhan farmers are entitled to the same size plot, the soil quality of particular plots obviously varies. Lack of influence over decisions regarding the distribution of land may also mean that women get poorer quality plots. No clear picture is available on the extent to which women have lost out on the land distribution, but individual reports suggest that this has been the case (see, for example, Fikri-Expert's report on Tashkent oblast, Fikri-Export 2004).

Associations of Farmers and Dekhan Farmers have been set up to represent the interests of these groups. It is important to ensure that women are strongly represented in these associations, in order to help improve equal access to land and other inputs.

The following recommendations are put forward:

- More systematic tracking is needed of how land allocation has worked in practice for women and men.
- As mentioned in Chapter 4, a systematic needs assessment of women dekhan farmers is also required. This should also pay attention to the problems facing women and men due to the loss of social support systems previously provided by collective farms and shirkats, and look at ways in which they can be compensated within the existing institutional and budget framework.
- Promote awareness raising and development of gender expertise among local authorities to counteract cultural stereotypes that tend to work against the equal allocation of land and other inputs to women and men. The Ministry of Agriculture could help with this.

- Ensure that women have the agricultural knowledge and marketing and business skills necessary to work as small and large-scale farmers.
- Legal support services are required so that women can learn their rights to land and other inputs and how to defend them.
- Sex-disaggregated data on membership and management of Associations of Farmers and Dekhan Farmers should be collected and, in line with the emphasis in the I-PRSP on quotas for women in public bodies, a quota system should be used to ensure representation of women in the management of these organizations.

B. Access to Water and other Utilities; Women's Time Poverty

Water is an important resource in rural areas, first, because many rural households do not have access to piped drinking water, and second, because most of the country's agriculture relies on irrigation: about 82% of Uzbekistan's agricultural land is irrigated. Water is an important production asset, and in most rural areas access to water is as important as access to land.

The state pays virtually the entire cost of maintenance and operation of the irrigation system. In addition, a substantial implicit subsidy is associated with the irrigation system through the subsidized pricing of electricity for pumping. Water is supplied on the basis of contractual agreements with shirkats and private farmers and trade in water is forbidden by law. Dekhan farmers in the household sector are also included in the planning of water deliveries, although priority has normally been given to shirkats and to private farmers who produce the strategic crops of cotton and wheat.

The management of water has a regional perspective, since water supply sources cross national borders (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan). This is an area where initiatives have been taken on a regional level. Within the framework of the Global Water Partnership for Central Asia and Caucasus, a Central Asian Gender and Water Network is being set up, which meets regularly to share experience and initiatives, including experience in the treatment of gender issues. It has also been instrumental in carrying out special studies on women's and men's roles as users and managers of water resources in rural areas.²²

A recent small survey of households in one rural raion in the Fergana Valley suggested that the questions regarding the distribution of water for farming are decided by men (ICWC 2004). It is important that women be helped to know their rights to water for agricultural purposes, and also to have a say in the decision-making bodies responsible for the distribution and management of water resources. Local water users' associations (WUAs) are being set up in some areas of the country. It is important that women be represented in these new bodies, both as users and in the management structures.

As to drinking water, access to public utilities in general is less frequent in rural areas, meaning that households are less likely to have access to piped drinking water, piped gas, or sewage systems. This all tends to add to women's work and time required to carry out household tasks.

²² More information on this network is available at: www.gender.cawater-info.net

According to official (SSC) statistics, over 90% of urban households and 70% of rural households have access to piped water. However, the estimates on access to water and adequate sanitation vary. According to the LSA, only 56% of the population has access to running water in their own dwelling (World Bank 2003). According to data from the 2002 HES survey, 85% of urban households had access to piped water, compared to 29% of rural households (33% of rural households used a public tap). In rural areas, 89% of households used a pit toilet (as opposed to a flush toilet), compared to 44% in urban areas. In rural areas, 27% of households cook with firewood or straw, or by burning dung (Table 5.2). The LSS reports that the supply of natural gas covered 77.4% of dwellings, 67.5% in rural areas.

Table 5.2 Survey Estimates of Share of Households in Urban and Rural Areas with Access to Selected Public Utilities, 2002 (%)

	Urban Households	Rural Households
Access to piped water	85	29
Use of public tap	—	33
Use of Pit Toilet (as opposed to flush toilet)	44	89
Cook without gas or electricity	—	27

Source: SSC 2002.

However, even access to piped water does not mean that the water is safe, or that access is continuous. Uzbekistan has problems with the quality of the water delivered through the pipes and the regularity with which it is delivered. Utility infrastructure in most regions is in urgent need of repair and maintenance work. Irregularity of supply means that many households have to either buy water, which is brought in trucks, or use water from rivers and canals. Again, problems are more frequent in rural areas.

The recent small survey of households in the Fergana Valley raion (ICWC 2004) showed that 45% of the respondents used a water pipe in the yard, and 55% used a well on the street. The average time for collecting water for the home was 30 minutes, although in some villages it was 1.5–2.0 hours. In 75% of the cases, children were the household members responsible for fetching water. Women were found to be responsible for the use of water in the home, but men were more likely to fetch the water if they had transport, such as a car, cart, or bicycle. However, study of the time use of working men and women in the villages showed that women spent slightly more time collecting water and fuel, and more time on cooking and child care. Men spent more time on shopping (bazaar) (Table 5.3). Access to electricity is not a frequently mentioned problem, but interruptions in supply are reported to be frequent. This can also affect water supply, as pumps are electrically operated.

Table 5.3 Time Budget of Working Women and Men (hours per week)

Type of Activity	Women	Men
Hired labor	38.0	40.0
Preparing meals	10.5	3.5
Housework, cleaning yard, etc.	10.5	10.0
Child care	6.0	2.0
Laundry, washing dishes	5.5	1.0
Looking after elderly, sick	4.0	2.5
Going to bazaar, shopping	2.0	7.0
Work on household plot, work with domestic animals	16.0	18.0
Fetching water, fuel	7.0	5.0
Visiting neighbors, friends	2.5	3.5
Receiving neighbors, friends, relatives	2.6	2.6
Prayers, etc.	1.5	1.7
Personal hygiene, etc.	2.4	1.3
Watching television, reading, hobbies	9.0	13.0
Social duties	2.0	3.5
Eating and sleeping	48.5	51.1
Total	168	168

Source: ICWC 2004.

No regular time use surveys have been carried out at the national level, but a one-off survey undertaken in 1997 showed that women spent an average of 4.23 hours per day on unpaid work, compared with men's 1.48 hours (SSC 2002).

Summary and Recommendations. Water is an important productive asset In Uzbekistan's rural areas. Difficulty in accessing water can add to the time burden of women, although there is no systematic study of the amount of time spent by men and women in procuring water for irrigation and household use. In order to ensure equality of access, the following recommendations are offered:

- Ensure that male and female farmers and dekhans know their water rights.
- Ensure that women farmers and dekhans are members of WUAs.
- Introduce quotas to ensure representation of women in the management structures of WUAs.
- Acquire sex-disaggregated data on membership and management of WUAs.
- Carry out further awareness raising about gender issues and their relation to water management in rural areas, and provide further support to gender and water networks.
- Encourage a linkup of women and WUAs in the participatory discussion under MDG #7, access to safe drinking water. Ensure that gender concerns are adequately mainstreamed in the formulation of national targets and indicators for this MDG.
- Carry out systematic time use surveys to establish the difference in men's and women's time burden for water-related activities and other household chores.

C. Access to Credit and Markets

In the LSS and other policy documents, the Government has placed great emphasis on the role of SMEs in creating employment opportunities. In 2003, the UNDP carried out a survey of household assets in three oblasts (Samarkand, Andizhan, and Khorezm) (UNDP Forthcoming). The aim was to identify what assets could be mobilized as capital for promoting small household-based entrepreneurial activities. One of the most striking conclusions of the survey was the *lack of* household assets in the country. Apart from their dwellings, almost the only asset is people's own labor, and it is essential that they find opportunities to mobilize this remaining asset through employment.

The 2003 survey suggested that the demand for credit among households (to set up small businesses) is large. The share of families in the survey that would like to organize family-based businesses was at least twice as high as the share of families that have by now established such businesses by mobilizing their assets. Among the factors constraining households, financial factors prevail: most of the sampled families are willing to mobilize their assets to generate additional income, but they lack resources to do so.

The results suggested that a family willing to capitalize its assets has to invest on average about \$945, or about 15% of the total value of their assets. However, only 5.4% of families could meet this criterion (3.6% and 10.7% in 1st and 4th quartiles respectively); 44% of families have no savings at all.²³

In 2003, Uzbekistan's SME sector was provided with microcredit to the amount of more than SUM40 billion (\$353,750), of which SUM28 billion was provided by commercial banks from their own resources, while SUM12 billion were supplied from credit lines of extrabudgetary funds, external borrowing, and grants. Most of these credits were provided by Pakhtabank (27.6%), National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity (17%), Uzzhilotssberbank (15.6%) and Promstroybank (12.5%). The Business Fund supplied microcredits to the amount of SUM5.5 billion, and the Employment Fund under the MLSP supplied SUM6.8 billion. According to the International Finance Corporation, the total loan portfolio for NGOs was US\$1.4 million, and for credit unions it was about US\$600,000.

The idea of the credit unions is that they can reach the small entrepreneurs, i.e., those to whom the banks have little incentive to lend, who need small loans and have little or no collateral. Credit unions were first set up in 2002, and their development has been supported by international development partners, including ADB, USAID, and the World Council of Credit Unions. They provide loans that can be guaranteed by mortgages or letters of guarantee (types of collateral that can be provided by households, but that are not usually accepted by banks). In 2004, 6,520 individuals were members of credit unions. However, the experience accumulated in the brief period within which credit unions have been operating shows that a typical credit union member is a person with a certain amount of savings, willing to mobilize these savings in business through credit unions as a legal

²³ Savings here are defined as cash (kept in a bank or not), shares, bonds etc, the money value of investments made in jewellery and antiques, the money value of livestock bought as an investment, and housing that is not bought for the use of the household as its primary abode.

option. Poor households normally do not join credit unions, as they lack resources to pay even the admission membership fee (CER 2004: ch. 2).

It is important that women and men have equal opportunities to take advantage of the changing economic situation. Women in particular need to have continued access to training in the skills (vocational, business, and leadership) required to take advantage of the opportunities emerging from the policy emphasis on facilitating private sector and SME development. According to the LSS, women represent less than 14% of entrepreneurs. In 2001, it was estimated that of the entrepreneurs who received microcredit (as of 1 Jan 2002), only 15% were women (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Entrepreneurs Receiving Microcredit
(by oblast, as of 1 January 2002)

	Number of Credits Issued		Share Received by Women and Men	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Andizhan	857.6	7,586.5	10.2	89.8
Bukhara	1,031.6	4,457.9	18.8	81.2
Dzhizak	263.1	2,711.3	8.8	91.2
Fergana	1,388.5	6,381.4	17.9	82.1
Karakalpakstan	920.5	2,682.8	25.5	74.5
Kashkadarya	482.6	4,355.9	10.0	90.0
Khorezm	655.8	2,063.5	24.1	75.9
Namangan	1,184.0	10,656.3	13.7	86.3
Navoi	549.9	4,059.9	11.9	88.1
Samarkand	1,184.0	10,656.3	10.0	90.0
Surkhandarya	776.0	3,067.9	20.2	79.8
Syrdarya	353.1	2,246.2	13.6	86.4
Tashkent	1,483.7	7,435.7	16.6	83.4
Tashkent City	3,988.4	20,815.5	16.1	83.9
Total	14,397.0	81,429.5	15.0	85.0

Source: SSC 2002.

Another problem that is more difficult to document consists of the sociocultural constraints affecting women's access to credit. These constraints make it more difficult for women to approach banks and credit institutions, and also make applications by women less likely to be successful.

Summary and Recommendations. While the potential demand for credit currently cannot be met, problems in accessing credit prevent many from gaining access. Credit unions are helping, but their coverage is still small, and poor households are less likely to join them. Women are accessing only a small part of the limited credit available.

Recommendation: Efforts should be made to build on the experience of the Business Women's Association (BWA) in providing a combination of skills and business training and credits to women, and on the basis of the pilot project already implemented, develop proposals for working with the BWA and the MLSP on ways of achieving a broader impact.

D. Access to Social Protection

Like other countries of the former Soviet Union, Uzbekistan inherited quite an extensive system of social protection, but one that it could not afford to maintain, although Uzbekistan has made efforts from the beginning of the transition period to ensure that the country retained a strong system of social protection. In particular, it was one of the first post-Soviet countries to introduce a “last resort” social assistance benefit, which was a type of benefit that did not exist in the Soviet period. This benefit, introduced in 1994, targeted low-income families as subsidies on food and other basic goods and services were withdrawn.

1. Social Assistance Benefits

Uzbekistan maintains two main social assistance benefits, child allowances and low-income benefits, both of which are administered through the mahallas, or traditional local community organizations.²⁴ Until 1998, child allowances were universal benefits, available for all families with children under 16 years of age. Since 1998, they have been targeted to low-income families, using the same targeting mechanism as the low-income benefit. This innovative system of targeting social assistance, introduced in 1994, instead of introducing a national system of means testing, lets local mahallas make decisions (using local knowledge of living standards) about which families within their communities are eligible for benefits.

The child allowance can be allocated in the range of 50% of the minimum wage for families with one child, up to 175% of the minimum wage for families with four or more children. Child allowances are provided to low-income families with children under 16 years of age (or older, if the children are still in full-time schooling). All mothers with children under 2 years of age also receive a universal benefit. The low-income social assistance benefit can range from 1.5 to 3 times the minimum wage. Approximately 1.1 million households receive child benefits; more than 700,000 receive child-care allowances for children under 2 years of age; 300,000 receive low-income benefits. Some 6% of all state expenditures go to needy families through the mahalla system of social assistance.

2. Pensions

The pay-as-you-go pension system provides old age, disability, and survivor insurance to all those employed in the formal sector. Pensions are financed by a 39.8% payroll tax, of which 37.3% is paid by employers and 2.5% by employees. In 2002, expenditure on pensions was equal to 7% of GDP. The 2001–2002 HBS data suggest that overall, pensions play an important role in reducing poverty for pensioners and other individuals living in their households (most pensioners live in extended families, and almost one third of households in the survey had one member who was a pensioner) (World Bank 2003). Those who do not participate in the formal economy have no pension rights, and participation in the pension system by dekhan farmers is voluntary, therefore few contribute. The pensionable age is 55 years for women and 60 years for men. Pensions are estimated to cover 90% of women of pensionable age and 85% of men; coverage rates are higher in urban than

²⁴ For more details on this scheme, see Marnie and Micklewright 2005.

in rural areas (World Bank 2003). However, these relatively high coverage rates reflect the fact that most people of pensionable age worked during the Soviet period. Coverage rates can be expected to drop in coming years, due to the decrease in the share of the working population employed in the formal sector.

The problem with the social security system is that the high payroll tax discourages registration of small businesses in the formal sector. The LSS estimates that less than 50% of the economically active population is currently paying contributions to the Pension Fund. The other problem is that the pension system is not considered fiscally sustainable, despite the fact that the dependency ratio is quite low (0.3). The problem is that workers have little incentive to contribute to the scheme, since little linkage exists in practice between the size of the pension received and the worker's contributions. The Government is currently drafting and implementing reform proposals. Since January 2005, a new cumulative pension system is being introduced to supplement the current "pay-as-you-go" scheme. The cumulative system is voluntary and based on the principle of personal savings accounts, meaning that pension size will depend on how much the citizen has saved. The citizen will be entitled to his/her normal pension, plus the supplement accumulated through his/her savings.

3. Unemployment Benefits

Those who register as unemployed at the state employment offices are entitled to an unemployment benefit. However, the size of this benefit is low and take-up is also low. As noted in chapter 4, only a small percentage of the unemployed actually register with the employment offices (see also footnote 19).

4. "Privileges"

Apart from cash benefits, the Government provides so-called "privileges" to selected groups of the population (including old-age pensioners, military veterans, and some categories of state employees). These include free food packages for pensioners living alone; free drugs if prescribed by a doctor; discounts on utility payments (gas, water, heating, and electricity); free education materials, etc. Some 1.2 million people are entitled to these privileges.

5. How Effective is the Social Protection System in Providing Support to More Vulnerable Men and Women?

According to the LSA, old-age pensions provide the highest per capita benefits, followed by the low-income social assistance benefit, the benefit for children under 2 years of age, the child allowance benefit and last, the unemployment benefit. But the difference between per capita level of pensions (SUM2,374) and the social assistance benefits (SUM1,121 for low-income benefit, and SUM526 for the child allowance in 2001/02) is significant. Since pension levels are linked to the recipient's previous wage level, the average old-age pension tends to be higher for nonpoor households. The minimum pension is roughly 43% of the average wage.

The HBS data have been used to look at the targeting of social assistance (low-income benefits and child allowances) through the local Mahalla Committees (see World Bank [2003: ch. 7]). The system seems to work, in that low-income families are more likely to receive the benefits. The levels of the benefits are quite low, but were still found to make up a significant share of cash income for the poorest households. However, the amount of state expenditure going to these benefits has been decreasing, and the number of recipients has also decreased. This decrease may be due to a drop in applications, but is more likely to be due to a decrease in the funds available to pay benefits.

Overall, it seems that although benefits and pensions are not large, they have a positive effect on poverty reduction. In terms of access, women and men seem equally protected, with women being relatively advantaged, in that their retirement age is lower. Since life expectancy for women is also higher than for men, they tend to benefit from the solidarity system, in that they receive pensions longer. However, pensions are being paid now to those who worked most of their lives in the Soviet period, when formal employment was guaranteed and obligatory. The issue now is that growing numbers of the population will not qualify for pensions in the future, because they have not participated in formal sector employment. Since women participate less in the formal sector and are more likely to be employed as dekhani farmers, it seems likely that they will be less protected in the future.

The other issue is that of the ability of men and women to demand accountability from the Mahalla Committees responsible for making decisions on eligibility for, and the amount of, social assistance benefits for the vulnerable. Mahalla Committees traditionally consist of the male elders of the community. At least in the first years of the scheme, decisions on which households were eligible for the targeted assistance were made in a transparent way and announced at a public meeting of the community. Qualitative research gives mixed reports on women's voice in the mahallas. Most of them have women's committees, the formal duties of which are primarily helping arrange wedding parties and the like for community households. However, some reports suggest that women can and do approach the women's committees with their concerns, and that these are passed on for consideration by the council of elders.

Privileges are criticized in the LSS as being an inefficient use of limited social expenditure funds, since they are not targeted at the poor. Unemployment benefits are also considered too low to have any impact on poverty reduction (World Bank 2003: 42–32).

Another problem is the system of social workers. Qualified social workers are sorely lacking (it is estimated that demand outstrips supply by 1,500 a year [Government of Uzbekistan 2005: 19]), and few training courses are available for them. This means that the task of caring for the elderly, sick, and disabled will tend to be taken on by women in their households, adding to their time burden.

Summary and Recommendations

- The country's innovative system of targeting social assistance (child benefits and low-income benefits) through the mahallas appears to be a valid mechanism, and the

benefits can help poor households. However, the level of benefits is low, and an increase in state expenditure on these benefits is needed to increase their poverty reduction effect.

- The effect of the changing pension system on women's and men's pension rights and coverage has to be studied in more detail, to ensure that the current working generation has equal opportunities to qualify for retirement pensions.
- The targeting effectiveness of the mahalla social assistance system should be monitored regularly, using the special modules already attached to the HBS. (This requires that the SSC make the database available to the MLSP and other researchers.)
- Maintain efforts to ensure that the mahalla system of allocation remains transparent and that forums exist where women and men can express their opinions and demand accountability from the Mahalla Committees.
- Develop the social worker system and make training courses available for them.

Provision of preschool facilities is not part of the social protection system, but efforts need to be made in conjunction with the Ministry of Education to develop community and other alternative types of child care support, which can provide elements of early childhood development and also reduce women's time burden.

Chapter 6 Gender Dimensions of Human Development

A. Health Sector Reform in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan inherited a relatively well-developed health care system at the beginning of transition. However, it was one, which could not be maintained after the loss of central budget transfers. Public expenditure on health has continued to fall in recent years, from 3.8% of GDP in 1995 to 2.5% in 2003, and per capita health expenditure is now below the average for low-income countries (World Bank 2004). The Government has begun introducing changes in the organization and structure of health care services with the end of ensuring access, while making delivery of services more cost effective. The focus has been on guaranteeing access to basic health services through primary health care reform, shifting toward a greater reliance upon General Practice physicians and guaranteeing access to emergency services. Overall, attempts are ongoing to reorient the system toward outpatient facilities, rather than in-hospital services. The Comprehensive Health Program was introduced by a Presidential Decree in 1998.

Apart from introducing changes in the ways in which health care is delivered, the Government has launched a series of programs to tackle priority health concerns. These include an immunization program against childhood diseases, tuberculosis prevention programs (such as DOTS [directly observed treatment short-course]), drug treatment programs, the healthy lifestyle program, and a family planning program.

1. Reform of the Health Care System

The structure of health care services is being rationalized to three levels: rural medical centers (SVPs), central district hospitals, and regional hospitals. Fees have also been gradually introduced for certain services for in-patient and tertiary care, and some facilities have been privatized. This has been accompanied by a list of population groups that are exempt from paying the fees for such private services. The reform also envisages the introduction of health insurance schemes, but little progress has taken place so far.

Privatization is occurring through the sale of some state facilities, the building of new private health care facilities, and the granting to medical workers of long-term leases of government facilities. The Government also issues licenses to doctors for private medical practice. The Government does not regulate their fees, but these providers are supposed to provide 20% of services free of charge to exempt groups, for which the Government will reimburse them. There are also some mixed-financing institutions, where fees are charged for certain services provided in public facilities. Private providers make quarterly contracts with the health care facilities, and patients pay the physicians' fees for services provided under the contract. The Government regulates the fees charged at mixed-financing institutions, and paid services in mixed-finance facilities have to be delivered in separate departments from free services or those provided for exempt groups.

In order to protect vulnerable groups and to ensure free care for diseases with public health concerns (“socially significant diseases”), the 1998 decree specifies individuals, services, and facilities that enjoy exemptions from payment for medical services. Primary health care, emergency care, immunization, and care for socially significant diseases are free to all. Assistance for birth delivery is free, but the patient can pay for services at a private practice. Exemptions are not based on income levels, but on population categories (e.g., children under 17 years of age and young people up to 24 years of age, the disabled, orphans, war veterans, and military recruits).

While privatization could help improve the efficiency and quality of health services, concerns have been raised that lack of adequate regulation, transparency, and mechanisms for accountability mean that the poor are being disadvantaged. In a sense, privatization is an attempt to formalize the already widespread practice of informal payments for most services provided at public health facilities. For the moment, the result of privatization appears to be a mixture of formal and informal payments, which continues to affect the access of the poor to quality health care.

Use of formal private services is still quite limited: it was estimated in 2003 that 3–10% of health care was delivered by formal private providers (World Bank 2003). Qualitative research carried out in 2002 suggested that health providers earned between 40% and 60% of their income from private practice, and that most private practice was informal (i.e., without formal contracts with facilities, or providers were unlicensed and used public facilities in working hours) (World Bank 2003). High fixed tax obligations and the formal costs of the facilities provide incentives for doctors to evade the formal system. Providers justify informal payments on the basis of the low official salaries of health providers. Two thirds of health care service users reported making informal payments of cash and in-kind goods and services. The main reason why patients made informal payments was to secure better quality health services. Users participated in the informal system because they could negotiate fees that were lower than official charges. Apart from penalizing the poor, the widespread use of informal payments means that a large amount of resources is not being reinvested in the health care system to improve the quality of public services.

According to the 2001–2002 HBS data, a total of 81% of all households reported making out-of-pocket expenditures for health. Over 85% of rich households (top quintile) made payments, as did 73% of poor households (lowest-income quintile) (World Bank 2003). Evidence shows that the poor are more likely to rely on self-treatment, or turn to local “healers” who use traditional cures (Joldasov 2003).

Another problem is lack of clarity and transparency. The introduction of some formal payments for services seems to have led to confusion among the population as to when they are making a formal payment or an informal one, especially in public facilities. Apart from the confusion (among both doctors and patients) about which services should be provided free at which facilities, the exact definition of exempt groups is not always clear to health care service users. The same is true for the tariffs for paid services.

Overall, the problem is not lack of access for the poor to facilities; the physical facilities usually exist. What is important is the growing differences in the quality of the services provided,

the differences in the physical conditions (state of repair and equipment) and staffing levels of the various facilities, and the way in which the system of formal and informal payments is preventing the poor population from using the health care system. If users cannot pay in advance for services, they are likely to be refused treatment, even for emergencies. Poor people living in remote regions are particularly disadvantaged, since they will incur transport as well as health care costs.

Clear mechanisms are also lacking for ensuring accountability of providers and ways in which users can know their rights. This was clearly expressed by participants in focus group discussions carried out in four oblasts in 2003 (Joldasov 2003). Participants felt that they did know their rights as users of health care services, and how to legally protect these rights. As users paying for services, they also felt they should have a right to choose their doctor. However, they were experiencing a monopolization in the delivery of services and also over the price set for what is usually perceived as a low quality of service.

Within this overall picture, the gender concerns are that both women and men from the poorer and disadvantaged sections of society should be guaranteed access to the health care services they require. It is important that women be empowered to participate in the household decisions on when and how much to pay for health care services, and that both men and women have access to whatever community or other organizations emerge in order to improve the accountability of local health care providers.

B. Gender and Health Care Indicators

In the early years of transition, most health indicators deteriorated, including maternal and child mortality and incidence of infectious and respiratory diseases. Life expectancy was also reduced (Table 6.1). Overall, women have a longer life expectancy than men (73.8 years compared with 69.4 years), and the gender difference in life expectancy is greater among the urban population (74.3 years, compared with 67.9 years).

Uzbekistan is usually said to suffer from a “double burden” of disease, having a relatively high incidence of morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases characteristic of poor countries (e.g. tuberculosis, diphtheria, viral hepatitis, and typhoid); as well as a high incidence of non-infectious diseases characteristic of developed countries (e.g., cardiovascular and circulatory diseases). Tuberculosis increased by over 30% in the 1990s. The number of registered cases of tuberculosis has continued to rise in

Table 6.1 Life Expectancy at Birth for Women and Men (number of years)

	1997	1999	2002	2003
Urban Population				
Total	—	—	70.5	71.1
Women	74.0	74.2	73.6	74.3
Men	69.1	69.1	67.3	67.9
Rural Population				
Total	—	—	71.7	71.9
Women	71.4	71.6	73.3	73.4
Men	66.8	66.9	70.2	70.5
Total Population	—	—	71.2	71.6
Women	72.7	73.1	73.5	73.8
Men	68.1	68.2	68.9	69.4

Source: SSC 2002.

recent years, but no sex-disaggregated data are available on incidence; 59,000 cases were registered in 2000 and 69,400 in 2003, while the number of newly registered cases was 65.5 per 100,000 population in 2000, and 77.6 per 100,000 population in 2003.

Health indicators vary across regions, urban/rural areas, and income groups. For example, anaemia rates are especially high in the Aral Sea region in Karakalpakstan. High rates of infectious disease and poor nutrition, particularly among children, reflect a drop in the quality of health care, low incomes, poor access to clean water and sanitation facilities, and the effects of environmental degradation. In rural areas, the quality of drinking water is also affected by poor agricultural practices.

Signs of malnutrition can be seen among women and children. The World Bank's LSA found nutritional differences between children and women from poor and nonpoor households; indicators of children's nutritional status, such as stunting and underweight were highest in Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Navoi, and Bukhara.

One qualitative study suggests that the time burden on most women, especially in rural areas, has led to deterioration in the overall health status of women. Both men and women participants in the study expressed the opinion that their communities contain almost no healthy women. Poverty, malnutrition, and hard manual work mean that women are not healthy. Some participants claim that women are undernourished because they tend to give their portion of meals to their children or husbands. Men are considered to be better nourished, because they eat outside the home more often (invited as guests). Men also believe that women are responsible for their health and the health of their children, and can turn wives out of the house or leave them if they get sick. Women's work burden and consequently their health status has also deteriorated due to the fact that young men are leaving their families to look for jobs in other regions or in other countries (Joldasov 2003).

C. Maternal Mortality

While most health indicators showed some improvement in the late 1990s, maternal mortality actually increased, reaching 34.1 per 100,000 live births in 2000. Rates were high in the early 1990s—51 per 100,000 live births in 1992—but fell to 20.7 per 100,000 in 1996. Since 2000, rates have been decreasing again, although another slight rise occurred between 2000 (26.9) to 2003 (29.9). Significant regional differences are also reported.²⁵

The reasons for the rise in maternal mortality are thought to be several. First, an overall deterioration has taken place in the health status of women. Poverty and low living standards appear to have had an effect on nutrition levels. High rates of anaemia are recorded among women (64.8% of pregnant women are anaemic) and iodine deficiency and low weight-for-age are found among

²⁵ Note that some evidence shows official figures underestimating maternal mortality, since survey estimates tend to be significantly higher than those obtained through the official administrative statistics (as is the case with infant and under-5 mortality rates). ADB (2004) suggests that significant regional differences occur, with, for example, Bukhara having a maternal mortality rate that is twice the national average.

children under 5 years of age. Estimates derived from the 2002 HES suggest that 6% of women and 4% of men are undernourished.²⁶

Second, inequalities exist in the quality of the facilities, the level of the equipment, and the qualification level of the medical staff. Access to prenatal care is in fact widespread, and it is estimated that 95% of pregnant women receive prenatal care, although only 39% of them receive care in the first trimester of pregnancy. Most women also deliver at health facilities, assisted by qualified personnel. The problem is again not just access, but access to quality services.

Third, as outlined above, the prevalence of informal payments may deter poorer women from using the available services. Fourth, in rural areas, women tend to marry young, have children at a young age, and have frequent births. This also affects maternal health. Fifth, despite efforts to improve contraceptive knowledge and availability, abortion is still used as a way of terminating an unwanted pregnancy (the number of recorded abortions has fallen slightly, but was still 10.5 per 100 births in 2003). Finally, access to safe water and sanitation and exposure to environmental pollution varies by place of residence, and in some areas affect maternal health. Overall, the average national figures are thought to mask significant differences among regions and income groups.

The health and education status of mothers tends to have an influence on the health status of infants and children. Almost 50% of infant mortality is within the first month of birth, and many cases are influenced by the care given to mothers during pregnancy. Official figures report a decrease in infant mortality rates to 16.6 per 1,000 live births in 2002.²⁷ However, survey data from the 2002 HES estimates 62 per 1,000 nationally, with 75 per 1,000 in rural areas and 43 in urban areas.

Fertility rates may be falling. According to the 2002 HES, the total fertility rate is now 2.9 children per women, compared to 4.0 in 1996. The fertility rate is 3.2 for rural areas, and 2.5 for urban areas. There have also been signs that childbearing is being delayed, as the HES recorded that 2% of 15–19 year olds had given birth, compared to 7% in 1996; 54% of 20–24 year olds had given birth, compared to 60% in 1996. These are positive trends for women's reproductive health status, but they need to be accompanied by other improvements in health indicators.

D. Gender Issues and the Incidence of Diseases

Men appear to be more vulnerable than women to most statistically recorded diseases (Table 6.2). The difference in the death rates for cardiovascular diseases and deaths due to accidents is particularly striking. The incidence of mental disorders and alcohol/drug abuse is also

²⁶ Women were classified as undernourished if their Body Mass Index was less than 18.5. Six percent of women and men reported going without food for 1 or more days in the last 6 months. Twenty-eight percent of women were obese, with the highest rate of obesity being in Tashkent city (34%).

²⁷ Here again, official statistics show significant regional variation, with Tashkent City actually showing the highest figures (24.9). In general, rates in urban areas tend to be higher, but it is not clear whether this is due to better reporting or to poorer maternal and infant health status. See UNDP (Forthcoming: Annex 3).

higher among men (Table 6.3). Smoking prevalence is reported to be much higher among adult men (41%) than among adult women (1%) (ADB 2004).

Table 6.2 Death Rate among Working-Age Population by Sex, According to Cause of Death

	Per 100,000 of the population (2000)		Per 100,000 of the population (2002)		Per 100,000 of the population (2003)	
	Women 16–54 years	Men 16–59 years	Women 16–54 years	Men 16–59 years	Women 16–54 years	Men 16–59 years
Cardiovascular diseases	46.1	115.9	49.8	113.5	49.3	115.6
Accidents, poisoning, traumas	20.9	86.5	20.6	80.0	18.1	71.4
Tumors	28.7	32.4	28.4	28.7	28.7	28.6
Respiratory diseases	12.8	20.4	13.1	20.6	10.9	17.7
Digestion diseases	20.0	35.0	20.5	32.7	19.9	32.4
Infectious and parasitic diseases	15.0	33.3	15.1	31.8	13.9	29.3
Other	34.1	47.9	31.3	41.9	31.1	38.6
Total	177.9	372.4	178.9	349.2	171.8	333.6

Source: State Statistical Committee.

Table 6.3 Drug Abuse and Mental Disorders, 2000
(Patients registered for the first time)

	Per 100,000 people		Distribution by sex	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Mental disorders	109.2	182.4	37.6	62.4
Alcoholism and dipsomania	3.2	27.8	10.4	89.6
Drug addiction and drug abuse	2.7	43.2	5.9	94.1

Source: SSC 2002.

A recent qualitative study carried out to ascertain the perceptions of the poor population on health matters suggested that both men and women in poor and vulnerable families face considerable stress. Men, who cannot earn enough to bring home money for their families, i.e., cannot fulfill their traditional role as breadwinner; suffer symptoms of stress and nervous disorders. Wage arrears and lack of employment opportunities in rural areas, as well as exposure to the insecurities of the mardikhor system, have made such stress more common. Women usually experience stress due to their time burden, but this may be exacerbated, for example, by being forced to marry a partner they have not chosen (Joldasov 2003).

Summary and Recommendations. The government's priority directions for health care reform are compatible with the national MDG targets for goals #4–#6, but more effort will have to be made to ensure that they are costed and linked to changes in the way in which the health care budget is allocated. The recent rises and large regional differences in maternal mortality rates are cause for concern. Since most women have access to prenatal care, and since the main causes of maternal deaths are complications in pregnancy, the problem appears to be with the quality of the prenatal care being offered. The LSS and I-PRSP state in several places the Government's commitment to improving the quality of medical assistance provided to women of fertile age (e.g.,

Government of Uzbekistan 2004: 32–24). The government has to be supported in ensuring that the ongoing primary health care reform includes policy measures that address women’s specific health needs and ensure access to affordable health care services throughout the country. Recommendations include the following:

- Better tracking of regional differences in maternal mortality rates and other key health indicators is needed, to identify where reform efforts should be prioritized.
- Better tracking and tackling of disease incidence and drug abuse from a gender perspective is needed.
- A time use survey (as recommended in the previous chapter) would be useful to try to understand the extent to which women’s time burden, especially in rural areas, is affecting their health.
- NGOs should be supported in efforts to raise women’s and men’s ability to understand the services to which they are entitled and to make health providers more accountable to their users.
- It would also be advisable to develop education programs tailored for young girls on health risks, healthy lifestyles, and the importance of sport.

E. Gender Issues in Education

Uzbekistan inherited good education indicators and has made efforts to ensure that they are maintained. Universal access to basic primary and secondary school education (grades 1–9) has been maintained, and literacy rates are almost 100% for men and women. Eighty-two percent of the employed population has completed basic education (9 years) and of these 34% have higher education. According to the 2001/2002 HBS data, approximately 92% of men and 93% of women in the 25–44-year-old age group have had some upper secondary or higher levels of schooling (World Bank 2003: ch. 6), although the 25–34-year-olds have been investing less in higher education. Despite these achievements, however, the quality of education at all levels of education is seen as not being maintained, and differences in access to, and the quality of, school education provided across regions and income groups is growing.

As with the health care sector, maintaining expenditure on education became difficult in the transition period, after the loss of subsidies from the central Soviet budget. State expenditure on education has declined from 7.4% of GDP in 1995 to 6.4% in 2003, although the share of education in overall state expenditures has risen from 22.8% to 26.2% in the same period (UNDP Forthcoming). The initial policy reaction at the beginning of the transition period was to cut expenditure and diversify sources of financing. Pre-school education, which had been largely financed by state enterprises, was cut drastically, and priority was given to basic elementary and lower secondary schooling. Obligatory school education was cut from 11 years to 9 years, responsibility for financing a large part of the education program was decentralized to the oblast level, and textbooks were no longer supplied beyond grade 1. In higher education institutes, a system of “contract” (paying) students was introduced. Those scoring top marks in the entrance exam pay no fees, while those scoring below a certain threshold are admitted on a fee-paying basis. Forty percent of university entrants today pay no fees.

Apart from finance, the education system inherited from the Soviet era had other problems that had to be addressed. The curriculum, teaching methods, and other Soviet “norms” were not flexible enough for the task of educating young people to participate in the market economy. Apart from the basic school curriculum and teaching methods, school and vocational education was also providing training for a lot of skills that were no longer matched by demand in the labor market.

In order to address these problems, the Government in 1997 introduced an education reform program, the “National Program for Personnel Training.” This envisages an increase in the duration of obligatory school education from 9 to 12 years. While the basic 9-year school education will be provided at the current secondary schools, the upper secondary grades (10–12) will be provided at academic lycea, attached to universities and staffed by university teaching staff, and at the existing network of vocational secondary schools. The latter are being changed into a new network of professional colleges, with more flexible curricula intended to respond to local employment needs. These professional colleges are expected to accommodate about 90% of secondary enrollments. It is expected that all graduates of academic lycea will go on to higher education. Graduates from the vocational schools will be eligible to go on to higher education, but few are expected to do so.

Higher education is being reorganized along the lines of bachelor’s and master’s degree programs, and certain areas of studies are being expanded, for example computer science, business administration, and English language.

This reorganization basically represents a streamlining of the education structure, cutting down on the tracks and types of institutions inherited from the Soviet system. All existing technical and vocational establishments will be gradually closed or converted into professional colleges. In higher education, numerous courses will be progressively eliminated and replaced by four-year bachelor’s degree programs, followed by two-year master’s degree programs.

Apart from the organizational changes, the quality of the education provided at all levels is perceived as needing to be improved. Therefore, emphasis is being placed on improving curricula and teaching methods, teacher training, and educational materials. Revision of curricula and textbook content has been a priority since independence.

The quality of teaching is being addressed through pre-service and in-service teacher education. The Government considers that 54% of primary school teachers, most of them in rural schools, are underqualified. Retraining courses in modern teaching methods are needed, along with study courses for teachers in the new subjects being included in the curriculum.

Changes in the rigid system of education management, inherited from the Soviet period, are also being introduced. Administrative decentralization and community participation are being supported and nongovernment sources of funding explored. Financing and management responsibilities are increasingly being devolved to local governments. A new legal framework to allow for community involvement in schooling has been developed. Community views on decisions affecting the schools will be expressed through school boards and/or the mahallas.

F. Gender Issues in Preschool Education

Preschool coverage was 19.2% in 2003 (Government of Uzbekistan 2004), compared to about 37% of the 3–6-year-old age group in 1990. In rural areas, the decline has been steeper: estimates suggest that coverage dropped from 27% in 1991 to 12.1% in 2003 (UNDP Forthcoming). Although preschool education was never as prevalent in Uzbekistan as in other parts of the Soviet Union, the continuing decline in preschool coverage is of concern because of the role that preschool can play in reducing early dropouts and improving school performance. Some rise may have taken place recently due to the introduction of alternative types of pre-schools (e.g., community mahalla-based kindergartens). Data are not currently available to monitor whether preference is being given to boy or girl children in preschool education. For the poorer sections of the population, however, the costs (formal or informal) of preschool education do not make it an option for children of either sex. The collapse of the preschool system has added to women's time burden, and contributed to the reduction in opportunities for women to participate in the labor market.

G. Gender Issues in Basic and Secondary Education

Sex-disaggregated administrative data on enrolment rates are not available on a regular basis. For the 2001–2002 school year, the gross enrolment rate in primary education (grades 1–4) is estimated at 78% (79% for boys and 77% for girls). However, this may be partly explained by the fact that parents can choose whether to send their children to school at the age of 6 or 7 years. At junior secondary level (grades 5–9), the enrolment rate is 94%, but with larger gender disparities (100% for boys and 88% for girls). Enrolment rates for upper secondary grades (10–12) fell from 75% in 1999–2000 to 61.4% in 2002–2003.

Using the HBS data, it is estimated that boys had attendance rates of 78.5% and girls of 77.8% for grades 1–9 (7–15-year-olds) in 2001/02, and that only 36% of the 16–18-year-old age group was actually attending school in 2001 (27% of those in the lowest income group) (UNDP 2004). School attendance for boys and girls declines sharply after age 15; the decline is steeper for girls. However, no regular source of data monitors attendance rates. In rural areas, children who are enrolled in school often miss part of the school year because of the need to help in cotton harvesting.

The World Bank's LSA shows that the relationship between family income and school attendance is consistent at all levels. The LSA also uses the HBS data to estimate that 1.2% of children from the poorest-income quintile were at university in 2001-02, compared to 7.2% from the highest-income quintile (2.9% from the lowest quintile were attending technical college, compared to 13.3% from the top quintile) (World Bank 2003).

Although access to basic and general schooling is guaranteed, the poorer sectors have suffered from increases in costs for textbooks and other school materials that used to be provided free of charge. Out-of-pocket payments for education include textbooks, official tuition fees for higher education, and uniforms, but now also include informal payments. According to the results of a special module attached to the HSB in September 2000, approximately 10% of households made unofficial payments or gave gifts to teaching staff for their primary school children; 18% for secondary school-age children; and over 20% for older children in higher education. The size of the

payments was larger for higher education. The nonpoor spend more than the poor, but the expenditure represents a greater share of overall household expenditure for the poor. The largest payments for schoolchildren are for uniforms and then for textbooks. Only a small share of households (2%) report paying tuition for school-level children; this rises to 21% for children at higher institutions.

Teacher morale and motivation has also declined in the transition period. The Government has made efforts to improve conditions, through offering stable salaries, and “privileges” such as access to subsidies for utility services, free medical services, etc. The average teaching load is low—14 hours per week in primary and 16 hours in secondary schools. Teachers therefore often take on second jobs, especially in tutoring. Women make up the vast majority of teachers (75% of school teachers), but are underrepresented in the upper-level staff categories. The MDG discussion has brought to light concerns that almost no male teachers are left, and a target for improving the gender balance in school teaching staffs has been proposed.

However, with shrinking education budgets, priority was given to maintaining teachers’ jobs and salaries, and as a result, only a very small share was left for teaching materials and upkeep of school infrastructure. Decentralization of financing may have contributed to increasing inequity in the quality of schools in rural and urban areas.

As with basic health services, formal access to basic education services is there, but the quality of the services offered is not equal for all regions or income groups. Resource constraints have led to shortages of equipment and materials and deterioration in the physical condition of classrooms and school buildings. In order to address some inequalities, the Government has made efforts to reduce textbook costs for households by introducing a textbook rental scheme, which has been piloted and is now being extended to the national level. The Government has begun (2002/2003) to provide subsidies for textbook rental fees for the poorest students; winter clothes are also supplied to the poorest students through the mahallas.

The main component in the reformed program for secondary education outlined above is the increase in compulsory education from 9 to 12 grades. The target date for completion was originally set for 2004, but has since been delayed to 2009. At present approximately half of the students completing 9-year secondary schools enter the academic lycea or professional colleges. The remainder either continue in the former 2-year vocational secondary schools, or leave school. In fact, enrolments for upper secondary classes (after 9th grade) have fallen in recent years, and attendance rates have fallen even more steeply (World Bank 2004). The fact that general secondary schools now stop at 9th grade means that girls, especially in rural areas, may miss out on the 10–12th grades, since these classes tend to be offered at schools further from their place of residence. This will exacerbate the already existing gender gap in vocational and higher education. More investigation is required to monitor the effect of the ongoing changes in secondary school provision, and consideration should be given to the importance of measures, for example, aimed at ensuring safe transport for girls to attend the schools providing grades 10–12.

Overall, regular monitoring of the attendance of boys and girls (equal access), and also their learning outcomes (equal quality) is needed. So far, no national system of evaluating learning achievements is in place, but work on this is being undertaken.

H. Gender Issues in Tertiary Education

Overall, the numbers entering higher education have fallen, partly due to the increasing costs and the introduction of the fee-paying system for some students. Enrollments have fallen from 230,000 in 1994 to about 196,000 in 2004 (Table 6.4). Of those studying in higher education in 2003, 38.8% were women and 61.2% were men. The share of women declines further for postgraduate courses (25%) and for PhD courses (12%).

Table 6.4 Numbers and Share of Men and Women Students in Higher Education

	2002		2003	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Numbers studying in higher ed (thousands)	90.4	141.9	98.8	155.6
As a share of the population in the 19–22-year age group (%)	9.0	13.9	9.4	14.6
Distribution by sex (%)	38.9	61.1	38.8	61.2

Source: State Statistical Committee.

Women also tend to take up study courses related to health, education, and the arts, reflecting and perpetuating their existing gender segregation in the lower echelons of the labor market (Table 6.5). The share of women in secondary specialized (vocational) education has also decreased, from 49% in 2000 to 26% in 2003 (Government of Uzbekistan 2004).

Table 6.5 Distribution of students in Higher Education by Branch Specialization, 2003
(at the beginning of academic year)

	Women		Men		Distribution by Sex	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	%	Women	Men
All higher Educational Institutions	98.8	100.0	155.6	100.0	38.8	61.2
Industry and Construction	7.1	7.2	31.4	20.2	18.4	81.6
Agriculture	2.5	2.6	14.4	9.2	14.9	85.1
Transport and Communications	1.9	1.9	9.9	6.4	16.1	83.9
Economy and Law	3.4	3.5	11.6	7.5	22.9	77.1
Health, PE, and Sport	10.8	10.9	11.4	7.3	48.7	51.3
Education	72.0	72.8	75.3	48.4	48.8	51.2
Art and Cinematography	1.1	1.1	1,6	1.0	41.0	59.0

PE = physical education.

Source: State Statistical Committee.

I. Women and Information and Communication Technology

Women and ICT is an issue to which only limited attention has been paid in Uzbekistan to date. UNDP is compiling data on access of men and women to ICT in Uzbekistan, but they are not yet available.

The issue is important because of the growing importance of ICT in guaranteeing access to information, and therefore to greater empowerment and opportunities. In the interests of equal opportunity, it is important that women have access to training in ICT, and be encouraged to overcome existing gender stereotypes regarding use of this technology. Telecommunications and information technology (IT) tend to be a traditionally male-dominated branch.

This issue is being partly addressed through building up ICT capacity in school libraries. The US Embassy (the US Trade Development Agency) is also supporting a Center for Women's Training in Telecommunications and IT at the Tashkent University for Information Technology. The center will have two regional distance learning centers. However, training at this center, although subsidized, will still be fee-paying, and thus limit access by the poorer sectors of the female population.

Summary and Recommendations. Girls and boys need to have equal opportunities to access all levels of education. Women's position in the labor market and ability to participate fully in social, political, and economic life will depend on access to education. This has been stressed in the country's MDG discussion, especially in discussion of MDG #3 (improving women's presence in primary and secondary education). Apart from raising awareness among girls about the importance and advantages of higher education, attendance at upper secondary schools should be monitored to ensure that gender differences do not increase at this important level. The following recommendations are put forward:

- Monitor the extent to which informal fees, as well as costs of clothing, school materials, and transport influence access for boys and girls to all levels of schooling. The possibilities of working with mahallas, the Ministry of Education, the MLSP, and NGOs to ensure that girls and boys from poorer families are not penalized due to these costs should be explored.
- Use the current redesign of curricula and textbooks as an opportunity to ensure that gender stereotypes are not reinforced through school education materials.
- Support the Government in its efforts to introduce elements of ICT into school curricula. Investigate the possibilities of supporting access for women to ICT training courses in mahallas, possibly as part of the needs assessment of female dekhan farmers proposed in Chapters 4 and 5; such courses could be specially tailored to young women in the upper-secondary school age groups.
- Ensure that women, who make up the majority of teachers, and men are both able to participate fully in the retraining courses being offered as part of education reform.

- Ensure that women and men have a voice in the available mechanisms (school boards, mahalla committees) being used to increase community participation in decisions affecting school affairs.
- Religious instruction for young girls and women is being stressed in the latest Presidential Decree on the work of the National Women's Committee and in the latter's latest plan of action (see Chapter 8). Work with the National Women's Committee to ensure that, while respecting religious traditions and customs, this does not reinforce stereotypes that could counteract the targets being discussed for MDG #3, and encourages young women to take up further education.
- It is still difficult to monitor equal access to equal quality of education, due to the lack of data on attendance rates and the lack of assessment systems for teaching processes and learning outcomes. This is a problem also being faced in setting concrete MDG baselines and targets. These data gaps have to be addressed.
- The decline in preschool facilities is worrying from the point of view of early childhood development, as well as from that of women's time burden and ability to participate in the labor market. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the possibilities of developing alternative community-based facilities could be pursued for girls and boys of preschool age.

The decreasing economic opportunities in Uzbekistan have led to increasing vulnerability of men and women. In this chapter we mention some of the main manifestations of this increased vulnerability, by looking at the risks presented by domestic violence, informal labor exchanges, migration, trafficking, and HIV/AIDS.

A. Domestic Violence

An increase in economic hardship is thought to have contributed to growing domestic violence against women in the transition period, but lack of systematic monitoring of this in both the Soviet and transition periods makes it difficult to assess trends. No specific provision in the legislation outlaws domestic violence, although various articles of the Criminal Code cover it indirectly. Collecting evidence of domestic violence is also difficult, since victims often keep silent and do not complain to law enforcement bodies. However, some small studies by NGOs give some indication of the problem, and discussion of the issue is gradually coming out into the open.

A recent study found that hospitals, police stations, and courts do not record sex-disaggregated data, and that incidents of violence are often subsumed in records of accidents, as the victims are averse to reporting to public institutions and officials are insensitive to the issue of domestic violence. Efforts are being made to train health personnel and law enforcement officials to recognize and record incidents. However, unless reporting forms are developed and integrated into administrative procedures, little change in the situation can be expected.

Only when domestic violence ends with the death or mutilation of a woman does the case lead to criminal prosecution. The police tend to treat complaints of domestic violence as an internal family matter and leave the couple to resolve the problem. In addition, the legal system can provide little protection, since cultural traditions make it unlikely that a woman would agree to answer questions from a judge about her private life, especially in the presence of a jury, many of whom will be men. Uzbek women are brought up from childhood in the spirit of obedience and subordination to the will of elders and men, and the tendency is to assume that any problems encountered in marriage are a natural part of married life (IHF 2000: 503–504).

Another survey carried out by Ijtimoiy Fikr (Public Opinion) Center (2000: 10–11)²⁸ included the question: “Are there or not instances of psychological and physical violence toward women, and where women encounter violence?” According to 43.3% of those questioned, this happens “quite often”. In all, 18.7% of respondents thought that women were most subject to violence in public places, 9.5% in the family, and 7.9% in work places.

Domestic violence may also be increasing due to early marriages in remote regions. It is a custom among Uzbek families to encourage their sons and daughters to marry at a relatively young

²⁸ Around 1,575 people from six regions were questioned, of whom 54% were women and 46% men.

age. Thus, it is generally accepted that young Uzbek women should be married between the ages of 17 and 23 years, and young Uzbek men between the ages of 23 and 26 years. According to the 2002 HES results, the median age for marriage is 20 years for women and 23 for men. The indicators on marriage and divorce have been relatively stable over recent years. In Uzbekistan, 6.5 out of every 1,000 persons concluded marriage in 2002; 6.3 out of every 1,000 persons in 2003. The indicated number of divorces in 2002 was 0.7 of every 1,000 people; the level was the same in 2003 (SSC 2004). However, these figures do not include the increasing number of illicit marriages, primarily polygamous in nature, under the statutes of *shariat* (Islamic law), the continued instances of covert “second families,” and the practice of lifelong separation rather than legal divorce.

According to one study, young girls are often “given away” in arranged marriages at an early age. In rural areas, where marriages are often arranged by the families, young married women (under 18 years) frequently become virtual slaves of oppressive mothers-in-law (who may have experienced similar fates themselves). Early unregistered marriages are recognized in a religious ceremony. Two-wife marriages continue but are recognized only when both wives reside in the same household. Tradition may support the reluctance of national and local governments to confront the social acceptance of domestic violence. Public opinion opposes divorce and courts make divorces difficult to obtain (Brody and David 2002: 55–56).

The chair of the Women’s Committee has recently drawn attention to the problem of domestic violence. This is one of the first signs of official recognition of the problem, and opens the path for a more determined government approach to deal with it.

B. The Growing Importance of *Mardikhors*

One result of the shrinking job opportunities in the formal market has been the growing importance of *mardikhors*, or informal labor exchanges, where workers are hired mainly for day work. These are found in Tashkent and all provincial centers, and were originally used only by men (in fact the name in Uzbek implies that they are for men). However, with growing poverty and shrinking employment opportunities, they have come to be used by women. Since it is culturally considered slightly shameful for women to use them, the fact that women are increasingly forced to turn to them is a sign that more women are facing economic hardship.

In 2003, it was estimated that the *mardikhors* employ approximately 8,000 workers per day nationwide (CER 2004). In Tashkent, 2,000 are employed per day, and about 70% of the day workers come from other regions.

Mardikhors, used by urban and rural men and women, are unregulated, thus women and men remain vulnerable to unscrupulous businessmen. The opportunities for men are mainly in construction; for women in domestic work (cleaning, cooking) for the growing middle class. In the areas bordering on Kazakhstan, they are also employed as casual labor for cotton picking in Kazakhstan.

C. Migration

In past years, reports have surfaced of informal migration from rural areas to the large cities, particularly Tashkent, as the growing rural population has tried to compensate for low agricultural wages and the lack of nonagricultural employment opportunities in rural areas by benefiting from the possibilities for temporary and informal employment in the cities. This informal employment has increased, partly because of the limits to formal labor migration posed by the system of residence permits required for the large cities. The internal migrants often flock to the urban mardikhors (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Officially Registered Migration Abroad 2000–2003

	2000	2001	2002	2003
<i>Of Those Migrating</i>				
Moving to CIS/ Baltic States	57,805	74,877	82,963	92,417
To Other Countries	4,740	4,660	3,595	2,811
Total No. of Persons Migrating	62,545	79,537	86,558	95,228

CIS = Commonwealth of Independent States.

Source: SSC 2004.

More recently, reports of increasing informal labor migration abroad have become persistent. For men, this is usually connected with the search for jobs (construction, etc.) in neighboring Kazakhstan or Russia. It seems that economic hardship is forcing more and more working-age people to this option. In a survey of Dzhizak oblast carried out in 2003, 12% of respondents claimed that at least one of their family members had left in 2003 for temporary employment: 23% of these had gone abroad, and over 30% to Tashkent (Tahlil Sociological Research Company 2003).

Both internal and external migration have implications for the rights of these workers, but also for the family welfare of the households concerned: if an increasing number of men are leaving for temporary employment, an increasing number of women and children are being left at home. It can also contribute to difficulties in family life. Qualitative research suggests that women's time burden can increase considerably when husbands leave for months or years to find work in other regions or abroad (Joldasov 2003). For women participating in informal migration, it can also be linked to the problems and dangers of human trafficking, making them particularly vulnerable.

No estimates are available on informal migration trends. However, it is interesting that even the information on officially registered migration to other CIS countries shows a marked increase in the 2002–2003 period. This can no longer be explained by “ethnic migration” (for example, in the 1990s, some 300,000 Russian and Ukrainian nationals left the country), and seems much more likely to be connected to labor migration flows. In 2003, the negative migration balance increased by 20%, and more than half of those migrating were of working age (UNDP Forthcoming).

D. Trafficking of Persons

Human trafficking is a worldwide problem, but one to which Uzbek women appear to have been falling increasingly victim in recent years. No official statistics connect women involved in prostitution with victims of traffic and trade in women. However, unofficial data from law enforcement bodies, social services, and NGO surveys testify to the expansion of prostitution in Uzbekistan, especially coerced, as well as traffic and trade in women.

The US State Department has since 2000 published an annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, which provides an annual update of the progress made in various countries in eliminating trafficking in persons, in accordance with the standards set by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (US Department of State 2005). According to the latest (2005) report, Uzbekistan is primarily a source, but also a transit country for people trafficked to Bahrain, Egypt, India, Israel, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Western Europe, and other former Soviet republics. Women are typically trafficked to these countries for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while men are typically trafficked to Kazakhstan and Russia for labor exploitation in construction, agriculture, and the service sector.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported an increase of trafficked victims from the Fergana Valley in 2004, an area where the poverty effects of population growth and pressure on available land for agriculture is particularly strong. It is increasing economic hardship that makes women and men easy victims of those who promise easy earnings abroad. Many women become victims because they are tricked by promises of employment, marriage, or education opportunities. In 2003, the annual trafficking report identified Uzbekistan as one of the worst nations in the world for not preventing forced prostitution and forced labor, and it was classified as a Tier 3 country. In 2004, Uzbekistan became a Tier 2 country, but in 2005, it was downgraded to a Tier 2 “Watch List” country.

No official data exist on the number of human trafficking cases in Uzbekistan. However, at the beginning of 2005, the General Public Prosecutor’s office released figures suggesting that more than 2,500 cases of human trafficking had been recorded (Irinnews.org 2004).

A recent study carried out by an NGO in Thailand gives some idea of the scale of the problem. The Thai media first reported the emergence of Uzbek women working in the sex trade in 1999. However, the figures on the numbers of women and men entering Thailand from Uzbekistan shows that the figures for men have remained fairly stable over the 1998–2002 period, while the numbers of women increased dramatically in 2000–2003. While 2,595 women entered the country from Uzbekistan in 1999, the number was 5,017 in 2000, decreasing to circa 3,500 in 2003 (the figures for men were circa 2,500 in 1999 and 2000, decreasing to under 2000 in 2002) (Foundation for Women 2004).

As part of the study, interviews were carried out with Uzbek women awaiting deportation in the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok, of whom there were 228 in 2002. Most of the women had secondary and vocational education, and one had a university degree. Most had married

at a young age (16–17 years), and 80% were married with young children. The reason given for coming to Thailand was to work and send money back home.

The same study (Foundation for Women 2004) cites a report by Future Generation, a Tashkent NGO, which conducted a survey of Uzbek women and found out that 85% of the respondents wanted to go abroad for whatever jobs they could find in foreign countries. Only 10% were aware of the risks and negative aspects of such migration. The factors pushing young women toward migration were unemployment, insufficient income, family obligations, and lack of opportunities for employment and job security. Most had been lured by false tales of other women's success stories or had been deceived by agents. Some women were later manipulated into taking part in illegal drug trafficking.

1. Measures Undertaken by the Government to Tackle the Problem

The USAID *Trafficking in Persons Reports* recommend three types of action to counteract trafficking, namely prosecution, protection, and prevention.

Prosecution: Since 2003, the Government has begun to discuss the problems of trafficking more openly and also to discuss strategies to combat it. First, it has drafted trafficking legislation, because previously no legal definition of the crime existed, and only limited possibilities for prosecuting perpetrators, but this legislation has not yet been approved. In the meantime, existing criminal statutes have been used to arrest traffickers. The arrests totalled 80 in 2003, rising to 251 in 2004. In 2004, however, the Government extended a general amnesty to convicts serving prison terms of less than 10 years, and most of the traffickers were released as part of this amnesty. Contacts were made with antitrafficking counterparts in the UAE, which is the main destination for Uzbek women trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Protection: The Government provides no direct support to victims, partly due to limited resources. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now helping victims to obtain the necessary identification documents to return to Uzbekistan, especially from the UAE. The state-run airline (Uzbekistan Airways) has also been told to issue tickets at reduced rates to trafficking victims, and no victims have been put into jail.

Prevention: The government supported an antitrafficking awareness-raising campaign using the mass media and informational posters in public spaces. It has cooperated with the IOM, and allowed free advertising on local television stations for the seven antitrafficking hotlines operated by local NGOs in partnership with the IOM. A national antitrafficking unit has been formed at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and more recently regional units were also set up to better coordinate antitrafficking measures. And an antitrafficking working group includes representatives of three government agencies.

2. Anti-Trafficking Measures Supported by International Organizations

As mentioned above, the IOM is supporting seven hotlines around the country for trafficking victims as part of its countertrafficking project. The IOM is also active in helping victims return home. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been active since 2003 in providing specialized training schemes for law enforcement agencies dealing with trafficking, and USAID is supporting a crisis center at the airport, where victims can apply for material, legal, and psychological support.

E. Gender and HIV/AIDS

Uzbekistan does not yet have any national policy on HIV/AIDS, although the Government in 1998 set up the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Center, which has branches throughout the country, and the United Nations is providing support in the development of a national strategy.

Information on the number of cases is made available by the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Center, which in turn gets results of testing that is mandatory for high-risk groups (prisoners, army recruits, etc.). The number of registered cases nationwide is circa 4,000. However, the numbers have increased since 2001, especially among drug users, and Uzbekistan's is considered one of the youngest HIV/AIDS epidemics. (In 1998, only 51 cases were registered, and in 2000, just 230.) The trends show an increase in the share of women (from 12.4% of all registered cases in 2002 to 17.5% in 2004), and a decrease among men, as well as an increase in heterosexual transmission.²⁹ The largest share of the infected population is based in Tashkent City (47.9%), and Tashkent oblast (20.1%).

The most vulnerable population segment is considered to be the 20–29-year-old group. Young people in Uzbekistan are becoming increasingly at risk from the easy availability of drugs (notably heroin) as a result of its geographical proximity to Afghanistan. The number of young people who are injecting drug users (IDUs) has increased over the last decade, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates the number of drug users to be anywhere between 65,000 and 91,000.³⁰ IDUs represent some 60% of the registered cases of HIV/AIDS.

Uzbekistan is currently considered to be in the concentrated stage of HIV/AIDS. Of the three stages, the first is the initial, where less than 5% incidence is reported among vulnerable groups. The second, or concentrated, stage is when more than 5% incidence is reported in one of the vulnerable groups, but less than 1% among pregnant women (at present the share is 0.01%). The generalized stage is when it is prevalent among vulnerable groups, and more than 1% incidence is reported among pregnant women. Uzbekistan's task is now to stop the spread to the general population. Thus, the MDG target for Uzbekistan has been set at preventing the incidence among pregnant women from reaching 1%. A second target has been set to increase the share of HIV/AIDS patients with access to antiretroviral therapy to 100% by 2015.

²⁹ A survey of sex workers has been carried out for UNAIDS in six regions, but so far no results are available. The figures quoted here were provided by UNAIDS in Uzbekistan.

³⁰ Information supplied by UNICEF in Tashkent.

The World Bank has launched a Regional AIDS Control Project (May 2005) covering four Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). The project concentrates on prevention among people most at risk, namely migrants, prisoners, IDUs, and sex workers. A Regional AIDS Fund is also being set up to promote greater regional cooperation, as well as cooperation between the public and private sector and between different public services, such as the AIDS centers and prisons.

UNICEF is supporting “youth-friendly services” to give young people the services they need in a friendly, non-judgemental way. The primary aim is HIV prevention. The Government has also opened HIV counselling centers in Tashkent and in regional hubs. Those attending the centers receive confidential testing, counselling, and advice from a specialist, while IDUs receive free syringes. UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation have also worked with the youth organization “Kamolot” on HIV prevention, including a mass media campaign in 2003. They also worked with Kamolot on developing a manual on HIV/AIDS and substance abuse for young people.

Summary and Recommendations. Summarized above are the main manifestations of the increasing vulnerability faced by sections of the male and female population in the transition period. These vulnerabilities are in many cases linked to the increases in economic vulnerability described in previous chapters, and the need to improve living standards and economic opportunities. The following recommendations are also offered:

With regard to domestic violence:

- Encourage the Women’s Committee to work with development partners and NGOs to establish crisis centers and other forms of help to victims of domestic violence.
- Carry out awareness raising out among community leaders and women’s committees in mahallas in order to help them intervene to help victims. The current emphasis placed on the role of mahallas and women’s committees in preventing divorces among couples should not prevent them from intervening to protect women in cases of domestic violence.
- Work with and provide training to law enforcement bodies to ensure that gender stereotypes and traditions do not negatively affect the way they react to victims of domestic violence (i.e., assuming that such cases are private, family matters).
- Encourage the Government to develop clearer legislation concerning domestic violence.

With regard to the system of mardikhors and migration:

- Women need to know their legal rights in order to protect themselves from unscrupulous middlemen in the mardikhors; legal and other advice and support services should be made available on the sites of mardikhors, especially for women arriving from rural areas.

- Work with local communities should stress the importance for young women of continuing their education after obligatory school in order to broaden their employment choices; awareness-raising about the risks of mardikhors (and traffickers) could also be carried out in the upper grades of secondary schools and in the mahallas.

With regard to trafficking

- Promote further training of law-enforcement agencies in how to deal with trafficking and victims of trafficking.
- As above, work in the mass media, as well as with women in local communities, and in the mardikhors, to warn of the risks of trafficking. Work is also needed to raise awareness and help victims overcome stigma, since many cases of trafficking and violence are not reported by the victims for fear of being condemned by relatives and communities. In the case of trafficking, victims can be threatened with retaliation if they contact the police.
- Development partners should support the Government in its efforts to work with trafficking destination countries.

With regard to HIV/AIDS

- Provide further support to the Government to work out a national strategy on HIV/AIDS prevention. This can be linked to the country discussion on MDG #6, and help ensure that the national policy is costed and linked to budget possibilities (e.g., providing antiretroviral treatment to all those with HIV/AIDS requires appropriate budget allocations).
- Increase awareness raising among young people through schools, mahallas, and women's committees.

Chapter 8 National Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework for Promoting Gender Equality

A. Legal framework

Uzbekistan is a signatory of several international agreements on women's rights and status in society (Table 8.1), and also of the United Nations Declaration and Action Platform set forth in Beijing in 1995. Uzbekistan sent a delegation to the Beijing Conference, and in 1996 ratified the Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 1997, it ratified the Convention on Equal Pay for Equal Work for Men and Women.

Table 8.1 Uzbekistan's International Commitments

Name of Treaty/ Convention	Date of Signing/ Ratification
United Nations CEDAW	6 May 1995
ILO Convention 103 on Protecting Motherhood	6 May 1995
ILO Convention 100 on Equal Pay for Equal Work for Men and Women	30 August 1997
United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women	30 August 1997

ILO = International Labour Organisation.

Source: United Nations and ILO websites.

The key elements of the country's legal framework regarding gender equality are the Constitution (adopted on 8 December 1992); the Family Code (adopted in 1998); and the Labor, Civil and Criminal Codes.³¹

According to the Uzbekistan Constitution adopted in December 1992, men and women have equal rights in all spheres of social and economic life. All citizens of Uzbekistan have the same legal status; under the law they enjoy equal rights and freedoms, irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, or personal or social status (Article 18). According to articles 36–42, each person has the right to ownership of property, to employment, to vote and stand for election, to social security benefits in old age, to qualified medical services, and to education. Article 46 specifically states that men and women have equal rights. Article 177 provides that all citizens have the right to vote and to be elected to the organs of public administration regardless of gender.

The key elements of the Family Code (1998) are marriage rights and property rights. The Family Code states that spouses enjoy equal rights and duties (Article 19); child care and childrearing as well as all related family matters are joint responsibilities (Article 21); the age for entering into marriage is 19 for men and 17 for women. If an individual wishes to enter into

³¹ This section draws to a large extent on the UNDP's *Gender Kit* (UNDP 2005).

marriage at an earlier age, in exceptional cases, local administration may lower the marital age by a maximum of 1 year (Article 15). Only marriages registered in the Civil Status Registration bodies are legally valid; marriage entered into by religious ceremony is not legally recognized (Article 13). Both men and women have an equal right to instigate a divorce, but the husband cannot divorce his wife during pregnancy, or within 1 year from the birth of the child (Article 39). Property acquired by spouses during their marriage is considered common property unless otherwise stated in the marital contract.

The Labor Code (1995) has a protectionist approach, designed to prevent discrimination against women in their right to employment. A employer cannot refuse to employ a woman on the grounds of her pregnancy or of her having many children. The Labor Code guarantees equal remuneration for equal work. It has some provisions that protect women from work in harmful or difficult conditions and other privileges. For instance, a pregnant woman should be transferred to easier and less harmful work, for which she is to be paid the same average salary received at her previous job. The law provides privileges for women with children under 2 years of age. The approach is designed to provide protection to women, but assumes that women are exclusively responsible for domestic work and children. According to the new labor regulations, a pregnant woman may choose not to work overtime, or she may choose not to use her pregnancy or maternity leave or child-rearing leave. This is an attempt to eliminate the contradiction between the measures protecting women's rights and the requirement to ensure equal treatment of all individuals, irrespective of gender.

Gender disparity occurs in the official retirement ages. Men can retire at 60 years of age, women at 55 years. (These numbers will be raised to 63 years for men and 58 for women, but the 5-year difference will remain.) This disparity runs counter to the life expectancy figures: on average, women live 5–6 years longer than men.

According to the Civil Code (1997), women are not restricted in their rights to make business contracts, be involved in entrepreneurial activities, stand up for their royalties and inheritance, etc. The Criminal Code makes it a crime to commit a direct or indirect violation or limitation of rights or of direct or indirect privileges to citizens on the grounds of their gender, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, conviction, or individual or social status. In particular, torture and/or physical injuries to a woman who is pregnant counts as an aggravating circumstance. The Criminal Code (1995) also makes prosecutable as criminal offenses crimes against sexual freedom, such as rape or sexual harassment by a boss or by a person on whom a woman depends in a material or other way. It also specifies that marriage is based on willing consent and forcing women to marry or obstructing marriage is prohibited (Article 136).

B. Policy and Institutional Framework

The main Uzbek institutions responsible for gender issues are the Women's Committee and the Department for Social Protection of the Family, Motherhood and Childhood under the Cabinet of Ministers. The institution of the Ombudsman under the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) deals with general human rights cases, including violations of women's rights, and in 2000 the Commission on

Family and Women's Issues and the Committee on Social Issues and Employment were created under the Parliament.

The Women's Committee of Uzbekistan was founded in 1991. It has always been registered as a nongovernment or "social" organization, but in practice is subsidized by the Government and acts as the government agency for women-related issues and policies. A contradiction has long existed between its status as a social/nongovernment organization and the fact that it is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Women's Issues.

A Presidential Decree #1084 entitled "About the measures on the Enhancement of Women's Roles in State and Social Development in Uzbekistan" was issued on 2 March 1995. It established the post of Deputy Prime Minister for Women's Issues and a top-down management system, which consisted of Deputies on Women's Issues at each administrative level (oblast and raion) *khokimiyats* (governing councils). The Deputy Prime Minister was elected a Chairperson of the Women's Committee, which has branches at all administrative levels (regional, town, raion), and the same arrangement applies at each administrative level, with, for example, deputy *khokims* (governors) on women's issues at the regional level also acting as regional chairs of women's committees. Village organizations (mahallas) also have their own women's committees. The 1995 Presidential Decree also called for the creation of a permanent Secretariat on Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood, which was formed as a part of the Cabinet of Ministers, with local branches (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 The Development of the Government's GAD Machinery

1991	Women's Committee created, with branches at the national and regional level (oblast, raion, town)
1995	Participation of Delegation from Uzbekistan in Beijing Platform of Action
1995	Post of Deputy Prime Minister on Women's Issues created, with deputies on Women's Issues at regional levels, who also act as chairpersons of the national/regional women's committees
1995	Creation of the Department for Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood at the Cabinet of Ministers, with regional branches
1996	Uzbekistan signs CEDAW
1999	National Platform of Action created to implement at the national level the 10 priorities in Beijing Platform
2000	Creation of Commission for Family and Women's Issues under Parliament
2004	Presidential Decree 3434 on "Additional Support of the activity of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan"; turnover of management staff at Women's Committee
2004	Department for Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood at Cabinet of Ministers was abolished
2004	Quota system for parties putting forward candidates for parliamentary elections: 30% of candidates have to be women

CEDAW = Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Source: Author's research.

In September 1999, a “National Platform of Action for the Improvement of Women’s Situation in Uzbekistan and Enhancing Their Role in Society” was adopted. This program was an attempt to implement at the country level the 10 priorities determined during the Beijing 1995 Convention. Recently, the Women’s Committee reported at an international forum on the implementation of the National Platform; at the time of writing this report is not available. Due to the fact that the actions envisaged were not backed up by clear budget allocations and financing, many of them remain good intentions. For this reason, it is important that the next national plan be aligned with the policy priorities formulated in the national PRSP and linked to the budget through the PRSP costing process.

1. The Women’s Committee

As noted above, the Women’s Committee is considered a social organization, which has the same legal status as an NGO. However, its role has always been unclear. The fact that it is chaired by a deputy prime minister means that it is in practice directly incorporated executive power. This has given the Women’s Committee greater access to government funds for their projects and potentially enhances the participation of women in public activities.

In practice, however, the potential offered under this arrangement is only partially exploited. The main reasons for this are i) problems of finance, ii) lack of high-qualified personnel who can defend and assert women’s interests at all levels of authority, and iii) lack of long-term programs that are linked to budget possibilities rather than being lists of good intentions.

The Women’s Committee has four main mandates:

- Social and professional support to women in transition; equal representation in decision making at all levels; expansion of women’s participation in economic reforms and the democratic transformation of the society; improving their status in the labor market and employment.
- Equal access to education and training; strengthening legal guarantees and mechanisms to protect women’s rights.
- Protection of motherhood and childhood, family planning, improving women’s reproductive health, support to all government and nongovernment organizations implementing the national program “Soglom avlod uchun” (“For a Healthy Generation”); activities to reduce negative environmental factors affecting the health of women and children.
- Broadening contacts with international women’s organizations, information exchange and implementation of goals of the Beijing Platform of Action.

2. Women’s Committee Developments in 2004

On 25 May 2004, a new Presidential Decree (#3434) was issued on “Additional Support for the Activity of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan.” The following were listed as the main principles and directions of the activity of women’s committee and its local divisions:

- Development and realization of national policies in the sphere of social and legal protection of women, protection of maternity and childhood, professional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth of women; improvement of social public and political activity of women; active participation in state building.
- Development and realization of measures to protect women's health, rear a healthy family, and assist in developing women's and family sport and propaganda on a healthy mode of life.
- Development and realization of measures (programs) directed to such issues as women's employment, improvement of their work and study conditions (especially in remote areas), and involving them in entrepreneurial activity.
- Organization of effective work in target areas (family, *mahalla*, work camp, educational institution) on explaining and observing national and religious traditions, realizing and protecting women's constitutional rights, effectively opposing destructive structures influencing the consciousness of women and drawing them into extremist and terrorist activity.
- Effective coordination of activity and interactions with women's NGOs.
- Mobilization of NGOs' efforts to improve women's role in modernizing and democratically renewing Uzbekistan society.

This decree allows for the same institutional structure, but changes in the activities include “effectively opposing destructive structures influencing the consciousness of women and drawing them into extremist and terrorist activity.” It also introduces the (salaried) position of a “consultant on religious enlightenment and intellectual and ethical upbringing” to mahallas with more than 500 households. The position is to be filled by a woman. At the same time, the management staff of the National Women's Committee was completely turned over and increased from 5 to 18. Since then, the new Women's Committee has drawn up a Plan of Action, which places emphasis on monitoring observance of women's rights, finding mechanisms to promote women's presence in decision-making bodies, monitoring activities of women's NGOs, advocacy, and work with the new religious consultants in the mahallas.

3. Other Developments

A government resolution of October 2004 also downgraded the Department for Social Protection of the Family, Motherhood and Childhood under the Cabinet of Ministers. It is now one section of a bigger department.

The national Parliament is going through restructuring, with the introduction of two chambers (upper and lower). The lower chamber is to have a permanent staff. For the recent elections (26 December 2004), a quota system was introduced: 30% of the candidates put forward by each of the five political parties had to be women. However, in practice, several women candidates competed in the same electoral district; so that it was to be expected that the final share of women deputies actually elected would be less than 30%. (Women ultimately won about 18% of the seats).

The recent changes in the staff of the Women's Committee, as well as the 2004 Presidential Decree on its activities, seem to indicate some rethinking on the part of the Government with regard to its strategy. Overall, a rather protectionist attitude to women prevails in government policies and legislation, with emphasis being placed, for example, on maternal welfare and protection of women from unsafe or unhealthy working conditions.

C. Women's Voice in Politics and Decision Making

In the Soviet period, a system of so-called "quotas" guaranteed equal or proportional representation of various social groups in the power structures of the country, in particular for men and women. The system of quotas was never made public, but was part of the recommendations made by the former Communist Party. With the collapse of the Soviet system, the quota system disappeared, and the number of women represented in various positions of authority in society drastically decreased.

As noted, the number of women elected to the national Parliament, the Oliy Majlis, has recently increased from 9% to 18% since the December 2004 elections. This was largely due to the reintroduction of a quota system, not for the share of women parliamentarians, but for the political parties that put forward candidates for the election, which were obliged to ensure that 30% of their candidates were women. The I-PRSP suggests that this quota system will be used more widely in the future to increase women's representation at different levels of public authority. The 2004 Women's Committee Plan of Action also mentions the intention of working on recommendations to introduce quotas to increase women's participation in public and political life.

However, women by and large remain underrepresented in top economic and political positions. No woman holds a management position on the staff of the President of Uzbekistan or in the Council of Ministers of the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic, or among the presidential representatives (governors) in the oblasts and major cities. While the percentage of women in the Oliy Majlis is not high, it is much higher than that in local government structures. The small number of women in managerial positions within the Cabinet of Ministers prevents them from having any real influence on decision-making processes or in taking an active part in the implementation of these processes.

The data in Table 8.3 from official state statistics suggest that women occupied 24.4% of the managerial positions in the economy in 2002.

Table 8.3 Share of Men and Women in Managerial Positions by Branches of the Economy
(1 January 2002)

	Women	Men
Industry	21.9	78.1
Agriculture and forestry	6.8	93.2
Transportation	13.7	86.3
Communication	27.1	72.9
Construction	18.3	81.7
Sales, Public Catering, Logistics, Procurement	21.4	78.6
Public Utilities and Communal Services, Municipal Consumer Services	18.8	81.2
Health Protection, Physical Culture, Sport, Social Welfare	30.0	70.0
Education	38.7	61.3
Culture and Art	39.3	60.7
Science and Scientific Services	29.0	71.0
Finance, Credit and Insurance	27.6	72.4
Administrative Apparatus	14.2	85.8
Other Industries	19.3	80.7
Total	24.4	75.6

Source: SSC 2002.

D. Nongovernment Organizations

A law on NGOs was adopted in Uzbekistan only in 1999. Before this, the only legal category was “social organization”; now social organizations come under the legislation governing NGOs. Since independence, reportedly more than 2,300 NGOs have been created, but no concept of an NGO is as yet universally accepted. For example, the Government created a number of social organizations, like the Women’s Committee, which technically have the same status as NGOs. It is difficult to uncover reliable data on the number of NGOs set up by citizens themselves. At present, more than 412 registered NGOs deal with women’s issues (UNDP 2001). The NGOs are spread out all over the country (Table 8.4). Their territorial distribution shows three “centers of gravity”: Tashkent, where 22% of all women’s NGOs (including republican associations) are based; Samarkand, which hosts 15.4% of all women’s NGOs; and the Republic of Karakalpakstan, where the arrangement is different from Tashkent and Samarkand: out of 12 women’s NGOs, seven were established with the support of the Women’s Committee and function under the Women’s Committee of Karakalpakstan.

Table 8.4 Territorial Distribution of NGOs

Administrative Unit	%
Andijan Region	4.4
Bukhara Region	5.5
Djizak Region	4.4
Ferghana Region	6.6
Karakalpakstan Region	13.2
Kashkadarya Region	5.5
Khorezm Region	5.5
Namangan Region	3.3
Navoi Region	3.3
Samarkand Region	15.4
Sukhandarya Region	3.3
Syrdarya Region	3.3
Tashkent City	16.5
Tashkent Region	4.4
Nationally Registered NGOs	5.5

Source: Women’s Non-Governmental Not-For-Profit

The growth of women's NGOs in Uzbekistan is very promising, given that many of them are committed to enhancing the political and legal status of women and have extensive grassroots networks. Their primary foci are improvement of women's status in the family and society, protection of women and of women's legal rights, and expanding women's access to new income and business opportunities. In most cases, these foci are pursued in an integrated manner, so that, for example, vocational training courses include training in legal literacy and discussions of barriers to women's participation in public life. The greatest strength of these NGOs is in fact the women and men who staff them. On a shoestring budget and often on a volunteer basis, they conduct training workshops and seminars, staff crisis centers and telephone advice lines, and provide countless women with practical support on a wide range of issues.

Women's NGOs in Uzbekistan have important grassroots knowledge and networks. They can quickly discern the legislative, social, and economic barriers to women's well-being. In addition, women's NGOs have the flexibility of small, independent organizations. On the downside, some concerns have been voiced about the duplication of activities, lack of coordination, and small-scale nature of the projects such NGOs undertake. Many NGOs are well aware of these problems and have taken measures to address them. One initiative here was the creation of an umbrella organization, the Association of Women's NGOs of Uzbekistan (MEHR) in August 2003. The founders of MEHR include the Association of Women Lawyers, the Association of Business Women (Tadbirkor ayol), the Association "Women and Health," the Institute "Woman and Society," the Association of Women Scientists (Olima), the International Fund "Eastern Woman," the Legal Center Himoya, the "Tayanch" Agency, the Uzbek Association for Reproductive Health, and the Women's Organization "Mehri." By June 2005, 58 women's NGOs from different regions of the country had joined the association, and it has helped several new women's NGOs to be created, with the more experienced NGOs providing advice on how to attract financial support from international funding agencies and NGOs.

MEHR defines its main objectives as follows:

- Consolidating and coordinating the activities of women's organizations and NGOs dealing with women's issues; representing and protecting the interests of women's NGOs; strengthening the role of women's NGOs in the social, political, and public life of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- Strengthening the potential of the women's movement in the country, taking measures to achieve gender equality at the decision-making level.
- Monitoring implementation of the United Nations CEDAW; preparing, together with other women's NGOs, the Alternative Report (unofficial report) on the Convention's implementation..
- Implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as other similar international and national documents aimed at protection of women's interests.
- Cooperating with and assisting national nongovernment and state organizations concerned with protecting the interests and rights of women, exchanging information, and creating shared information networks.

- Cooperating with international social and state organizations, foundations, and funds that promote women's interests and work toward gender equality.

Despite the positive role of the NGO sector in Uzbekistan, some changes have occurred that are currently making the activities of women's NGOs more difficult to carry out. Resolution #56 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 4 February 2004 on "Steps for increasing efficiency of technical assistance, grants and humanitarian aid money received from international/foreign government and nongovernment organizations" was aimed at "preventing possibilities and channels of dirty finance and money laundering."

In line with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No PF-3434 of 25 May 2004, national and regional NGOs were required to be registered and reregistered by 1 November 2004 with the Ministry of Justice. The Women's Committee was asked by the Ministry of Justice to approve applications from women's NGOs. This highlights once more the peculiarly ambiguous nature of the Women's Committee. As an NGO, it is being asked to exercise control for the Government over which organizations can operate as NGOs.

Changes have also been made in the regulations on receipt by NGOs of grant money. All grants have to be transferred through two major banks (Asaka and the National Bank). Decisions to release the funds are made by the banks, after checking with the Cabinet of Ministers, on the basis of whether the grant activity is considered useful to the country, and whether it duplicates activities already being carried out by a government organization. Further, NGOs cannot access funds from development partners not accredited in the country. The money, if already transferred, will only be transferred back to the development partner organization if another commission considers it appropriate. If not, the money is kept and transferred to the state budget. In practice, this is a disincentive for NGOs to reregister.

These developments are worrying, as they may signal the beginning of more bureaucratic and government interference in NGOs' activities. However, many women's NGOs and development partner organizations are well aware of these concerns and are taking measures to address them. On a more positive note, signs indicated a possible revival of the dialogue between the Women's Committee, the development partner community, and women's NGOs and a recommencement of cooperation between the different organizations involved in gender and development. A seminar (forum) was held in Tashkent in February 2005 to discuss the "Place and Role of Women in the Democratic Renewal of Society." Discussion focused on prospects for the further development of the women's movement, ways of increasing women's activity in politics, mechanisms for developing entrepreneurial skills among women to ensure their economic empowerment, and measures for strengthening cooperation and partnership between the state and NGOs. A formal resolution was adopted by the forum.

E. Development Partners

In August 2004, a Gender Equality Coordination Unit (GECU) was created, in order to coordinate activities and technical assistance projects among development partners. The unit includes representatives from ADB, IREX, OSCE, Embassy of Switzerland, UNDP, USAID, and World Bank. On 12 August GECU sent a letter to the Chair of the Women's Committee, inviting dialogue on possible areas of cooperation.

While all of the development partner community tackles gender as a crosscutting issue, the main areas of activity through which gender issues are being addressed can be summarized as follows:

- *UNDP* has been active in providing microcredit and capacity-building support to the Women's Committee, highlighting gender issues through the MDG discussion, and updating its *Gender Kit* materials for all working on gender in the country. It is opening up and leading discussion on gender budgeting (workshop held in December 2004); gender aspects are being considered in the design stage of regional development projects for selected oblasts, and it is also planning to work with the SSC and data users on a major restructuring of the statistical system. At present, UNDP has three international experts and one local expert working on gender issues.
- *USAID* is currently reviewing its latest 5-year program and preparing a new 3-year one. It has been active in provision of microcredit. It is providing help to trafficking victims, through a project financed by USAID and implemented with the IOM. It is supporting a shelter for trafficking victims in Tashkent, operated by a local NGO. It is raising awareness of trafficking through work with youth and schools. It has awareness-raising programs for both women and men on human, health, and economic rights. USAID provides capacity building to NGOs through support centers. It has also worked on gender issues on water management with WUAs.
- The *World Bank* has mainstreamed gender, particularly in its health, water supply, and sanitation projects, and the Tashkent Solid Waste Management Project; it has also provided small grants to support local NGOs.
- The *Swiss Embassy's* Gender Project has a focus on working with the media and gender stereotypes, gender studies, and development of gender courses for higher education levels.
- *OSCE* has a focus on leadership training, capacity building for NGOs on legal and political literacy, and working on legal aspects of trafficking to promote the development and adoption of countertrafficking policies. It has developed and provided training courses for law enforcement agencies dealing with trafficking; it also carries on awareness-raising work on human rights and women's rights.
- Other bilateral development partners have been active, particularly in the sphere of microcredit (for example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and Britain's Department for International Development (DFID)). While the other

organizations in the “UN Family” tackle gender aspects of their specific mandates (for example UNAIDS, United Nations Population Fund, and the World Health Organization). Of particular relevance is UNICEF’s work with communities to develop alternative child care services. The focus for UNICEF is largely on early childhood development, but potential synergies with other objectives include easing women’s time burden and providing more possibilities for women to work outside home production in rural areas. UNICEF’s work on raising awareness of HIV/AIDS among young people is also relevant.

Summary and Recommendations. The legal picture in Uzbekistan remains mixed: the major laws clearly set out gender rights (the framework), but the various legal decrees, regulations, and instructions issued by the Presidential Apparatus, Cabinet of Ministers, and line Ministries—which determine how the major laws are implemented—often contradict them and display a lack of gender sensitivity. A popular perception is that gender rights and equality exist *de jure*, but often no *de facto* mechanism exists for ensuring that they are respected. This is largely due to the lack of consistency in the numerous regulations issued under the framework of one major law.

In fact, analysts have found that the existing legislation sets out clearly all the principles of gender equality; what is lacking is clear mechanisms to ensure that these are implemented. In particular, no equal opportunities legislation helps ensure that women have the opportunity to participate at all levels of economic and political life, and that they are involved in decision-making processes. Work has begun on drafting equal rights and equal opportunities legislation, and the National Center for Human Rights produced a first draft law in 2002. A push forward on legislation relating to violence against women is also needed (see Chapter 7).

The need to improve the legislative framework can be tackled by capacity building at various government levels, not only at the Ministry of Justice, which registers the various decrees. It is unrealistic to tackle the problem through a review of all legal acts registered at the Ministry of Justice, since they are not all computerized, and the task is enormous.

At the national level, the Women’s Committee has experienced a regrettable loss of all the capacity building that was carried out over the past 10 years, due to the complete turnover of the previous management-level staff (all five staff members replaced). The Secretariat on Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood under the Cabinet of Ministers has also been restructured. Apart from the loss of capacity, counterparts and entry points for development partners at the central government level have also been lost.

A clear voice on gender issues is also lacking in the Presidential Apparatus, which, given its political influence and responsibility for drafting Presidential Decrees, etc., would be desirable. The need for capacity building and training in leadership is acute.

The latest presidential decree gives mixed signals, but overall suggests more political control over the work of the Women’s Committee. At the local level, the position of “moral/spiritual teachers for women” has been introduced in the mahallas. This has potential

negative connotations, because it seems designed as a measure to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and generally encourage passive attitudes and behavior among women. It is potentially a mechanism for greater social and political control. However, if the Women's Committee and mahallas are receptive, this measure could actually create a mechanism for reaching out to a broad section of the female population and educating them on legal rights, protection from violence, awareness of the dangers of trafficking, etc. NGOs, on the other hand, have built up considerable capacity in recent years, and remain active despite problems caused in accessing grants through the reregistering requirements introduced last year. They have played an important role in empowering and providing concrete forms of help to women and deserve further support, through both capacity building and financing of specific projects.

A. Changes since 2001

The analysis of secondary material, the participatory discussions, and observations by the writers suggest that in many of the areas covered in the previous sections, the situation has deteriorated since 2001, especially with regard to economic opportunities. In most sections, however, this is difficult to back up with statistics, which makes the task of identifying priorities among the issues more difficult.

As was stated in Chapter 1, this assessment has the task of updating ADB's 2001 Country Briefing Paper *Women in Uzbekistan* (ADB 2001). The changes observed since 2001 are summarized below.

1. Economic Growth and Income Poverty

- Economic growth is stable, but not as high as in other CARs, and not high enough to have a poverty reduction effect. Changes in the Government's exchange rate policies have been observed since 2002, and alignment between the official and unofficial exchange rate has been achieved, largely through restricting money supply and dampening the demand for dollars. The same restrictive policies have also kept inflation low.
- The Government has published official poverty figures for the first time in the transition period (probably for the first time ever, since poverty did not officially exist in the Soviet period). This marks a milestone in overcoming the official secrecy surrounding poverty and the reluctance even to use the term poverty in political documents. The poverty rate for the country is estimated at 27.5%, and the majority of the poor (70%) live in rural areas.

2. The Development Context

The context and the way in which development partners can influence the critical gender issues have changed: it is now possible to engage the Government and civil society in discussion of them within the framework of the LSS/PRSP and MDGs. Although gender mainstreaming has been adopted in principle, it needs to be strengthened in the ongoing PRSP formulation phase.

3. Employment Opportunities

- Unemployment remains relatively insignificant, but underemployment is a growing problem. The country has a labor surplus, particularly in rural areas, which to a certain extent has been absorbed by low-productivity agricultural work. Restructuring in agriculture and the transformation of former collective farms and

shirkats into private farms has led to considerable redundancies, especially in the 2001–2003 period. Most of the redundant labor is now employed in small agricultural subsistence farming. It is hypothesized that women have been particularly affected by the loss of employment effected by the restructuring. Although official employment rates remain high, it is not clear that small-scale dekhan farming is actually a viable option for women. Many are employed only in seasonal low-skill work.

- No parallel development of private sector nonagricultural employment has taken place during this period. Despite the emphasis placed in the LSS on private sector and SME development, in practice they still face difficulties.
- In many cases, the loss of employment in shirkats for women has also meant the loss of access to social support systems.
- The new private farmers are predominantly men, and farm management is becoming a man's occupation.

4. Access to Productive Assets

- Qualitative research suggests that women have been disadvantaged in the land distribution process.
- WUAs are being set up to improve management of this valuable resource, although there are still problems in defining their legal status. Gender and water issues have been studied and discussed and a regional initiative launched.
- While the MLSP is trying to promote family businesses to help women find employment, most families do not have enough assets to start up businesses, and access to credit is still limited.
- Credit unions have begun to operate in the country, with development partner support, to help small entrepreneurs access credit, but their number is still small.

5. Access to Social Protection

Pension reform has been launched with the introduction of a new cumulative pension scheme to supplement the existing pay-as-you-go scheme.

6. Health

The increase in maternal mortality rates observed in 1999/2000 has been reversed, but the latest HES (Government of Uzbekistan 2002) still provides a higher estimate than the official administrative data (32 per 100,000 live births, compared with 26.9), and regional differences are significant.

7. Education

- Enrolment and attendance rates for upper secondary grades are declining, with some evidence that the declines are greater for girls.

- Introduction of 12-year basic schooling is continuing but has not yet been completed. The completion date has been extended to 2009.

8. Vulnerability

- The problem of domestic violence is being discussed more openly, but a lot of social stigma still surrounds it.
- Migration has increased, reflecting the growing employment problems. Much is informal, leaving women and men open to exploitation.
- Trafficking of persons, including women for sex work, appears to have increased since 2001, but more recently the Government has also recognized the problem and taken more decisive measures to tackle it.
- The incidence of HIV/AIDS is still small compared to other countries in the region, such as Ukraine, but nevertheless has grown considerably since 2001, with 60% of the current cases being accounted for by IDUs. The Government is working on a strategy to combat HIV/AIDS with UN support.

9. Legislation and Institutions

- The first draft of equal opportunity legislation has been completed.
- A complete turnover has taken place in the management staff of the national Women's Committee, and the Department for Social Protection of the Family, etc., in the Cabinet of Ministers has been downgraded, resulting in a loss of gender capacity.
- A new Presidential Decree was published on the work of the Women's Committee. Its work now includes introduction of consultants on religion and moral upbringing in the mahallas.
- A quota system was introduced for the December 2004 parliamentary elections: political parties putting forward candidates were required to ensure that 30% of their candidates were women. The I-PRSP suggests that the quota system will be used to increase representation of women at different levels of public service.
- The MEHR Association of women's NGOs has been established.
- A decree requiring reregistration of all NGOs was issued, and changes made in the regulations governing their receipt of grant money.
- The GECU was set up to coordinate the gender activities of development partners.

B. The Emerging Gender Issues

The main issues emerging can be summarized under the following headings:

1. Economic Opportunities and Economic Insecurity

Available information suggests that employment and income-generation problems are becoming more acute for many sections of the population, with one of the outcomes being an

increase in informal and formal migration. This has welfare implications for families—men, women and children—and increases the vulnerability of the men and women involved. Overall, women still tend to be concentrated in lower-paid, lower-status jobs. The LSS places clear emphasis on private sector development and SME development. So far the opportunities in these sectors have been limited, but women need to be helped to take advantage of whatever opportunities have emerged or are emerging in the private sector and SMEs. This includes training in relevant professional skills, business skills, and leadership skills (preferably with a series of training initiatives that follows through on all three aspects). Women need help in recognizing their rights to resources and credit, their legal rights in the labor market/production sphere and the means to defend them from arbitrary interventions, and leadership skills to help them participate in community and local-level decision-making bodies. Credit unions are seen as a positive development in broadening access to credit; work needs to be continued and broadened to ensure that women are aware of how they can be accessed and used. Vocational colleges have to be supported in studying supply and demand in the labor market and tailoring appropriate courses for women and men. Further work on the developing and implementing equal opportunity legislation is required, as is work on reviewing the effect of existing legislation on maternity rights and other rights in deterring employers from hiring women.

2. Rural Development

Again, the issue of helping to ensure greater economic security seems paramount, while empowering women to take advantage of any emerging income-generating opportunities and gain equal access to resources and a say in their management. The restructuring of shirkats into private farms, without a parallel development in other agricultural/nonagricultural rural employment, has had a detrimental effect on women's access even to low-skill seasonal employment, as has their loss of access to noncash payments through the shirkats (e.g., cotton stems for fuel). Employment opportunities for women are also more limited because of their traditional child-care and other home functions. Fertility rates in rural areas remain high, and cultural factors encourage families to have many children. Community-based child-care facilities could help address some early-childhood development concerns for rural children, and also help free women slightly more for employment and participation in decision-making bodies. Women's involvement in bodies taking decisions about the allocation and management of key resources, particularly land and water, needs to be strengthened. It would be advisable to carry out a needs assessment for women who have become dekhan farmers as a result of agricultural restructuring.

3. Capabilities: Education and Health Care

Both health care and education issues are being highlighted, articulated, and addressed through country MDG discussions. Inequalities in the services offered in both sectors vary across regions and income groups. The fact that general secondary schools now stop at 9th grade means that girls, especially in rural areas, may be more likely to miss out on grades 10–12, since these classes tend to be offered at schools further from their place of residence. This will intensify the already existing gender gap in vocational and higher education. More investigation is required to monitor the effect of the ongoing changes in secondary school provision, and consideration given to

the importance of measures, for example, aimed at ensuring safe transport for girls to schools providing grades 10–12. There is a need to work with the young generation to raise gender awareness, raise the ambitions/confidence of young women, and to encourage girls to take up higher education to increase their opportunities and choices, and reduce their vulnerability.

Efforts are being made to improve the quality of education offered in schools by adapting and modernizing teaching methods and subjects. Within this effort, some work has been done on gender and curriculum, but this remains a vast area where much is still to do at all levels of education. New textbooks are being developed, and this provides a timely opportunity to work on eliminating gender stereotypes in textbooks and school materials. The issue of women and ICT has to be addressed. Community involvement in the decisions regarding school affairs is being increased. It will be important to ensure that both men and women participate in the school boards or other community groups involved in school management. More work on provision of early childhood development facilities would contribute to the development of boys and girls, and also help reduce women's time burden.

Health care indicators for both men and women still give cause for concern. The evidence suggests that the poor do not always have access to affordable health care services or to a satisfactory quality of services, and that inequalities in the standard of service provided are growing. Poverty and the increasing time burden are having worrying negative effects on the health status of women and their children. Better regulation and transparency in the current mix of services provided on a paid and unpaid basis is needed, as is tackling the all-pervasive system of informal payments. The accountability of health care providers needs to be increased, and users of health care services, both women and men, need to have clearly delineated rights and access to legal support in order to make their needs and concerns heard. Maternal mortality rates continue to be high, with considerable regional differences, despite the widespread availability of prenatal services. This suggests that the emphasis on improving the quality of these services must be continued. The discussion of MDGs #4, #5, and #6 provides a good entry point for promoting woman-friendly and accessible services, and also for bringing forward the discussion on the need to improve data collection and data reliability for key maternal health indicators.

4. Empowerment: Leadership and Capacity Building

At the national level, the Women's Committee has experienced a regrettable loss of all the capacity building that was carried out over the past 10 years, due to the complete turnover of management-level staff (five previous staff members replaced by 18 new ones). The Secretariat on Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood under the Cabinet of Ministers has also been restructured. Apart from the loss of capacity, counterparts and entry points for development partners at the central government level has also been lost. A clear voice on gender issues is lacking in the Presidential Apparatus, which, given its political influence and responsibility for drafting Presidential Decrees, etc., would be desirable. The need for capacity building and training in leadership is acute. The latest presidential decree gives mixed signals, but overall suggests more political control over the work of the Women's Committee. At the local level, the position of "moral/ spiritual teachers for women" has been introduced in the mahallas. This has potentially

negative connotations, because it seems designed as a measure to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and generally encourage passive attitudes and behavior among women. It is potentially a mechanism for greater social and political control. However, if the Women’s Committee and mahallas are receptive, this measure could actually create a mechanism for reaching out to a broad section of the female population and educating them on legal rights, protection from violence, awareness of the dangers of trafficking, etc.

NGOs, on the other hand, have built up considerable capacity over the past years, and remain active despite problems caused in accessing grants through the reregistering requirements introduced last year. As a principle, in order to have more sustainable impact, and to promote and open up the gender debate in the country, it would be best to promote project initiatives that require government agencies and NGOs to work together.

The reintroduction of the principle of using quotas to increase women’s participation and representation in top social, economic, and political positions could play a positive role, provided it is accompanied by a strong focus on increasing gender capacity in the country.

5. Empowerment and Insecurity: Legal Rights and Legal Literacy

The legal picture remains mixed: overall, major laws clearly set out gender rights (the framework), but the various legal decrees, regulations, and instructions issued by the Presidential Apparatus, Cabinet of Ministers, and line Ministries—which determine how the major laws are implemented—are often contradictory and display a lack of gender sensitivity. This can be tackled by capacity building at various government levels, not only at the Ministry of Justice, which registers the various decrees. It is unrealistic to tackle the problem through a review of all legal acts registered at the Ministry of Justice, since they are not all computerized, and the task is enormous. Training in legal rights for potential and actual victims of violence is needed (particularly domestic violence and trafficking), and also for representatives of law enforcement agencies.

6. Statistics

As has been seen throughout this report, the lack of data and limited access to data remain problems for conducting gender analysis and identifying critical issues and priority interventions. This issue is, however, not limited to gender, and concerns a bigger issue of how to achieve restructuring of the statistical data collection mechanisms and how to reorient the prevalent attitude to statistics among government agencies (which is currently based on a Gosplan-type reporting approach). Through all project work and PRSP work, efforts should be made to demonstrate that it is not helpful to use statistics to present reality as the Government would like it to be presented, rather than as a tool for understanding reality better and thus making better-informed policy interventions. These issues can be tackled together with the World Bank and UNDP through work on the PRSP and MDG indicators.

Meanwhile, however, support to initiatives within the SSC and capacity building efforts there remain valuable. For example, the handbook *Women and Men of Uzbekistan*, which was

produced in 2002 by the predecessor of the SSC, the Women's Committee, and the BWA (SSC 2002), with support from ADB and UNDP, remains one of the few sources for recent administrative data, and is highly appreciated by development partners, NGOs, and others working in the field. It has recently been followed up by an SSC publication in Russian, *Social Development and Standard of Living of the Population of Uzbekistan 2003* (SSC 2004). The SSC should be encouraged in its efforts to improve the availability and reliability of sex-disaggregated data. The HBS is not capable of producing statistics that can be used as a basis for analyzing the different ways in which poverty can affect men and women, and other forms of data collection to supplement it are needed. One gap, which the SSC is also interested in filling, is regular surveys on men and women's use of time. Apart from improving information collection, further work also has to be carried out in improving the skills of local users of the data, including the HBS data, and existing data sources (including the HBS and the MLSP's Labor Force Survey) should be available to local and nonlocal users.

7. Emerging Issues and the National MDG

The discussion of national MDG targets is still taking place. The emerging issues listed above are relevant to the following national MDGs:

MDG #1: reducing income poverty in the country is closely linked to the need to increase employment and income-generating opportunities. This will require a more favorable environment for investment and private sector growth in the formal sector. Once this is in place, it is important that men and women benefit from the emerging opportunities for productive employment through equal access to knowledge, training, and productive assets. It may be worth setting an explicit sex-disaggregated employment target under this goal as well as in MDG #3. However, care will have to be taken in the formulation and choice of monitoring targets, since use of official employment data (from administrative sources) does not allow monitoring of the country's employment problems (see further under MDG #3).

MDG #2: it may be worth introducing a target that explicitly refers to male and female enrolment in lycea for the 10th–12th grades of secondary school, since enrolment at this level will influence the ratio of males and females continuing to higher education.

MDG #3: since productive employment, especially in rural areas, is a problem for men and women, employment targets should be explicit. However, it is not clear that the current formulation is the most appropriate ("share of women in wage employment other than agriculture"). An alternative could be "share of women in nonsubsistence farming and nontemporary employment in agriculture." Another target could be "share of female entrepreneurs, including private farmers." It would also be worth considering a target on access to land and credit. As always, these targets will only be possible to set and monitor if data collection and access are improved.

It would be worth monitoring enrolment at all levels of education, and particularly for the new lycea, as mentioned under MDG #2 above.

Since quotas for top political, social, and economic posts are now being discussed; it would be worth wording the target for representation of women in accordance with the quotas under discussion, and to work for clearer country definitions of “top posts”. A proposal could also be made to have quotas for representation of women in management organizations that influence the allocation of productive resources, in particular credit, land, and water.

MDG #4: no comment/ recommendation

MDG #5: Since maternal mortality shows regional differences, it may be worth introducing region-based targets. A target should also be set to improve the data collection for maternal and infant mortality rates, as well as the adoption of international definitions. Further, since much maternal mortality appears to depend on lack of access to qualified obstetrics services and equipment, it may be worth defining a basic package of services and monitoring its availability at primary health care facilities. Anaemia levels could also be monitored.

MDG #6: All of the proposed targets and indicators under this goal could be sex disaggregated.

MDG #7: It may be relevant to add an indicator relating to women’s representation in WUAs (see also MDG #3 above).

MDG #8: Global target 18 under this goal refers to the need to make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications. It would be worth considering a target and indicators that take into consideration the need to ensure equal access for men and women to the benefits of ICT.

**Achievements and Constraints
How can Gender Mainstreaming be Strengthened?**

A. The Current Country Strategy and Program Priorities

From 1996, when ADB lending operations in the country started, until 2003, ADB approved 17 loans to Uzbekistan, whose cumulative value as of 31 December 2004 was \$859.7 million. The nonlending program for 2004–2007 envisages an annual technical assistance figure of \$1.9 million per year from Technical Assistance Special Fund and Japan Special Fund sources.

ADB's strategy for Uzbekistan focuses on reducing poverty and promoting regional cooperation. ADB's support to the development of the Government's Living Standards Strategy (LSS) (completed in July 2004) has already been mentioned in several sections of this report. This provides a clear statement of the Government's commitment to reducing poverty and improving living standards and sets out priority policy directions for achieving poverty reduction. ADB's efforts to bring the benefits of cooperation to the region include encouraging Uzbekistan and its neighbors to strengthen regional infrastructure, particularly in energy, transport and trade facilitation, and water supply.

ADB project interventions have had a strong focus on agricultural/rural development: improving productivity and employment opportunities through better use of land and crops and improving social and economic infrastructure in rural areas, especially water supply and irrigation. As stressed previously, most of the country's poor live in rural areas, and rural development is critical to poverty reduction efforts. Particular concerns have emerged about the decline in female employment opportunities, due to shirkat restructuring and the disadvantages faced by women in competing for jobs and access to productive assets in the emerging private sector.

ADB has also been providing support to educational reform, through two consecutive textbook development projects linked to school curriculum reform and aimed at improving the quality of education as well as access to textbooks. Within this reform project, analysis of gender stereotypes in school textbooks has been undertaken and recommendations drawn up for standard criteria for evaluating the content of textbooks and other materials, including the extent to which their presentation of gender is fair and equitable.

In the health care sector, ADB is developing a project aimed at improving maternal and child health care through reform of the primary health care system, improving capacity among medical staff, streamlining health care financing, and strengthening the blood safety program.

B. Gender Mainstreaming in Strategic Program Areas

As part of efforts to improve gender mainstreaming in ADB programming and operations, a national gender consultant has been working since October 2000 in ADB's Resident Mission in Tashkent under RETAs 5835 and 6092 for gender development. The gender consultant has contributed to strengthening gender mainstreaming in projects by participating in project design, as well as in social and poverty assessments carried out as part of the preparatory stages; ensuring that women and men are involved in the projects as beneficiaries and project staff/managers; providing training to local consultants employed on projects and to stakeholders; drawing up gender action plans (GAPs) for projects and developing monitoring indicators for tracking their implementation; and working with project teams on monitoring gender impacts in general.

The overall GAD approach in project design and implementation includes the following elements:

- ensuring discussion of gender outcomes in project design and developing GAPs for projects;
- ensuring that GAPs include participation strategies to include women and men as beneficiaries and project staff/managers;
- providing capacity building to government counterparts to ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed into all aspects of programming;
- institutionalizing sex-disaggregated data by ensuring that project data can track relevant indicators for women and men, girls and boys; and
- working with local women's NGOs to the extent possible.

In the period since 2000, the above approach has been applied to projects as they have been designed and implemented. To date the approach has been applied to 11 projects, which can be divided into three main groups, namely (i) those with a focus on increasing employment and income-generation opportunities in the private sector, (ii) those aimed at achieving different aspects of rural development, and (iii) those dealing with health care and education. The achievements and constraints in gender mainstreaming in the 11 ongoing projects are summarized in the table attached at the end of this chapter, which also includes some recommendations on how their gender mainstreaming could be strengthened.

C. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Increasing Employment and Income-Generation Opportunities in the Private Sector

1. Small and Microfinance Development Projects

Links to Key Gender issues: In the transition period, shrinking numbers of job opportunities in the formal sector have forced men and women to look for alternative sources of income. A large section of the female workforce found that their choices were limited to household plot production in agriculture and informal trading activities. Some sections of the workforce, which are educated and entrepreneurial, need to be supported in taking advantage of the new opportunities for

entrepreneurial activity in the private sector. Local NGOs, including the BWA, have been able to provide valuable training and support to such sections of the female workforce. This project aims to make access to small amounts of credit easier for entrepreneurs, and particularly for women, through facilitating the establishment of small credit unions.

2. Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction: Innovative Poverty Reduction in Karakalpakstan

Links to Key Gender Issues: the project's aims include promotion of income-generating activities and the development of community-owned safe drinking-water schemes. In the latter, women would benefit from being involved as managers, and from the outcomes of having safe water, since they are usually responsible for procuring drinking water and caring for household members who fall sick because of unsafe water.

3. RETA 5889 projects: Training of Women Entrepreneurs/ Farmers in Bukhara and Tashkent Oblasts

Links to Key Gender Issues: These two small projects aim to provide business training to help women take advantage of new employment and income-generating opportunities arising from the current policy emphasis on SME development. Running parallel to the project on credit development described above, they help women to find out about and take up the possibilities for accessing credit. Project work has been carried out in coordination with a local NGO, the BWA, and is thus also helping to build capacity in the local NGO sector.

D. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Agriculture/Rural Development (Including Water Infrastructure)

Links to key gender issues: Overall, this sector is key to both poverty reduction and addressing female vulnerability. This is due to the large number of poor and vulnerable people living in rural areas, and the low level of wages in agriculture (previous chapters have shown that 70% of the poor live in rural areas and that agricultural wage levels are 50% of the national average). It has been argued that employment opportunities, especially for women, are shrinking in the wake of shirkat restructuring. It is important that women be involved and actively participate in organizations regulating access to and distribution of key resources such as land, water, and credit. Although men and women formally have equal access to land, irrigation water, and credit, in practice women have tended to be disadvantaged in the allocation of all these resources. Moreover, the revival of traditional gender stereotypes is stronger in rural areas, and this is where measures to promote women's empowerment in family and community life are particularly needed.

1. Amu-Zhang Water Resource Management Project

Links to key gender issues: The project goal is to improve the income and living standards of the population in the Amu Zhang area by improving its irrigation and water supply and supporting agricultural sector reform in the area. The project is linked to some of the key issues

identified in this assessment, namely declining income-generating opportunities for women and men in agriculture, the decline in employment for women due to shirkat restructuring, and their increasing dependence on household plots and subsistence farming. The improvement in irrigation and water supply is relevant to improving productivity in new private farms and household plots, while improving the water supply will help reduce women's time burden and improve the health status of household members.

2. Grain Productivity Improvement Project

Links to key gender issues: This project also has links with agricultural restructuring and the effect on male and female employment. It is important that crop production become more efficient, but also that a small number of private farmers not be the only ones to benefit from this. It is important that income and employment opportunities for agricultural unskilled labor be increased. The project envisages an increase in seasonal work for women in weeding the wheat fields. However, the aim of increasing productivity in agriculture is in potential conflict with that of providing employment. In the long term, low-wage, temporary, unskilled seasonal work will not solve the employment problems in rural areas.

3. Ak Altin Agricultural Development Project

Links to key gender issues: The key links are, again, increasing women's employment opportunities and the need to ensure equal rights for women and men in access to land, irrigation water, and credit.

4. Western Uzbekistan Rural Water Supply Project

Links to key gender issues: The project addresses the need to promote the participation of women in bodies managing water supply and to raise women's skills so that they can participate in management.

5. Central Asia Gender and Water Initiative

Links to key gender issues: The project is designed explicitly to promote women's involvement in decision-making regarding the use and management of water. This is still a new concept for the general public, and the first activities have therefore been concentrated on raising awareness and building capacity for gender mainstreaming among the various stakeholders in the water sector.

6. Land Improvement Project (planned)

Links to key gender issues: The project is concerned to improve agricultural productivity while improving employment and income-generating opportunities for the rural population. It provides another opportunity to promote women's representation in water management bodies.

E. Gender Mainstreaming in Projects with a Focus on Education

1. Basic Education Textbook Development

Links to Key Gender Issues: Equality of access to education is highlighted in the LSS and MDGs. But the MDG and LSS discussion has also shown no significant gender differences in the formal enrolment rates for primary and secondary schools, or evidence of any large difference in attainments. Girls and boys have different ambitions, however, as reflected in the lower numbers of female students studying in higher educational institutions and the lack of women's representation in senior management positions throughout all branches of the economy. This is partly the result of parents' choices about whether to invest in daughters' education, but it is also due to the cultural and other stereotypes that girls face throughout their formative years. As part of ADB support for revised curricula in basic school education, two projects on textbook development have been implemented. One of the projects' aims is to ensure equality of gender representation in learning and teaching materials. For this purpose, standards are being developed and specified as part of the system of mandatory evaluation and approval criteria for all materials in schools.

2. Women and Child Health Development Project

Links to key gender issues: Although 95% of women are reported to receive prenatal care, only 39% of them receive this within the first trimester of pregnancy, and many women are reported to have anaemia. Most women deliver at public health facilities, under the guidance of trained medical staff. Yet despite these facts, maternal mortality figures remain high and, although decreasing overall, are thought to be increasing in some regions. The primary cause of maternal mortality is pregnancy or delivery complications. The implication is that the quality of the prenatal care and medical services where women deliver has to be improved; the issue is not so much ensuring access but improving the quality of care that women receive.

3. Living Standards Survey

Links to Key Gender Issues: The LSS is linked to all the critical issues and is an important vehicle for capacity building. The LSS addresses gender issues, especially in the health care, education, and employment sections. Gender mainstreaming remains weak, however, due to weak government capacity in gender.

4. Other: RETA 5889 project on Women against Violence

Links to Key Gender Issues: Increased legal awareness regarding domestic violence and legal and psychological support to victims is provided.

F. General Recommendations for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in ADB Activities and Projects

As can be seen, approaches to GAD activities have been developed and applied to a series of projects, with considerable success. Gender mainstreaming also incurs constraints, of which the main ones can be summarized as (i) weak GAD capacity in project counterparts and considerable training requirements, and (ii) lack of sex-disaggregated data for monitoring project outcomes.

The overall approach to gender mainstreaming should be applied consistently and extended to include ongoing and future infrastructure (transport) projects. The latter should consider the implications for prostitution and trafficking of persons and the vulnerability of men and women to involvement in drug trafficking. The transport needs of the rural population should also be considered, including the efforts of women and men to reach markets.

G. Other General Recommendations

The bigger picture for GAD should be tackled through the LSS/PRSP/MDG framework. ADB provided technical support and participated actively in the formulation of the country's first living standards/poverty reduction strategy (the LSS). ADB has also been supporting UNDP in guiding the process of formulating the country's MDG goals, targets, and indicators. The gender specialist at the URM participated in the roundtable to discuss the draft LSS and provided written comments on the draft document.

The LSS does state that one of its main directions is to "ensure gender equality and full participation of women in public and economic processes." The LSS adopts the principle of treating gender as a crosscutting issue, while also devoting particular attention to maternal and child welfare issues. The strategy represents a welcome first step toward setting national policy priorities for poverty reduction that are time-bound, monitorable, and linked to available budget resources. However, much scope remains for identifying and deepening the links between promoting further gender equality, meeting poverty reduction goals, and improving gender mainstreaming in the forthcoming PRSP.

It seems imperative that ADB remain involved in promoting the discussion and formulation process that is going on under the PRSP/MDG umbrella. This seems a good forum for bringing up gender issues at top-level discussions with the Government and gradually educating top-level officials about the purpose and significance of GAD concerns. It is also an ideal forum to get further consensus on the key gender issues emerging from this assessment. The I-PRSP has now been drafted, and work on the full PRSP formulation phase is due to take place (under World Bank guidance) throughout 2005 and possibly beyond. Since all PRSPs are required to show that a participatory plan and participatory discussion process have occurred, it can be assumed that the discussion will be broadened to include civil society and representatives of local government and the population in the regions. This again is an ideal forum for introducing and mainstreaming gender issues. It is vital that ADB continue to participate in the PRSP process and contribute to gender mainstreaming within it. The ongoing discussion of the MDGs and their localization at the

regional level are also an important vehicle for raising gender awareness and building gender capacity.

The PRSP framework could also provide capacity-building opportunities for the Women's Committee, for example by encouraging it to participate in the formulation process and link the development of their new National Action Plan to the PRSP. Issues related to gender statistics; gender budgeting, etc., can also be approached through the PRSP/MDG costing process. Policy measures need to be systematically evaluated for their potential impact on women and men. At the moment, many gender concerns remain invisible and appear gender neutral, especially in the environment chapter and the section on access to public utilities.

The participatory discussions revealed that the small interventions undertaken under RETA 5889 "Small GAD Initiatives" (such as training women farmers and entrepreneurs in Bukhara and Tashkent oblasts) were well publicized and appreciated. Such project initiatives are currently difficult due to Uzbekistan's nonparticipation in the RETA framework. If an umbrella can be found for them, however, these relatively modest interventions have had resonance and effect. They can also act as pilots for larger-scale interventions.

As a principle, in order to have more sustainable impact, and to promote and open up the gender debate around the country, it would be best to promote project initiatives that require government agencies and NGOs to work together. Also needed is a coordinating body, which could perhaps start through MDG consultations, to provide the forum for regular meetings of the Women's Committee, NGOs, gender focal points, and development partners.

It is recommended that current efforts to improve development partner coordination in mainstreaming gender in the country (through the GECU initiative [see chapter 8], the PRSP discussion process, and the formulation of national MDGs) be strengthened.

H. Recommendations for Interventions Concerning the Different Sectors

These have been given in most of the preceding chapters, but are summarized here:

1. Employment Opportunities (Chapter 4)

- In order for women to be competitive in the labor market and to be able to take advantage of new opportunities in the private sector, further support is required for measures aimed at increasing women's qualifications and skills, including business skills.
- The MLSP has been working on employment options for women that take into account women's child-care responsibilities and their lack of assets/credits. Providing incentives for setting up family businesses is mentioned in the LSS. The advantages for men and women of supporting and giving incentives for family-based businesses should be investigated. Cooperating with the MLSP and its local

offices and evaluating plans by MLSP to promote more employment opportunities for women, including family-based businesses may be a possibility.

- A criticism voiced by the MLSP during the participatory discussion held during the preparation of this report is that development partners tend to focus on small-scale training programs in business skills, etc., meaning that they have small coverage and limited effect. A case can be made for working with the former state oblast centers for training, which still exist, but which need to change their profile. By working with both local NGOs and these oblast centers, development partners could potentially reach out to a much larger group of women and make the training efforts more sustainable. This proposal is also put forward as a policy measure in the LSS, which mentions the need to improve the link between the skills taught at vocational colleges and the demand for skills in the labor market, and work toward the “creation of specialized training colleges in all regions for the training of production managers in small businesses. This can be done by changing the profile of existing colleges, which at present provide training for young specialists in skills that are not currently in demand in regional labor markets”.
- The MLSP should be supported in its efforts to develop regular labor force surveys to understand better the employment situation of men and women. To have real policy value, the data from these surveys should be available to all stakeholders (not just the Government, but also development partners and NGOs), and discussion of the results should be open. Systematic work is required to define and estimate the numbers of men and women employed, underemployed, and unemployed, and what incentives are required to draw women and men into more productive activities, preferably in the formal sector. This would be relevant to the targets being discussed under MDG #1, and could be brought forward under the PRSP framework.
- Better document the effects of shirkat restructuring on rural employment for men and women and carry out a needs assessment for dekhan farmers, especially women. The needs assessment should if possible take into account the significant interregional and intraregional differences. (The LSS mentions, for example, that the rural population in remote and mountainous areas is particularly disadvantaged in employment and income-generating opportunities.) Care should be taken not just to support projects that create more manual and seasonal harvesting/weeding work for women. While this traditional source of income and work should not disappear, it is also important to ensure that women’s employment opportunities and choices be broadened, so that they are not excluded from the benefits of restructuring. In the long term, providing the poor with jobs that do not allow them to improve their household income is pointless. Thus, a two-pronged strategy will have to be developed, aimed at protecting women’s current access to minimum low-skill manual jobs and developing alternative employment opportunities and ensuring that women acquire the skills and knowledge to take advantage of them.
- Explore the possibility of developing and restructuring regional vocational training centers as institutions that could provide training in appropriate skills for men and women being made redundant in the process of shirkat privatization and

restructuring. On the basis of the needs assessment for dekhan farmers, specific courses could be tailored for women. It may be possible to work with the MLSP, BWA, and other NGOs to assess training needs, including skills that allow women to take on credit and develop businesses, including farms.

- Evaluate the extent to which existing legal and social protection rights discourage the employment of women, and an assessment of the right mix of legal rights for women in the formal sector. Discussion of this has already begun, and some changes made (see Chapter 8). The impact of these changes should be tracked.

2. Access to Productive Assets (Chapter 5)

- The needs assessment of women dekhan farmers (see above) should also pay attention to the problems facing women and men due to the loss of social support systems previously provided by collective farms and shirkats, and look at ways in which they can be compensated within the existing institutional and budget framework.
- Conduct awareness raising and develop gender expertise among local authorities to counteract cultural stereotypes that tend to work against the equal allocation of land and other inputs to women and men. Work could also be done with the Ministry of Agriculture on this.
- Work with the MLSP, Ministry of Agriculture, and NGOs to ensure that women have the agricultural knowledge and marketing and business skills necessary to work as small and large-scale farmers.
- Legal support services are needed so that women know their rights with regard to land and other inputs and how to defend them.
- Make available sex-disaggregated data on membership and management of Associations of Farmers and Dekhan Farmers, and use a quota system to ensure representation of women in the management of these organizations. Do the same with WUAs.
- Continue to support work on raising awareness of gender issues relating to water management in rural areas, and provide further support to gender and water networks.

3. Access to Social Protection (Chapter 5)

- Study the effect of the changing pension system on women's and men's pension rights and coverage in more detail, in order to ensure that the current working generation has equal opportunities to qualify for retirement pensions.
- Provision of preschool facilities is not part of the social protection system, but efforts need to be made together with the Ministry of Education to develop community and other alternative types of child care support, which can provide elements of early childhood development and also help reduce women's time burden.

4. Health Sector (Chapter 6)

The Government has to be supported in ensuring that the ongoing primary health care reform includes policy measures that address women's specific health needs and ensures access to affordable health care services throughout the country. Better tracking is needed of regional differences in maternal mortality rates and other key health indicators, to identify where reform efforts should be prioritized.

5. Education (Chapter 6)

- The current redesign of curricula and textbooks is an opportunity to ensure that gender stereotypes are not reinforced through school education materials and to develop standard criteria for evaluating the gender content of materials.
- Encourage the Government in its efforts to introduce elements of ICT into school curricula. Possibilities of supporting access for women to ICT training courses in mahallas could be investigated, as part of the needs assessment of female dekhan farmers proposed in Chapters 4 and 5. Such courses could be particularly tailored to young girls in the upper-secondary school age groups.
- It is still difficult to monitor access to equal quality of education, due to the lack of data on attendance rates and the lack of assessment systems of teaching processes and learning outcomes. This is a problem also being faced in setting concrete MDG baselines and targets. These data gaps have to be addressed.

6. Domestic Violence, Trafficking, Informal Labor Exchanges, Migration (Chapter 7)

- Encourage the Women's Committee to work with development partners and NGOs to establish crisis centers and other forms of help to victims of domestic violence and trafficking.
- Support small projects to raise awareness among community leaders and women's committees in mahallas in order to help them intervene to help victims in concrete ways.
- Provide training for law enforcement bodies to ensure that gender stereotypes and traditions do not negatively affect the way that they react to victims of domestic violence (i.e., to assume that such cases are private, family matters).
- Encourage the Government to develop clearer legislation concerning domestic violence.
- Women need to know their legal rights in order to ensure that they can protect themselves from unscrupulous middlemen in the mardikhors; use small projects with NGOs to provide legal and other advice and support services on the sites of mardikhors, especially for women arriving from rural areas.
- Work with local communities should stress the importance for young women of continuing their education after obligatory school, in order to broaden their

employment choices; carry out awareness raising on the risks of mardikhors (and traffickers) in the upper grades of secondary schools and in the mahallas.

- Development partners should support the Government in its efforts to work with trafficking destination countries.

7. Legislation and Institutions (Chapter 8)

- Explore the possibility of providing gender training at the training academy of the Presidential Apparatus and introducing it into regular training courses offered for government officials.
- Continue or restart efforts to built up capacity building within the National Women's Committee and its various branches. This should be done in close coordination with UNDP, which is already offering support to the new management.

8. Statistics

Systematic work on statistics is required. One clear gap is a time use survey, which would provide more data on the differences in women's and men's time burdens. Sex-disaggregated data are not available, partly because they are not collected and partly because data are collected and not used, or used for limited purposes due to limitations on access (e.g., HBS data and data from the MLSP's new employment survey). Capacity building is also required for government counterparts to show how the data can be used for monitoring project outcomes, and how data can be used to better inform policy decisions. Work on statistics should be closely coordinated with UNDP, World Bank, and DFID, which are currently discussing different aspects of support in this area.

A list of achievements and constraints in gender mainstreaming is presented in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 Achievements and Constraints in Gender Mainstreaming

LINKS TO GENDER ISSUES	GAD IN PROJECT DESIGN	GAD IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	GAD IN M&E	ACHIEVEMENTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING FOR GAD FOCUS
<i>Employment and Income Generation</i>					
Small and Microfinance Development Facilities					
Promoting women’s economic activity and access to credit; increasing women’s participation in credit unions, especially in rural areas	URM gender specialist participated in discussion of draft document; women are expected to be active in organizing and managing credit unions and to constitute a large part of the membership.	URM gender specialist provided training to PIU and EA.	In at least 5 of the credit unions supported, a minimum of 50% of members will be women.		Should be support for an analysis of women’s demand for and access to credit in urban and rural areas, including the types and amounts of credit required, purposes, barriers to access; and ways in which women’s access to credit, membership of credit unions, and roles as managers of credit unions could be actively supported. Review by an expert of existing laws and regulations on credit unions for their gender implications and impacts are needed.
Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction “Innovative Poverty Reduction in Karakalpakstan”					
Promotion of income-generating activities, decentralized, community-owned safe drinking water schemes	URM gender specialist participated in preparation, conducted analysis in Karakalpakstan, met local NGOs being considered as implementers; prepared GAP, training sessions for stakeholders		Gender impact assessment	Build on experience of small grant provided to BWA under RETA (see below), and implement it on a bigger scale; BWA built up training materials and experience; at least 30% of women (from local mahallas and NGOs) to be involved in project management bodies.	Should be linked to the Central Asia Gender and Water Network project (see below), and use local trainers from this project to provide training and awareness raising on gender issues in water management. Could work with the Gender and Water Network and national and local (Karakalpakstan) office of SSC in order to carry out time use survey to establish the additional time burden for women and men required in order to procure safe water.

LINKS TO GENDER ISSUES	GAD IN PROJECT DESIGN	GAD IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	GAD IN M&E	ACHIEVEMENTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING FOR GAD FOCUS
RETA projects (Training of Women Entrepreneurs/Farmers in Bukhara Oblast; Training unemployed rural women in Tashkent oblast; Women against Violence)					
<p>Business training to help women take advantage of employment and income-generating opportunities arising from the current policy emphasis on SME development; linked to credit union development, helps women access credit. Increased legal awareness regarding domestic violence; legal, psychological, educational support to victims</p>	<p>Specifically targeted on women in one oblast; URM gender specialist helped identify local NGO to provide training and helped to develop training materials. URM gender specialist active in design</p>	<p>URM gender specialist facilitator during training; URM gender specialist facilitated training programs</p>	<p>URM gender specialist monitored implementation</p>	<p>243 women received consultation, 32 started own business, 62 received microcredit, 30 through credit unions; manual on credit union development prepared for rural women. Capacity built up in local NGO (BWA) providing training, which can be used in bigger scale project (see Japan Fund project above). Workshops attended by 240 women; educational materials prepared and distributed</p>	<p>Small grant, with minimum administrative costs, which had high profile, and generated interest in ADB activities. But scale and impact remain small, unless used as pilot for bigger projects. Should be support for the MLSP and BWA to work together on regional women's needs assessments in cities, small towns, and rural areas. Ensure gender expertise is available for this.</p>
<i>Agricultural and Rural Development, Including Development of Water Infrastructure</i>					
Amu-Zhang Water Resource Management Project.					
<p>Rural employ-ment, improved irrigation and drainage to help productivity from small plots where female agricultural employment concentrated; women's voice in management of key agricultural resources, for example water and WUAs. Women's traditional role in manual agricultural work (involving use of water) and responsibility for household drinking water.</p>	<p>GAP; information on project disseminated to women;</p>	<p>Ensure women's participation in WUAs; training WUAs in GAD to develop gender-sensitive monitoring indicators; ensure women's participation in training for managerial staff, ensure training at convenient time/place; ensure households headed by women are members of WUA.</p>		<p>Gender specialist involved in project design. Participated in poverty/social assessment. Ensure women are not only beneficiaries, but potential managers and contributors to the project. GAP drawn up.</p>	<p>Weak GAD capacity in the project; it is not clear whether consideration was given at the design stage to the employment impact on women of reducing manual work through access to machinery and supporting private farm development, which seems to be biased toward male employment, without ensuring that measures were envisaged to promote alternative employment opportunities.</p>

LINKS TO GENDER ISSUES	GAD IN PROJECT DESIGN	GAD IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	GAD IN M&E	ACHIEVEMENTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING FOR GAD FOCUS
Grain Productivity Project					
Increase seasonal employment opportunities for women; promote women's participation in community and production activities in rural areas, including WUAs and farmers associations	URM's gender specialist participated in appraisal mission; emphasized that women should be regarded not only as beneficiaries but as potential managers and contributors; GAP drawn up.	Awareness raising among beneficiaries; ensuring gender parity in access to agricultural services in project area and access to training. GAD focal point appointed.	Gender-disaggregated indicators identified; percentage of female staff participating in training and project activities.	Gender issues identified in design stage, and GAP developed; suitable monitoring indicators identified	
Ak-Altin Agricultural Development Project					
Women's employment in rural areas and access to productive assets	URM's gender specialist participated in discussion of draft project document, developed GAP, and contributed to the social and poverty assessment.	Women given equal access to all services provided by the project, including business advice, agricultural extension services, and training.		Gender issues identified in design stage, and GAP developed	
Western Uzbekistan Rural Water Supply Project					
Improve access to safe water; improve sanitation and reduce health risks for rural population; participation of women in bodies managing water supply; raising women's skills to participate in management.	Gender specialist participated; loan agreement includes clauses stating that the borrower will guarantee participation of women in community groups involved in project and employment of women in project activities	GAD focal points, awareness training for project managers, EAs and PIUs, GAP,	Included in GAP	Explicit commitment to involve women in project and employ them in project activities	

LINKS TO GENDER ISSUES	GAD IN PROJECT DESIGN	GAD IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	GAD IN M&E	ACHIEVEMENTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING FOR GAD FOCUS
Central Asia Gender and Water Network					
Women's involvement in decision making regarding use and management of water; raising awareness of gender issues in water management	URM's gender specialist participated in project design.	URM's gender specialist acted as facilitator at training sessions.		Information and analytical capacity in water sector improved	Should be more closely integrated with ongoing and pipeline projects on rural development. Should use expertise for training, awareness raising, and possibly participating in needs assessment of female dekhani farmers.
Land Improvement (planned)					
Increasing women's employment opportunities through higher demand for manual labor due to improved cotton harvests; increasing women's representation in management of irrigation and drinking water supply	URM's gender specialist participated in discussion of draft project document, developed GAP, contributed to social and poverty assessment.				
Education and Health Care Sectors					
Education Sector Development Program					
Improving quality of education through textbook development; eliminating gender stereotypes in textbooks; establishing criteria for evaluating gender content of school materials; providing access to ICT at schools;		Training on gender stereotyping for textbook authors and publishers URM's gender specialist participated in all project missions; facilitated training sessions			To link up to MDG and PRSP work, could support more systematic data collection and analysis of attendance of boys and girls at different levels of schools.
Women and child Health Development (planned)					
Reducing maternal mortality through improving the quality of health services available to pregnant women; including women's voice in type and quality of service provided					

LINKS TO GENDER ISSUES	GAD IN PROJECT DESIGN	GAD IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	GAD IN M&E	ACHIEVEMENTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING FOR GAD FOCUS
<i>Other</i>					
LSS					
Linked to all critical issues and an important vehicle for capacity building through its participatory process		ADB gender specialist participated in discussion of draft document		Gender issues introduced especially on health, education, and labor market issues	Due to weak capacity, gender mainstreaming not satisfactory.

ADB = Asian Development Bank; BWA = Business Women's Association; EA = executing agency; GAD = gender and development; GAP = gender action plan; ICT = information and communication technology; MDG = Millennium Development Goal; MLSP = Ministry of Labor and Social Protection; NGO = nongovernment organization; PIU = project implementation unit; PRSP = Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper; RETA – regional technical assistance; SME = small and medium-sized enterprises; URM = Uzbekistan Resident Mission (ADB); WUA = water users' association.

Source: Author's researches.

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Appendix

List of Persons/ Institutions consulted

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	MAIN RELATED ACTIVITIES
GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS		
Department for Social Protection of Motherhood and Childhood of the Cabinet of Ministers	Ms. Norbaeva Tanzila Kamalovna	Women's issues, gender, children's issues
Information-Analytical Department for Foreign Relations of the Cabinet of Ministers	Mr. Nodir Safaev; Mr. A. Ananin	External economic relations and foreign investments
Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	Deputy Minister: Mr. Akbarov A. Anvar Head of Department: Mr. A. Navotny	Employment, social protection
Ministry of Economy	Mr. Nasritdinkhodzhaev Z.; Ms. Abduganiyeva, Yu.	Employment, education, health, access to public utilities.
State Department of Statistics	Deputy Chairperson: Ms. R. Makhmudova	Gender statistics
Tashkent Oblast Khokimiyat	Deputy Khokim: Ms. Adiba Akhmedjanova	Women's issues
UN, MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS		
<i>United Nations System:</i>		
UNDP (UNDP) Development Support Services Programme (DSSP) UNAIDS UNICEF	Deputy Representative: Ms. Lykke Anderson UN Advisor: Ms. Laura Rio Gender Advisor: Ms. Dinara Alimdjanova Program Officer: Mr. Aziz Khudoyberdiyev Program Coordinator: Mr. Andro Shilakadze	MDGs, Gender, HIV/AIDS issues, maternal and child welfare
USAID	Program Management Assistant: Ms. Dinara Mirzakarimova	Democracy and conflict mitigation
World Bank	National Operational Officer: Ms. Dilnara Isamitdinova	Social sector projects
Embassy of Switzerland	Program Coordinator: Ms. Eleonora Fayzullaeva; Ms. Feruza Ashmatova	Gender and Development
OSCE	Project Coordinator: Ms. Lola Maksudova	Trafficking, gender issues

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	MAIN RELATED ACTIVITIES
<i>Women's NGOs</i>		
Republican National Women's Committee	Officer in Charge, NGO and International Organizations: Ms. M. Pulatova	
Association of Women's NGOs, "Mehr"	Chairperson: Ms. Zulfiya Tukhtakhodjaeva	
NGO "Women and Society"	Director: Ms. Nataliya Muravyova	Training for women in prisons under the RETA 5889
Business Women Association (BWA) – Republican office	Chairperson: Ms. Dildora Alimbekova, Director of Business Women Association (BWA); Business Communication Center (BCC) Coordinator: Ms. Tadjikhon Saydikramova	Microcredit programs, training of women
NGO Civic Initiatives Support Center (CISC)	Chairperson: Ms. Kabulova Dilovar Nasimovna	Civil society, gender issues
<i>Research Centers</i>		
Center of Economic Research (CER)	Director: Mr. B. Eshonov Project Coordinator: Mr. Abdurakhmanov	Economic and social research. HDI reports.
Center for Social Research "Expert"	Director: Mr. Arustan Joldasov	Social issues
Center for Social Research "Tahlil"	Mr. Yakov Asminkin; Ms. Olga Nemirovskaya; Ms. Nadejda Asminkina	Social research
Scientific Information Center Interstate Coordination Water Commission (ICWC)	Chairperson: Mr. Viktor A. Dukhovny Legal Adviser: Ms. Dinara Ziganshina Project Coordinator: Mr. Shukhrat Mukhamedjanov Leading Researcher: Ms. Galina Stulina	Integrated water resources Management issues, gender and water issues