

Republic of Kazakhstan



KAZAKHSTAN

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

**East and Central Asia Regional Department and
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ADB country gender assessment to provide background information and analysis on gender and development issues in its developing member countries

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A variety of sources were used in preparing this gender assessment. Qualitative data were gathered during field work in Kazakhstan between December 2004 and April 2005, during which time participatory consultations were held with a range of stakeholders including nongovernment organizations (NGOs), community based-organizations and women's groups, individual women activists and farmers, academics, government officials, and donor organizations. Field visits provided additional qualitative information.

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The Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment was prepared by a team led by Sri Wening Handayani of ADB's Social Sectors Division, East and Central Asia Regional Department (now East Asia Department). The report was written by a consultant, Helen Thomas, with extensive support for data analysis, document review, and field work from Dina Mukhamedkhan.

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Abbreviations

ADB	—	Asian Development Bank
CEDAW	—	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIS	—	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSPU	—	country strategy and program update
CSW	—	commercial sex worker
FHH	—	female-headed household
GAP	—	gender action plan
GDI	—	Gender Development Index
GDP	—	gross domestic product
HIV/AIDS	—	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HDI	—	Human Development Index
IDU	—	injecting drug user
IOM	—	International Organization for Migration
MDG	—	Millennium Development Goal
MLSP	—	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
NCFWA	—	National Committee on Family and Women's Affairs
NGO	—	nongovernment organization
SHG	—	self-help group
STD	—	sexually transmitted disease
TRCWS	—	Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women's Support
UN	—	United Nations
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	—	United Nations Children's Fund
US	—	United States

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(as of 16 January 2006)

Currency Unit	—	Tenge (T)
T1.00	=	\$0.000748
\$1.00	=	T133.63

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

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Executive Summary

Kazakhstan has made significant progress toward overcoming the difficult impacts of the transition to independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Sudden economic shocks occurred as guaranteed markets for products ceased to exist and restructuring of state-owned enterprises and collective production units brought about massive layoffs. These economic changes also led to considerable changes in social relations as collectivized production units were disbanded, social services were severely cut, and the assurances of lifelong support from the state were removed. The immediate impact in Kazakhstan was a rapid, sharp rise in poverty and a deterioration in human development indicators.

Alongside these difficulties new opportunities emerged with the development of a market economy, especially with the continued development of its oil and gas. This sector has created new wealth that has remained to a large degree within the country. Democratic developments strengthened civil society and created freedom of choice in many areas. In some of its neighbors, the transition period in Kazakhstan has not brought with it civil strife.

Sustained economic growth since 1999 and targeted poverty interventions have helped to reduce the number of people living below the subsistence minimum from 39.0% in 1998 to 19.8% in 2003. Several key targets set by the government in the State Program for Poverty Reduction, 2003–2005, have been met. For example, the poverty head count target was 25.0% but achieved 19.8%; the official unemployment level, at 8.8% in 2003, is slightly better than the target of 8.9% for that year. However, aggregate national-level data mask some areas of continuing concern. Poverty levels are higher among women, who constitute 60% of the poor (UNDP and GRK 2005, 21) as they have more difficulty finding employment than do men; earn less; and have to absorb, through their own unpaid labor, cuts to social services such as child care. Gains made in gender equality in the Soviet era in other areas of political and economic decision making have also been undermined since 1991.

In its State Program for Poverty Reduction, 2003–2005, the government recognizes that women are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Women are less competitive in the labor market than men and experience more unemployment. The government acknowledges that gender stereotypes trap women in low-paid jobs, creating a wage gap between them and men, and that employers are reluctant to hire women because of their double work load of income generation plus child care. The government notes that women's unemployment is at critical levels in rural areas and small towns and that targeted programs are required there. The so-called "reverse gender gap," with more girls enrolled in school than boys, in education is also noted: women are unable to convert their higher education into well-paid jobs and remain less competitive in the labor market. Poor maternal health is also contributing to various aspects of poverty.

Despite noting these gender inequalities, state policies and programs do not consistently articulate how women's vulnerability to poverty can be addressed and gender imbalances reduced in key aspects of economic and social development. The National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women was adopted in 1999 and the Concept of Gender Policy in 2003. A revised gender

strategy is being prepared to provide a more focused framework for support to achieve the Concept of Gender Policy, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. But momentum to implement these programs does not reach out into all priority areas of programming, and gaps between intended results—such as equal access to the benefits of economic growth—and actual outcomes are not consistently monitored or well understood.

It is important to understand how poverty reduction policies and programs may be affecting women as compared with men to ensure that development investments are as efficient and sustainable as possible. Effective implementation of poverty reduction programming requires an understanding of how the economic transition has had a different impact on women and on their status relative to that of men. Poverty reduction programs may need to be adjusted or revamped to address different and unintended impacts on both sexes. The evidence of gender disparities in economic and social life in Kazakhstan exposes how policies have failed to provide equitable benefits to all citizens. Addressing these gaps also has significant potential to help accelerate economic growth and reducing poverty.

Based on detailed analysis of poverty, economic, and human development areas, the following types of programming are recommended to narrow gender gaps and enable women to participate in and benefit from poverty reeducation programming.

Increasing Opportunities for Women

- Ensure that labor market policies respond to the needs of women as well as men, e.g., improve profiling of unemployed women and how programs can be targeted to support skill development in sectors of growth in the economy, and encourage employers to examine and remove discriminatory barriers to hiring and promoting women. Run public campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes.
- Facilitate women's participation in the workforce by giving greater priority to relieving household responsibilities and requirements for unpaid labor, e.g., reinvigorating affordable child care services and preschool education.
- Improve women's access to economic resources, business development and management skills, and market knowledge in the micro and small business sector. Encourage institutions that provide services to the private sector to support women entrepreneurs. This may be achieved through activities such as awareness campaigns and dissemination of research demonstrating women's productive potential.
- Improve the monitoring of key indicators regarding women's comparative access to economic resources and employment opportunities.

Increasing Women's Capabilities

- Promote the education of girls in nontraditional careers through vocational and technical training so they may take up job opportunities in sectors of economic growth. Make the environment in schools more secure and appropriate for girls by providing the needed infrastructure, revising curriculums, and challenging gender stereotypes in vocational

training to encourage girls and women to enter professions with a higher return on their labor.

- Improve women's overall health by developing a better understanding of a broad range of factors influencing well-being and health outcomes beyond reproductive functions (e.g., psychological stresses from poverty, health impacts of domestic violence, "hidden hunger" from poor nutrition, and poor access to health care services). Combat emerging health risks from HIV/AIDS in ways that respond to the different needs of women and men (e.g., incorporate into HIV/AIDS programs wives of high-risk groups such as migrant laborers and transport workers). Invest in the management and analysis of data related to health-care that incorporate a gender perspective.
- Seek ways to relieve women's unpaid work burdens that limit their capabilities and opportunities to improve income-generating skills.

Empowering Women to Influence Decisions and Institutions Affecting their Lives

- Address pervasive and growing gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes through public campaigns, revisions to education curricula, and visible support from political leaders.
- Increase women's access to decision making in the public sphere through a range of programs, e.g., consider reinstating quotas for women candidates and elected representatives at all levels of government, running campaigns to raise awareness of men representatives about the need for women's voices to be heard, and facilitating regular collaboration between the government and women-focused nongovernment organizations and other civil society organizations to ensure that women's needs and priorities are reflected in the planning and implementation of government policies and programs.
- Implement employment equity programs in the public sector to demonstrate leadership in creating workplace environments where women can reach decision-making positions.

Increasing Physical and Economic Security for Women

- Place a high priority on implementing zero-tolerance campaigns against domestic and all forms of gender-based violence (including human trafficking and sexual harassment in the workplace). Sensitize police, the judiciary, and policy makers to the criminality of violence against women and to its impacts on the community and contribution to poverty. Hold them accountable to enforce the law on domestic violence and human trafficking. Establish crisis centers, safe houses and a range of economic and psychological supports for survivors of violence and human trafficking.
- Establish appropriate support and social protection services so that women can build economic security and reduce dependence on state and family support. Such programs should increase women's economic opportunities, capabilities, and empowerment.
- Increase household-level security by providing alcohol treatment for men and women, with a focus on residential facilities for men who are repeated perpetrators of violence against women.

Mainstreaming Gender Concerns into ADB Operations in Kazakhstan

The Asian Development Bank's lending and technical assistance operations in Kazakhstan and commitment to continued policy dialogue on poverty reduction provide many concrete opportunities to mainstream gender at the strategic and operational levels in areas of focus identified in the 2004–2007 country strategy and program update. Ensuring that women participate fully in project activities can ensure equal access to economic opportunities, and improve their capabilities, contribute to decision making regarding projects and community development, and significantly improve women's security. These actions will support objectives of the government and can be reinforced through systematic inclusion of gender issues in policy dialogue. The final section of this country gender assessment provides examples of ways in which operations can be designed, implemented, and monitored to ensure that gender concerns are systematically taken into account. Concrete suggestions are included about relevant areas where gender disparities can be addressed and equitable participation in project activities encouraged.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is the largest of the former Soviet republics, excluding Russia, and the ninth largest country in the world. It is landlocked but has access to the Caspian Sea along its western border. Kazakhstan is positioned between two other large economic powers: Russia and the People's Republic of China. Its other neighbors are former Soviet states: the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In 1997 the country's capital city was changed to Astana, in the geographic center of the country, from Almaty, in the south, to improve national cohesion.

Kazakhstan possesses enormous fossil fuel reserves as well as plentiful supplies of other minerals and metals. It also has a large agriculture sector featuring livestock and grain production. With its physical size and resources Kazakhstan's economy is the largest among the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Its industrial sector is based on the extraction and processing of these natural resources and on a growing machine-building sector specializing in construction equipment, tractors, agricultural machinery, and some defense items.

The population of Kazakhstan in 2004 was 14.95 million of which 7.75 million (51.9%) were women (UNDP 2004a). With several large cities and many former "company" towns established during the Soviet era around state-owned enterprise operations, only 47% of the population continues to reside in rural areas (UNDP 2004a). The population is relatively heterogeneous, including the following major groups: Kazakhs, 53.4%; Russians, 30.0%; Ukrainians, 3.7%; Uzbeks, 2.5%; Germans, 2.4%; Tatars, 1.7%; Uighurs, 1.4%; and others 4.9% (1999 census). The population growth rate has fallen sharply from 14.3 per 1,000 people in 1990 to 6.22 per 1,000 in 2003. Large-scale emigration took place during the early years of transition, with many people of German, Russian, and Ukrainian origin leaving. Emigration rates have fallen in recent years to a level almost the same as immigration in 2003. Birth rates have also fallen, from 3.5 births per woman during the late Soviet era to an estimated 2 per woman today.

Kazakhstan has made significant progress toward overcoming the difficult impacts of the transition to independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Sudden economic shocks occurred as guaranteed markets for products ceased to exist and the restructuring of state-owned enterprises and collective production units brought about massive layoffs. These economic changes also led to considerable changes in social relations, as collectivized production units were disbanded, social services were severely cut, and the assurances of lifelong support from the state were removed. The immediate impact in Kazakhstan was a rapid, sharp rise in poverty and a deterioration in human development indicators.

Alongside these difficulties, new opportunities emerged with the development of a market economy, especially with the continued development of Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. The sector has created new wealth that has remained to a large degree within the country. Democratic developments strengthened civil society and created freedom of choice in many areas. The transition period in Kazakhstan has not brought civil strife, unlike in some of its neighbors.

Sustained economic growth since 1999 and targeted poverty interventions have helped to reduce the number of people living below the subsistence minimum¹ from 39.0% in 1998 to 19.8% in 2003. Human Development Index (HDI) rankings by the United Nations (UN) show Kazakhstan in more favorable condition than its neighbors, as demonstrated in Table 1. But Kazakhstan is still well below countries such as the Russian Federation and Hungary.

Table 1. Comparative Positions in Human and Gender Development Index Rankings

Country	HDI	GDI
Hungary	38	35
Russian Federation	57	49
Kazakhstan	78	63
Turkmenistan	86	67
Uzbekistan	107	85
Kyrgyz Republic	110	93
Tajikistan	116	Not reported

Source: UNDP 2004b: 140–142.

higher among women—60% of the poor are women (UNDP and GRK 2005, 21), as they have more difficulty finding employment, earn less, and have to absorb through their own unpaid labor cuts to social services such as child care. Gains in gender equality during the Soviet era in other areas of political and economic decision making have also been undermined since 1991.

Discrepancies in benefits from economic growth and poverty reduction programming can be tracked by comparing the UN Gender Development Index (GDI) with the HDI. The GDI measures inequalities between men and women in the three HDI component indexes: (i) life expectancy, (ii) educational attainment, and (iii) income measure of average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. If the GDI is lower than the HDI, inequalities between men and women exist in benefits from development (UNDP 2002, 23). In Kazakhstan the GDI has been persistently lower than the HDI, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Differences in two of the three indexes—life expectancy at birth and in education attainment—favor women, but are offset by men’s significantly greater benefits from economic progress. Economic benefit gaps are illustrated by the wage gap of almost 40 percent. Women’s average nominal wages across all sectors of the economy are 61.7% of men’s wages; and despite higher educational achievements, women made up 57.3% of the unemployed in 2003 (UNDP and GRK 2005, 21). Women therefore face greater economic insecurity and are more vulnerable to living in poverty than men.

Kazakhstan has met several key targets set its State Program for Poverty Reduction, 2003–2005, (the State Program). For example, the poverty head count target was 25% but Kazakhstan achieved 19.8%; the official unemployment level, at 8.8% in 2003, is slightly better than the target of 8.9% for that year. However, aggregate national-level data mask some areas of continuing concern. Poverty levels are

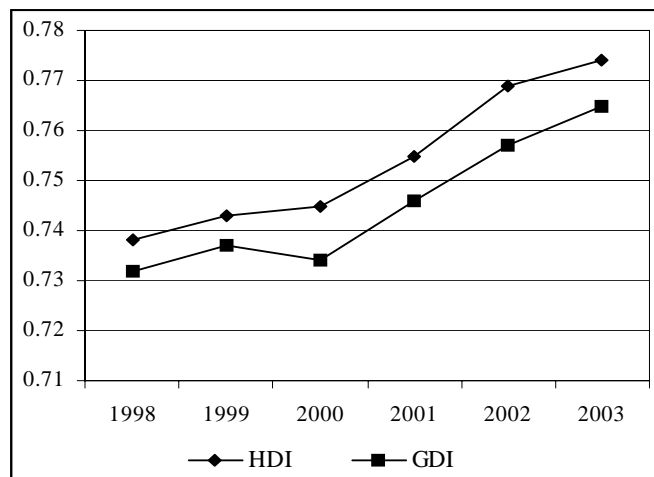
¹ In 2003, the State Statistics Agency established the subsistence minimum at T5,200, equivalent to \$35 a month.

The gender gap in benefits from recent economic growth can also be illustrated through a comparison of GDP per capita, as shown in Figure 2. The increase has been almost steady for men, but uneven for women; the gap even widened in 2000–2003. The gap is mostly due to labor segregation in sectors with high economic growth: men hold over 90% of jobs in the mining and mineral extraction sector, with higher than average salaries. Hence, according to the 2005 report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the highest wage gaps between men and women are found in regions with the highest gross regional product. (UNDP and GRK 2005:21). In these higher income regions, women's unemployment levels are also higher than men's.

In its State Program, the government recognizes that women are particularly vulnerable to poverty. The UN estimated in 2003 that 51.8% of the poor are women, compared to 48.2% of men (UNDP and GRK 2005, 28) but this estimate may not be a true reflection of poverty conditions within households, where women have a limited role in allocating household resources and hence have limited access to the resources required to fulfill their responsibilities as caregivers. Women are less competitive in the labor market than men and experience higher unemployment.

The government acknowledges that gender stereotypes trap women in low-paying jobs, and that employers are reluctant to hire women because of they carry the sole responsibility for child care. The government notes that women's unemployment is at critical levels in rural areas and small towns and that targeted programs are required. The so-called "reverse gender gap" in education is also

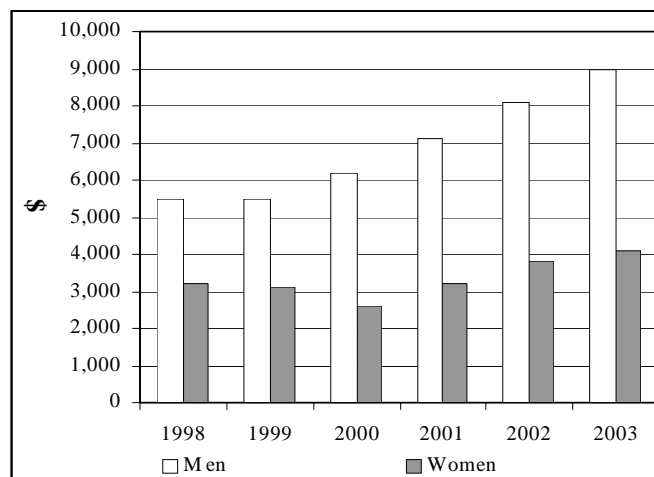
Figure 1. Comparison of Human and Gender Development Indexes in Kazakhstan, 1998–2003



GDI = gender and development index; HDI = human development index.

Source: Agency of Statistics, UNIFEM and UNDP 2004.

Figure 2. Gross Domestic Product Per Capita by Sex, 1998–2003



Source: UNIFEM 2005.

noted, but women are unable to convert their higher educational attainments into well-paying jobs. Poor maternal health is also identified as contributing to poverty.

Although the government notes these gender inequalities, state policies and programs do not consistently articulate how to address them in key aspects of economic and social development. The National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women was adopted in 1999 and the Concept of Gender Policy and the MDGs in 2004. But momentum to implement these programs does not reach all priority areas of programming, and gaps between intended results—such as equal access to the benefits of economic growth—and actual outcomes for men and women are not consistently monitored or well understood.

It is important to understand how poverty reduction policies and programs may be affecting women, as compared with men, to ensure that development investments are as efficient and sustainable as possible. The intensity of the initial transition period led to a mix of welfare programs that have helped limit the incidence of poverty, but have not narrowed the significant gaps in benefits between men and women. Effective implementation of poverty reduction programs requires an understanding of how the economic transition's impact on men and women has been different.

It is also important to acknowledge that poverty reduction programs may need to be adjusted or revamped to address different and unintended impacts on both sexes. The evidence of gender disparities in economic and social life in Kazakhstan exposes how policies have failed to provide equitable benefits to all citizens. Addressing these gaps also has significant potential to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty.

The following sections of this paper detail the gender-based factors influencing poverty rates and creating gender gaps in key indicators; some recommendations for addressing these factors and narrowing gender gaps are also included. Chapter 2 examines the gender dimensions of income and nonincome poverty. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the impact of the government's current poverty reduction programs to address gender gaps and the achievement of the MDGs. Chapter 4 examines national institutional frameworks and policies for poverty reduction, including gender mainstreaming. The sector analyses then follow: the gender dimensions of economic development and growth (Chapter 5); the gender dimensions of human development, including education, health care, and domestic violence, (Chapter 6); and gender, governance, and civil society (Chapter 7). The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening gender mainstreaming into Asian Development Bank (ADB) operations in Kazakhstan (Chapter 8).

A. General Poverty Levels

Living standards and health and welfare have been severely impacted by the transition from a planned to a market economy. The initial period of transition, from 1991 to 1998, was marked by a decline in economic output, high unemployment, a decline in real wages, and delayed wage payments by state enterprises and agencies. The fall in living standards was complicated by a sudden decline in public expenditure, which strictly limited the government's capacity to extend basic social services, a change that negatively affected the welfare of the poor in particular.

Stabilizing economic conditions led to growth between 1999 and 2001 averaging almost 9% per annum. Consequently, the number of people living below the subsistence minimum² dropped from a high of 39.0% in 1998 to 19.8% in 2003. The proportion of population with income below "food basket" cost³ (depth of poverty) fell to 6.3% in 2003 from 16.2% in 1998.

Poverty levels are higher in rural areas—22% compared to 10% in larger urban areas. Over 50% of the population live in rural areas and small towns that once supported single industries. In these communities, people with higher education have difficulty finding jobs, and a high proportion of women are forced into self-employment, which yields a low return on their labor. Many men are forced to migrate to urban areas seeking employment, leaving women alone to cope with family survival. Housing poverty rates⁴ in rural areas are as high as 60%, compared with 24% in urban areas, a situation that especially affects women's capacity to care for children and most family needs. Women feel an acute sense of isolation and inability to address their problems; they look to the government for short-term handouts for survival, as they have been forced to cope with domestic responsibilities under difficult conditions with little social support remaining.

Table 2 illustrates geographic variations in poverty levels based on the proportion of population with incomes below subsistence level in all regions. These data confirm that poverty levels have fallen in all regions except rural districts in Karaganda and Kostanay provinces (*oblasts*). Levels are also consistently higher in rural areas in all regions. All oblasts in the Southern Region had higher levels of poverty in 2003 than the average for the country as a whole. Atyrau Oblast in the Western Region had the largest share of the population with income below subsistence minimum, at 32.7%, despite being oil-rich. The specific weight of the poor in this oblast is only 5.1% of all poor, however, as this region is sparsely populated and remains dependent on inefficient agriculture (World Bank 2004, I:15–16). Mangistau Oblast, also in the western, mineral resource rich region, continues to have the highest proportion of the rural

² In 2003 the subsistence minimum was established by the State Statistics Agency at T5,200 or equivalent to \$35 a month.

³ The minimum "food basket" represents the cost of standard basic food items and nonfood products and services.

⁴ People are considered housing poor if they lack reasonable access to water (i.e., have no tap water, and have to walk more than 100 meters to obtain water, or take water from an "unimproved" water source) or if they live in overcrowded conditions (i.e., less than 6 square meters per person).

population with income below minimum subsistence, at 59.9%, but even this level has been reduced significantly, from a high of 95.5% in 2001.

**Table 2. Percentage of People with
Income below Subsistence Minimum by Region, 2001–2003**

Area	2001			2002			2003		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Western Region									
Aktobe Oblast	29.8	17.8	46.9	22.6	6.9	43.8	19.0	6.8	35.5
Atyrau Oblast	40.7	37.0	46.7	34.1	27.5	44.4	32.7	25.5	44.0
Mangistau Oblast	45.9	34.2	95.5	39.8	28.8	84.6	26.0	19.1	59.9
West Kazakhstan Oblast	27.3	23.5	29.8	28.0	11.4	39.0	17.1	7.0	23.9
Central Region									
Akmola Oblast	21.0	18.3	23.0	18.6	15.0	21.3	16.4	10.9	20.6
Karaganda Oblast	22.8	20.5	31.9	19.3	16.0	33.1	15.1	9.0	40.1
Southern Region									
Almaty Oblast	39.3	33.4	41.8	36.3	25.8	40.8	25.3	10.5	31.5
Zhambyl Oblast	48.2	39.8	54.0	35.8	31.3	39.1	30.0	21.0	36.6
Kyzylorda Oblast	39.5	32.9	50.0	32.3	22.1	48.0	27.1	17.9	42.2
South Kazakhstan Oblast	39.2	28.5	44.9	27.5	22.3	30.4	26.1	19.2	29.8
Northern Region									
Kostanay Oblast	25.5	13.4	38.7	22.3	12.9	33.4	2.01	9.2	34.3
Pavlodar Oblast	16.6	11.8	23.1	21.6	12.2	34.9	17.1	7.1	32.8
North Kazakhstan Oblast	10.0	4.8	13.3	14.3	4.3	20.7	11.9	3.8	17.0
Eastern Region									
East Kazakhstan Oblast	21.1	14.8	29.7	20.0	13.9	27.9	16.9	10.1	26.8
Astana	2.2	2.2		2.2	2.2		2.1	2.1	
Almaty	4.9	4.9		4.1	4.1		3.9	3.9	
Kazakhstan	28.4	20.0	38.5	24.2	15.6	34.7	19.8	10.8	30.9

Oblast where poverty levels have not fallen. Bold indicate oblasts where rural poverty has not fallen.

Source: Agency of Statistics, UNIFEM, and UNDP 2004.

B. Gender Dimensions of Income Poverty

The UN estimated in 2003 that 51.8% of the poor are women, and 48.2% are men (Agency of Statistics, UNIFEM and UNDP 2004; and UNDP and GRK 2005, 21, citing 2004 data of the Agency of Statistics). This estimate may not be a true reflection of poverty conditions within households, however. The people most likely to live in poverty are in four rural oblasts: Atyrau, Kostanay, Kyzylorda, and Mangystau. All but Kyzylorda are “oil-rich” regions, indicating the complexities of addressing poverty in Kazakhstan. Mineral extraction operations may provide high income to the government and enterprises but are not labor-intensive. Any jobs that are created in these usually remote rural regions are in male-dominated activities (e.g., operation of heavy machinery and engineering) and provide few opportunities for women or less-educated men. This is reflected in the high unemployment rates in these regions and wider-than-average wage gaps

between women and men. For example, in Atyrau the average salary for women is only 46.5% of men's, while women's average salary across the whole country is 61.7% of men's. Agricultural incomes are very low in all regions of Kazakhstan because of low productivity leaving, people who are unable to work in the mineral extraction sector even more vulnerable to poverty.

As in most countries, poverty indicators for Kazakhstan (income levels in particular) are assessed at the household level, based on an assumption that resources are divided equally among all household members. This assumption is increasingly questionable, based on evidence that women command fewer resources within the household for several reasons. For example, those bringing in the most cash income have the greatest influence on decision making regarding allocation of household resources. As women earn much less than men, they are likely to command fewer resources within the household and hence are more vulnerable to poverty. In addition, women tend to apply more resources to family requirements than do men (e.g., for children's food and education expenditures). Women therefore retain fewer resources than men for their own needs or for investments for income-generating activities (Falkingham and Baschiere 2004, World Bank 2001).

The dynamics of resource allocation within households is of particular importance in Kazakhstan as, despite the significant fall in poverty levels, a high proportion of households remain vulnerable to falling below the subsistence minimum level. Women living within these households may not have access to adequate resources to provide for basic needs for themselves and their children and it is important to understand how to reach these vulnerable women.

The government has identified single-parent families and single mothers as being especially at risk of living in poverty. However, that the prevalence of poverty among female-headed households (FHHs) is somewhat different from that in other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Only 33% of all FHHs were in the lowest expenditure quintile in 2003, and 52.5%, were in the top quintile (World Bank 2004, I:4). This may be because many women pensioners past child-bearing age head households and hence have fewer children. Despite male out-migration, FHHs are less prevalent in rural areas, as wives tend to join households with other family members, but are more prevalent in urban areas where poverty levels are lower. The data do not discount the economic and other risks women household heads face in such areas as discrimination in the labor market and difficulty with accessing other economic resources. However, care has to be taken not to assume that all FHHs share the same concerns about accessing economic resources.

Another high-risk category has been identified as pensioners, 69% of which are women, including 23% who are mothers with four or more children (World Bank 2004, I:4). This higher proportion is due to the lower life expectancy of men. Pensions have kept pace with living costs, but as the reforms are fully implemented, a higher proportion of women's pensions are likely to fall below the poverty line (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, because of women's lower average wages, the average pension paid to women is only 80.2% of the average pension paid to men (UNDP and GRK 2005, 21).

C. Other Measures of Poverty

The capability approach to assessing poverty looks beyond income to include good health, education, access to social capital, political participation, and security as measures of well-being. Long-term impacts of high levels of income poverty in Kazakhstan are seen in several dimensions of capability poverty. For example, persistent poor nutrition, resulting in iodine deficiency and anemia, has a significant impact on women's immune systems, maternal mortality rates, and overall well-being. About 60% of women are iron deficient and suffer from anemia, although moderate to severe incidence has fallen from 12% to 9% (UNDP 2004a). Incidence of anemia remains high in some regions—as high as 87% of women in the Aral Sea area. The longer-term effects are apparent in anemia morbidity rates among adults, which increased from 659 cases per 100,000 in 1999 to 1,139 in 2003 (World Bank 2004, I:8).

Nonmonetary dimensions of poverty continue to affect an additional 38% of the population (World Bank 2004, I:4). In 2003, 41% of households were considered to be housing poor. The deterioration of infrastructure has further restricted improvements in the standard of living, and this has led to significant impacts on women and their ability to fulfill domestic responsibilities. Access to running water, sanitation, central heating, and gas for the bottom income percentile in urban areas continued to fall, by 5% between 2001 and 2002. Almost half the people in rural areas have no access to these basic services. The high cost of improving services for the many sparsely populated areas, which has yet to be tackled by government policy, exacerbates regional disparities in poverty levels.

The challenge remains of how to reduce vulnerability of people identified as most at risk of being poor, i.e., the unemployed, those with inappropriate skills for jobs available, those living in families with many children, single-income/single-parent families, and those living in rural areas and single industry towns. A higher proportion of women than men are each of these categories.

D. Changing Gender Relations in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

As in all societies, gender relations⁵ in private and public spheres are framed by many factors. Barriers to equality in gender relations are in the most part socially constructed, but are maintained by a complex array of historical, ideological, cultural, economic, and religious influences. These influences seem constant, but are in fact changing along with other social relations. For equality goals to be achieved (such as those set out in the Kazakhstan Constitution), gender stereotypes and norms need to be examined and challenged. Few studies have been made of the factors influencing gender relations in Kazakhstan, or how gender relations are contributing to shaping the post-transition society. The following section provides a brief overview of some of the factors influencing gender relations in Kazakhstan, and illustrates how gender relations are in flux by referring mainly to changes in Kazakh traditions.

⁵ According to March et al. (1999), “gender relations are simultaneously relations of cooperation, connection, and mutual support, and of conflict, separation and competition, of difference and inequality.” Gender relations are concerned with how power is distributed between women and men. They define the way in which responsibilities, entitlements, and claims are allocated and the values attached to them. Gender relations are also influenced by other social relations such as class, disability, race, and ethnicity.

In Kazakhstan, traditional values echo through strong influences from the Soviet era to combine in diverse ways in the emerging post-transition society. The 8.6 million Kazakhs comprise 57% of the population, and Russians, 27%. Other ethnic groups comprise the remaining 16% and are from diverse backgrounds: they include Germans, Koreans, Ukrainians, and Uzbeks.⁶ This ethnic diversity limits the usefulness of generalizations regarding the impact of culture and tradition on social and gender relations. Yet some influences, especially from the Kazakh traditions, contribute to gender inequality.

Traditional nomadic Kazakh cultures recognized the important role that women played in ensuring the subsistence of the family, and women participated in many economic and social activities alongside men. Muslim women were not veiled and young men and women associated freely in many aspects of life, for example in horse racing or singing contests (ADB 1997, 13). Traditional songs and literature depicted women alongside men with similar qualities and as equal to their husbands. Women were responsible for household work, but were accorded decision-making authority, especially concerning household responsibilities. Marriages were arranged between families; a bride price was paid by the groom's family and in some cases a reciprocal dowry of livestock from the bride's family was also paid, as a contribution to resources for her use.

During the Soviet era many traditional attitudes were undermined as being counter-revolutionary and were actively discouraged, such as the payment of dowries or bride prices. Nevertheless, "unofficial" reciprocal financial relations were often maintained between the families of husbands and wives. Women's role as mothers was glorified in all spheres, but at the same time, services were provided to ensure that women's labor was released from domestic responsibilities to contribute to communal economic growth.

Settlement patterns were also radically changed as pastoralism was squeezed out by settled agricultural production and the arrival of other ethnic groups, e.g., Russians in the north and Uzbeks and the south and east. All social relations were radically changed as joint families were broken up and most Kazakhs settled in houses or apartment complexes. Russian culture influenced most aspects of Kazakh family life, reinforced by Soviet ideals of loyalty to the state rather than to the clan or extended family. (Russian influence was not as strong in the south, where many Uzbeks were resettled.) In the public sphere, women's labor was channeled into areas considered "suitable" according to Russian social norms, i.e., teaching, health care, and other social service sectors. Where convenient for the Soviet-era state, however, it also built on women's traditional skills in areas such as textile production and agriculture. Women took up prominent positions in the party apparatus, and many women were brigade or collective farm leaders.

The post-Soviet transition period has had a profoundly destabilizing impact on all aspects of social and gender relations. The pressure exerted upon men and women to fulfill both Soviet-era and traditional norms undermined both men's and women's well-being. In the private sphere, attitudes toward the role of women as mothers before all else have persisted. Women have been forced to absorb through unpaid labor the loss of many social services, such as child care and caring for sick family members as hospital services were cut, while having to continue to

⁶ Official government statistics from <http://www.kazakhembus.com/countryprofile.html>, November 2005.

contribute to household income through the difficult economic period. At the same time, a search for a national identity has built to some degree on traditional values, again stressing within the family women's primary role as caregivers, and male family members' responsibility for providing for the family from outside sources. These stereotypes cause pressure on men as well as women.

Traditional patterns of shared decision making within the family have been undermined by attitudes from non-Kazakh traditions that men should uphold ultimate decision-making authority. Women speak of a sense of being disempowered by these nascent gender stereotypes, as well as by the pressure on their time from the demands of unpaid labor and economic insecurity. Both men and women have exhibited psychological stress from the rapid economic and social change, but in different ways. With their self-definitions as breadwinner undermined by unemployment and loss of economic security, men have tended to become abusive toward themselves, through excessive alcohol use, and their families, especially in the form of domestic violence. Women have become discouraged and depressed as their time becomes stretched and their professional skills undermined through low wages and layoffs.

E. Outcomes from Changes in Gender Relations

The transition period has exacted considerable costs and many people continue to struggle against vulnerability to poverty, higher levels of unemployment, rising housing poverty, a decline in access to quality basic services, and signs of a re-emergence of conservative gender stereotypes that tend to limit women's personal, social, economic, and political freedoms. This country gender assessment captures the gender dimensions of poverty in Kazakhstan by analyzing contributing factors to the following trends for women: (i) decreasing opportunities, (ii) eroding capabilities, (iii) increasing levels of insecurity, and (iv) increasing disempowerment. Characteristics and impacts of these four trends include the following:

1. Fewer Opportunities

- Loss of employment and unemployment are greater among women, as women lose jobs more quickly than men and find it harder to find new jobs, especially after child rearing.
- Growing labor market distortions also limit women's opportunity to apply their higher levels of education or skills. Distortions are associated with discrimination against women in sectors considered nontraditional (see Chapter 5) or because women are considered unreliable workers because of their multiple responsibilities.
- Women have more limited access to economic resources (land and credit) than men and greater time constraints from having to absorb cuts in social services through their unpaid labor. These limit their ability to take up alternative or more productive economic opportunities emerging in the new market economy.

2. Declining Capabilities

- Education achievements of girls remain higher than those of boys', but girls' ability to apply education in the workforce is affected by discrimination and results in inefficient use of the investments made in girls' education.
- Higher opportunity costs for women to access health services are associated with women's time constraints and their potential inability to command resources to pay for increasing costs, particularly of transportation.
- Women's health has generally deteriorated from poor nutrition, time pressures, and deteriorating physical conditions such as housing.

3. Disempowerment

- Women feel disempowered within households and in the public sphere, as participation in the political process sharply declines.
- Gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes are pervasive and growing. Women are not perceived as independent political actors or agents of change and their access to economic and social resources is affected by decisions increasingly made by men in their family or community.
- Women lack access to decision-making positions in public and private sectors. Few women run for or are elected to legislatures; fewer women hold senior positions in government than men, and even fewer in the private sector.

4. Reduced Security

- Insecurity in the household is growing because of increases in domestic violence. Poverty and social disruptions are a toxic mix that leads to violence.
- The risk of human trafficking is growing for women; due to poverty, they may consider a job offered by a stranger or migrating alone without previous experience of moving around alone.
- Women are less able to manage risks of economic insecurity because of deterioration in social protection and safety nets.

A. Government Programs

Increases in GDP are not reflected in corresponding decreases in poverty rates. This is the core challenge for Kazakhstan, as contributions from oil and extraction sectors increasingly dominate the economy (38% of GDP in 2003, prior to sharp increase in oil prices; see Appendix 1). These sectors are capital intensive rather than labor intensive, most profits are repatriated to the central budget, and there are few local downstream or upstream businesses. In oil-rich oblasts such as Atyrau, urban poverty has declined, but rural poverty appears to be more closely linked to agricultural conditions and productivity. In the oil-rich oblasts, rural areas remain more isolated from the rest of the economy (World Bank 2004, I:15–16).

The government first systematically articulated its development goals and strategies in 1997 through the Kazakhstan Long-Term Development Strategy 2030 (2030 Vision). In 2001 the government announced the 2010 Strategic Development Plan. Three of its objectives are an agro-industrial policy to improve the welfare of the rural population through increased productivity and profitability of agrarian production, creation and support of employment in the rural areas, and industrialization. Significantly, the 2010 Strategic Development Plan includes a special section on gender and development.⁷ Three-year rolling indicative plans for socioeconomic development have been prepared, setting out medium-term public investment priorities.

As a prelude to preparing the 2004–2006 indicative plan, the government announced three key areas of public investment strategy:

- (i) The State Program for Poverty Reduction, 2003–2005;
- (ii) 2003–2005 as a period of rural revival that has been encapsulated in a state program entitled The Rural Area Development Program, 2004–2010; and
- (iii) The Industrial Innovation Strategy, 2003–2015, to enhance productivity, accelerate manufacturing growth, and (in the long term) shift to a service- and technology-based economy.

The State Program illustrates how women and gender imbalances are identified as contributing to poverty levels in Kazakhstan. Specific measures to effectively address these gender dimensions in poverty reduction strategies and programs are rarely articulated. The poverty profile in the State Program recognizes that women are vulnerable to poverty because of their double burden of work inside and outside the home, discriminatory employment practices, and continuing

⁷ Reported by the National Commission to the 49th Session of UN Division of Women in 2005 (GRK 2005). Activities are also reported to address gender equality in education, e.g., analysis of how gender concerns can be integrated into the education curriculum, and how to address stereotyping of teachers as female, etc. (see Chapter 6, section A).

poor reproductive health status. However, the poverty reduction objectives and detailed strategies do not follow up with specific activities to address these constraints.

Vulnerable groups are broadly identified in the State Program, as are principles to guide the implementation of the program. But although discrimination against women is identified as contributing to women's poverty, the need to address the economic impact of gender discrimination is not specifically identified in the overarching principles. Microcredit is the only area where special steps are recommended to correct unequal access to economic resources for socially vulnerable groups. Special measures are also recommended to assist rural women to organize their own businesses. This recommendation builds on an existing program initiated by the National Commission for Family and Women's Affairs (NCFWA), which provides a special credit line to support women entrepreneurs working in the production sector.⁸ It is reported that rural women received two thirds of all state-provided microcredit—but no targeting of poor women was specified in the program design and no monitoring has taken place to determine if the program has led to successful business development and employment for recipients.⁹

The strategic approaches to poverty reduction now being planned, following up on the State Program, promote economic diversity and rural revival, and mark a transition from a cautious fiscal policy to a strategy of accelerated development that will increase public investment in social services by 2% of GDP annually in the medium term. Despite the limited targeting of initiatives to support women in the State Program, increases in social service spending will benefit women, and improvements in several critical development indicators where women have fallen behind men may result (see Chapter 5, section E).

The government has already developed poverty reduction programs that target certain vulnerable groups. Improvements in the standard of living in almost all regions of Kazakhstan demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs for some. But persistent gender gaps in key indicators highlight the need to adapt some programs more effectively, to address the needs of women as well as men. As the government's new programs for economic diversification and agricultural revival are developed and delivered, it is vital that women have equitable access to the new resources being made available through public investments. The decentralization of planning and delivery of some programs to local levels provides potential to monitor outcomes from existing programs to identify where adaptations can ensure that targeting is effective.

B. Gender-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Monitoring

Poverty assessment in Kazakhstan has tended to focus on income poverty measurement and therefore fails to reflect diverse features of poverty. Furthermore, despite progress on the collection of some sex-disaggregated data and publication of specific statistical reports focusing on the status of women and gender differences, the data do not reappear in many mainstream poverty assessments. None of the 18 performance indicators for the State Program are sex-disaggregated,

⁸ A state program of microcredit targeting the rural population, including women, was also successfully implemented during 1998–2000, and was strengthened during 2000–2003.

⁹ Interviews for the county gender assessment with rural women and organizations working with rural women, indicated that none had participated in this government program.

apart from the longevity target and the inclusion of maternal mortality. This limits the capacity of stakeholders to track progress in addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women identified by the government. The State Program performance indicators are specifically tied to the priority programs (e.g., retraining, provision of microcredit, improved access to potable water, and increased telephone coverage). If outcomes from these programs are not sex-disaggregated, it is not possible to identify where and how future programming can be adjusted to reduce emerging gender gaps.

1. Performance Indicators to Address Gender Gaps

The following lists performance indicators from the State Program, noting how sex disaggregation would improve the targeting of poverty programs to address gender gaps in overall economic and social development:

- *GDP per capita.* The Agency of Statistics is tracking this indicator as sex disaggregated. It provides evidence of outcomes of distortions in the labor market and inability of women to access economic resources.
- *Percentage of people below minimum subsistence level.* These data are sourced from household surveys that do not examine intrahousehold resource allocations, although methodologies to do so are extant. The higher proportion of women living in poverty is masked when these data are not sex-disaggregated.
- *Level of unemployment.* These data are disaggregated by sex when collected and presented in annual reports from the Agency of Statistics. The State Program recognized that women experience higher levels of unemployment, yet the monitoring indicators fail to specify that trends in these gender-based differences must be tracked. Increasing employment is a core target in poverty reduction programs, yet women continue to fall behind men in accessing new jobs.
- *Percentage of economically active population employed in small business.* Small-scale business is important for increasing women's employment and income. Trends in women's comparative access to economic resources can be drawn from this indicator if it is disaggregated by sex.
- *Number of microcredits given.* The number should be disaggregated by sex to assess differences in access to this vital economic resource between men and women.
- *Number of retrained registered unemployed people.* As more women than men are registered as unemployed, specific programs should be provided to meet their needs. Unless outcomes from previous programs are tracked for women as well as men, future approaches may not be adapted appropriately.
- *Number of people employed in public works.* Public works form a core income program for the unemployed. Most public works involve construction or other jobs that are not traditionally offered to women, limiting their access to this important income sources. Unless the pertinent data are sex-disaggregated, it is not possible to track whether women have equitable access to this form of poverty reduction programming.

- *Percentage of people without access to potable water.* Sex disaggregation of these data are less important than for other indicators, as women are primarily responsible for managing potable water within households. But the planning and implementation of water programs must directly involve women as decision makers to ensure that their specific needs are met.
- *Percentage of families in rural areas without telephones.* Women who set up small businesses face more limited access to technology and information than do men. Specific targeting of new technologies to women as a vulnerable group should be considered, and monitoring undertaken to track the effectiveness.
- *Availability of preschools.* This is a vital program to assist women with preschool child care. Although there is no evidence of differences in access to services between boys and girls in this age group, sex disaggregation would ensure that gender gaps are identified and addressed should they emerge.
- *Incidence and mortality from tuberculosis.* Health outcomes from tuberculosis do not manifest gender-based differences; but, as with all data, sex disaggregation can ensure that the gender factor is constantly monitored.
- *Infant mortality.* These data are collected on a sex-disaggregated basis at local levels, but tend to be aggregated at the national level. Survival rates should be monitorable in a manner that can ensure that gender-based differences are not emerging over time.
- *Maternal mortality.* This is a core indicator of the status of women, as reproductive health requires more than high-quality health services. For maternal mortality to be low women must be able to command sufficient resources within the household to apply to their own health as well as that of their children. Planners should be encouraged to consider this indicator in the broader context of women's status.

The Agency of Statistics compiles most national-level poverty reduction programming reports, drawing on data sourced primarily from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and programming records from local government (*akimat*) level offices implementing the programs. Decentralization of poverty reduction programming to the *akimat* level has not been accompanied by capacity building to ensure that officials can track the outcomes of programs they have planned and implemented. Most *akimat* officials do not understand of the need to track gender-based differences to ensure that programming is appropriate for vulnerable groups.¹⁰ While sex-disaggregated data might be collected for program beneficiaries, differences in outcomes are not tracked, so analysis of past experience is not built into the development of future programs.

Similarly, capacity within the Agency of Statistics and other reporting agencies to analyze data in a gender-sensitive manner is very limited. Despite recent support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the publication of important reports such as *Women and Men of Kazakhstan, Short Statistical Brochure* (GRK 2004), little of this information appears in mainstream reports. ADB has been supporting poverty monitoring and assessment through technical assistance during recent

¹⁰ Based on interviews with *akimat*-level officials in several communities in the southern and northern regions of Kazakhstan during field work in January 2005.

years, but without including specific components to improve tracking of gender gaps and differences in outcomes from poverty reduction programs.

C. Gender and the Millennium Development Goals

By 2004, Kazakhstan had achieved two targets for MDG #1: income poverty and the incidence of food poverty had both been reduced by half. MDG #2, universal primary education (the main indicator for the gender equality) and MDG #3 (associated with gender balance in school enrollment) were achieved in 2003.

Continued low funding for social sectors, however, has limited progress in several key human development indicators. Progress had been achieved toward targets identified in the State Program regarding longevity for men and women, but have fallen back in recent years. Longevity for men was 60.5 years in 2003, just missing the target of 60.6 years; women's longevity in 2003 was 71.5 years, missing the target of 72.2 years. The maternal and infant mortality rates (MDGs #4 and 5) remain of concern, as well as the potential to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS (MDG #6). Ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015 (MDG #7) is considered unattainable by the target date (UNDP 2004a).

1. Millennium Development Goals and Country Targets

UNDP and the government released a report on progress against the MDGs in October 2005 (UNDP and GRK 2005). The report provides a detailed assessment against national targets, but some sections of the report do not fully explore how gender and gender-based factors are limiting progress. The following paragraphs outline progress to date for MDGs #1–7.

MDG #1, Country Target 1: Decrease the proportion of men and women below subsistence minimum to 18% by the end of 2015. The rate was reduced from 34.6% in 1996 to 16.1% in 2004, so Kazakhstan has met this MDG target.

The MDG assessment does not incorporate gender differences into the analysis of progress on this target. For example, the contribution of the significant wage gap to women's increasing vulnerability to poverty is not discussed. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, women are marginally more vulnerable to living in poverty, but official data taken at household level mask differences within households. Recent studies in other CIS countries have identified tendencies for women to have more limited access to household resources than do men. Similar studies have not been carried out in Kazakhstan, but related indicators, such as limited recovery in maternal mortality rates to pre-independence levels, point to women's inability to command adequate resources to maintain their own health status. These tendencies probably extend to other areas that contribute to women's vulnerability to poverty.

All poverty monitoring indicators should be gender sensitive and studies should explore intrahousehold dynamics such as allocation of resources within the household. Capacity for analyzing such trends needs to be strengthened for all stakeholders involved in poverty reduction

programs (government, nongovernment, and development partners) to ensure that gender gaps are identified and appropriate action taken.

Country Target 2: Between 1990 and 2015, halve the proportion of men and women lacking balanced nutrition. Progress is measured by the following indicators:

- *The proportion of people with an income below the cost of a food basket—6.4% target for 2015.* The proportion of such households was 12.7% in 1997 and fell to 4.3% in 2004. Thus, the target has been achieved but the issue remains in some poor regions.
- *The prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age.* The proportion of underweight children is still a concern in some poor regions, e.g., the western and central regions, where rates are higher than World Health Organization (WHO) standards.
- *The prevalence of micronutrient deficiency among the population,* also often referred to as “hidden hunger.” Rates of anemia among pregnant women fell between 1995 and 1999, but have increased since then, from 58% in 1999 to 64.3% in 2003 (rates are as high as 85.6% in the Southern Kazakhstan Region). This indicator provides additional evidence of women’s inability to access adequate resources to maintain a reasonable standard of health, despite gains in income poverty levels.

Chapter 6 demonstrates how a broader view of factors contributing to women’s health status needs to be taken if progress is to be made on this target. For example, women must have better access to economic resources, such as land and business information, to improve income security (especially in rural areas) and to increase investment in social services that provide care for preschool children to reduce stress on women’s time health.

MDG #2, Country Target 3: All children, boys and girls alike, should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. This target has been achieved. However, access to high-quality secondary education remains a problem in rural areas, and is linked to low levels of education of household heads.

The target is important to ensure that school graduates are well prepared for the workforce; however, the impact on women of limited availability of preschool education has not been addressed in MDG targets or reports. Women are forced to leave their preschool children with relatives or informal nurseries with no government oversight regarding quality or health care and safety standards. Children entering school at age 6 are increasingly unprepared to do so, leading to reduced achievements in early primary grades.

Education has a vital role in changing gender-based stereotypes and discrimination. Gender stereotypes in career preparation need to be identified and challenged in primary and secondary schools to encourage more girls to take up training in labor market growth sectors and improve their competitiveness. The government is revising curricula to eliminate gender biases and improve teaching methods. However, gender biases in education are not recognized in key government and

UN documents as important factors contributing to girls and women falling behind their male cohorts as they move into the labor market.

MDG #3, Country Target 4: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015. As Kazakhstan had eliminated gender disparity in primary and secondary education, it adopted another indicator: the share of national parliamentary seats held by women. However, only 9.5% of women hold parliamentary seats, a considerably lower total than in other CIS countries and many other low-income countries.

As already noted, greater priority must be given to eliminating discriminatory practices in employment, which lead to significant labor market distortions, earning gaps, and inefficient use of investments in education of girls. It is also important to eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment, as stated in the government's Gender Action Plan (GAP). This will require considerably better targeting of government poverty reduction programs and investments in strengthening women's leadership skills so they can assume a higher proportion of political and economic decision-making positions.

The MDG report specifically recommends that the following steps toward achieving MDG #3 be given highest priority (UNDP and GRK 2004):

- Create a favorable social and political environment for promoting women to the decision-making level in government, economics, and politics.
- Conduct state socioeconomic policy in a manner conducive to ensuring equal employment opportunities and conditions for men and women.
- Promote a gender-oriented approach to development programs and introduce gender analysis and assessment in large-scale development projects.
- Actively implement the government's gender equality policy. Ensure that NCFWA controls the enforcement of decisions and monitors results in the area of gender relations.

Furthermore, the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the UN Millennium Project in 2005 developed a list of the strategic priorities for a minimum set of actions to achieve MDG #3 and gender integration into other MDGs that can be applied in all countries (UN Millennium Project 2005). The 2005 MDG report for Kazakhstan notes that most of the minimum actions are not a high priority for the government. The minimum actions to achieve MDG #3 include the following:

- Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights to women and girls.
- Invest in infrastructure designed to reduce the amount of time girls and women spend on burdensome tasks. Increase women's participation in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects to increase their accessibility and affordability.
- Guarantee women's property and inheritance rights with action that includes legal reform to increase access to land. Strategies for better enforcement include

recording women's share of land or property, supporting women's groups that help women make land claims, and improving legal literacy.

- Reduce gender inequality in employment, close gender gaps in earnings, and reduce discrimination against women in labor markets through programs that provide support for child care, social policies that eliminate discriminatory employment and pay practices, social protection, and access to credit and skills training, especially in the informal sector.
- Increase the political representation of women in political bodies at the national and local levels through proven interventions like gender quotas and reservations.
- Combat violence against women through a combination of infrastructure, legal, education, health care, and other actions, including legislation, awareness programs, and health services to support victims of violence.

The implications for taking up these minimum actions reach beyond specific steps required to reach MDG #3 targets. Taking gender considerations into account will improve achievement of all MDGs.

MDG #4, Country Target 5: Achieve an under-5 mortality rate of 11.3 per 1,000 live births in 2015. Official data indicate that under-5 mortality rates have fallen from 34 per 1,000 live-births in 1990 to 21.7 per in 2002. However, these data do not reflect real rates, because they do not count losses of infants born between 22 and 28 weeks' gestation. Regional differences also parallel differences in poverty rates. The deterioration in the status of women and women's are contributing factors to infant and child mortality.

The massive cuts in social services have had a disproportionate impact on women, limiting the time and resources they have available to care for their children and themselves. The UN reports note that the health status of mothers determines whether children die early, as most diseases of pregnant women that increase the risk of maternal mortality also negatively influence the fetus and the newborn. This provides additional impetus to increase the priority given to understanding and addressing the broad factors contributing to women's poor health status.

MDG #5, Country Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio to a targeted 13.8 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015. In 1990, Kazakhstan's maternal mortality ratio was 55 deaths per 100,000 live births; this level had improved to 36.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2004. Again, official data are problematic because they do not count losses of infants born between 22–28 weeks' of gestation. The MDG report provides a very detailed analysis of the factors contributing to relatively high maternal mortality rates in Kazakhstan, notwithstanding progress made in other areas of human development.

The recommendations made are primarily associated with health care factors, but include specifically the need to promote gender equality as a factor that indirectly influences the health of mothers and children. It is important to increase the understanding of the links between maternal mortality rates and women's reproductive health and the overall status of women. Additional recommendations are included in Chapter 6.

MDG #6, Country Target 7: By 2015 halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. Kazakhstan still has a relatively low prevalence of HIV/AIDS, with an estimated 0.2% of the population aged 15–49 living with the virus, and 4,696 cases as reported in January 2005. The gender dimensions of high-risk behaviors must be better understood and spouses of high-risk men (e.g., soldiers, migrants, and injecting drug users) should be targeted in prevention and HIV/AIDS care programs.

MDG #6, Country Target 8: By 2015 halt and begin to reverse the incidence of tuberculosis. The tuberculosis incidence rate was 65.8 in 1990 and 154.3 in 2004. Mortality was 10.1 in 1990 and 22.0 in 2004. In 2003, the growth rate halted and the target is likely to be achieved. Prevalence and morbidity rates are higher among men than women, but no analysis of gender-based differences is presented in reports, and a better understanding of these factors is required.

MDG #7, Country Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources. The MDG report notes that principles of sustainable development will be integrated by the target date, but reversal of the loss of environmental resources will be challenging, especially in light of current economic growth trends in the energy sector. The impacts of environmental degradation on health and social development are more severe on women than for men.

MDG #7, Country Target 10: Reduce by 2015 the share of population that has no sustainable access to drinking water, from 15% to 6% in urban areas and from 29% to 15% in rural areas. About 95% of the population is recorded as having access to a piped water supply, but many of the water systems have not been maintained and/or are delivering unsafe water. About 13.3% of water systems are inoperable and 23.4% do not meet sanitary and technical requirements.

Women bear the brunt of the impact of lack of access to potable water. They are responsible for managing water resources in the household and have to care for sick family members affected by polluted and unsafe water supplies, as well as themselves. As this target is being achieved, higher priority must be given to ensuring that women, as primary managers and users of water resources in the household, participate in the design of and decision making for water programs.

MDG #7, Country Target 11: Achieve, by 2020, significant improvement in the lives of the rural population. Housing deterioration in rural areas has yet to be systematically addressed through government programs and creates a significant gap in living conditions between the urban and rural areas. The needs of women must be understood in all housing improvement programs and women must participate equitably in the design and implementation of all associated activities.

D. Recommendations

In 2005 UNDP released a detailed report on gender equality and women's status in Kazakhstan, to provide background analysis for the achievement of MDG #3 and other MDGs. This document compiles available data and provides detailed recommendations for consideration

by the government. UNIFEM has also prepared a background paper that provides detailed data on gender gaps for each of the MDGs in Kazakhstan, with suggested gender-sensitive indicators. Recommendations from this country gender assessment are as follows:

- Involve target groups and specific vulnerable groups, such as women, in the planning and monitoring process to ensure that changing needs are identified.
- Strengthen planning and monitoring skills at local levels to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated into all poverty reduction programs and assessments.
- Identify monitoring indicators for all poverty reduction programs (by government and nongovernment organizations) that reflect combinations of factors that lead to gender gaps in key areas.
- Ensure that all data collected are disaggregated by sex and that trends and gender-based differences are analyzed on a regular basis.
- Ensure that findings from needs assessments and monitoring (including the need to address gender gaps) are analyzed and fed back into the planning process when programs can be adapted to the existing situation.
- Ensure that findings from local- and regional-level monitoring are linked to monitoring of the new government gender strategy, poverty reduction strategies, and other poverty assessment mechanisms.
- Ensure that targets and monitoring indicators for NCFWA's 2005 Gender Strategy are closely aligned to monitoring indicators for future poverty reduction strategies and programs. This will facilitate tracking of gender gaps and improve integration of gender concerns into the implementation of future poverty reduction policies.
- The government and all UN agencies should consider all recommendations regarding the need to narrow gender gaps and suggested actions. Gender gaps will limit achievement of key MDGs, such as those associated with maternal health and infant mortality.

Chapter 4 National Legal, Policy, and Institutional Frameworks to Promote Gender Equality

A. Legal and Policy Framework

The basic framework in which the Government protects the rights of women and promotes gender equality is the Constitution of 28 January 1993, which guaranteed equality of rights and freedoms irrespective of sex and prohibited all forms of discrimination (Article 1). The Constitution of 1995, which is in effect at present, strengthens this commitment by declaring that ratified international treaties supersede national laws. The Parliament of Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 18 December 1979 and the subsequent Protocol to the Convention that allows individuals and NGOs to take up issues with the UN CEDAW Committee in 2000. Furthermore, the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women and the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women were also ratified in 2000.

The combination of the Constitution and the application of CEDAW and other related UN conventions to protect human rights should provide a robust legal framework for the protection of women's rights. In practice, however, judges, lawyers, and law enforcement officers are only guided by national laws, not many of which reflect the intent of CEDAW or the constitutional guarantees, especially regarding concepts such as "discrimination."

During the first few years of independence, in the spirit of the initial Constitution, the government took an approach "enabling women to effectively combine professional, maternal, and familial responsibilities." Such policies provided for representation of women in elected bodies, a very extensive system of government-guaranteed allowances and benefits for women with maternal and familial responsibilities, and limitations on the use of female labor. This reflected the Soviet practice of stressing women's role as mothers, and reinforced an approach that did not promote women as individual economic actors and agents of development.

Commitments made by the government at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, changed this approach. Since then, a series of policies and actions plans have been developed and implemented.

- *The Concept of National Policy for Improving Women's Status* defines general strategies and priorities aimed at ensuring principles of equal rights and freedoms and providing equal opportunities for men and women based on Kazakhstan's Constitution and international commitments. It follows the basic principles set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.
- *The National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women* (NCWFA 1999) sets out goals, concrete activities, centers for responsibility within the government, and target completion dates for each of the 12 areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. NCFWA identified a priority focus on four main directions within the National

Action Plan: (i) improve women's health, (ii) promote women's active participation, (iii) promote the economic advancement of women, and (iv) eliminate discrimination against women (GRK 2001). By identifying those responsible for implementing the goals set out in the National Action Plan, it provides a commitment to gender mainstreaming. However, little evidence of reporting by the respective ministries on progress against these targets can be discerned.

- *The Concept of Gender Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan* (2003) responded to some concerns regarding the development of a more comprehensive policy framework and institutional approach to promoting gender equality identified by the CEDAW Committee following the report presented by the government in 2001.¹¹ The Concept determines major principles, priorities, and goals of gender policy in Kazakhstan in the short term (to 2010) and long term (to 2030). The Concept defines the goals of gender policy in Kazakhstan as (i) achieving balanced representation of men and women in decision-making bodies; (ii) ensuring equal opportunities for economic independence, including setting up businesses and developing careers; (iii) enabling equal rights and responsibilities within a family; and (iv) ensuring freedom from gender-based violence. This reconfirms previous commitments from the government but more explicitly identifies issues of ensuring women's equal access to economic opportunities and gender-based violence. The Concept also commits the government to the introduction of gender education; revision of legislation in a gender-sensitive manner; gender analysis of the budget, national plans, and programs; and (specifically) the development and adoption of the draft law "On Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities" to advance the achievement of these policy goals. The law has been drafted but delays have been noted by the President, who requested its adoption be expedited at the Fourth Kazakhstan Women's Forum held in September 2004. At the writing of this report the law had still not been adopted.
- *The Concept of Gender Policy and the Millennium Development Goals in Kazakhstan* (NCFWA 2004) updated the National Action Plan around the framework of the MDGs. It sets out priority concerns and strategies to achieve gender aspects of the MDGs in areas of economy and labor, health, and the elimination of violence against women and children.
- *The Concept of Education Development* (2004), while creating an overall framework for developing a long-term education policy, stresses the need for developing a network of organizations engaged in preschool education as one of the social institutions providing women with an opportunity to work and support socially unprotected and poor families. It also sets out a program to introduce gender awareness and training to challenge gender stereotypes and protect women's rights at all levels of education.

¹¹ The Committee on CEDAW report identified several concerns, including the lack of a definition of discrimination limiting the potential to use constitutional protection to counter discriminatory acts, lack of integrated policy and institutional approach to gender mainstreaming, inadequacy of financial and technical resources for the national women's machinery, and lack of action in specific areas such as limited opportunities for highly educated women in the workforce, etc. (UN Committee on CEDAW 2002).

- A further *gender strategy* has been drafted to set out more specific steps to achieving the objectives in the 2003 Gender Policy Concept.¹² Consultations have been held with NGOs and other stakeholders and final approval was to be sought. This document is intended to articulate the Government's approach to gender mainstreaming in other policy directions set out in the 2010 Vision.

An analysis of key areas of legislation from a gender perspective is included in *Gender Equality and Women's Status in Kazakhstan* (UNDP 2005a, 67–75). It notes that in several areas of legislation (e.g., labor, social protection, marriage and family, political representation, land reform, and health and reproductive rights) basic protection exists for women's rights—with some inconsistencies: (e.g., protection of women's right to marital property may not be explicitly recognized under land reform legislation).

While legal reforms protect women's rights, concern remains regarding the way that legislation is being implemented. The judiciary, policy makers, and women and women's organizations have little understanding of the intent and implications of the provisions, or of how they can be applied. It is hoped that the new Law on Gender Equality and various forms of domestic violence legislation will provide improved mechanisms to ensure that women's rights are protected in the development of policies and enforcement of laws.

B. Institutional Framework

The Council for Family and Women's Affairs and Demographic Policy under the president of Kazakhstan was established in 1995 to address challenges faced by families, women, and children following independence. The council was reorganized to become the National Committee on Family and Women's Affairs (NCFWA) in 1998, under the President of Kazakhstan's office, as a mechanism to develop specific strategic approaches and programs in addressing gender equality concerns. The 28-person NCFWA serves as a consultative board to work on the protection of family interests and improvement of conditions for women's participation in the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the country. The NCFWA chairperson has ministerial status, to facilitate participation in senior levels of decision making. A deputy group of the parliament, composed of 33 elected deputies, guides implementation of policies and programs to promote the status of women, families, and gender equality. Key ministries are represented on the NCFWA, including, for example the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, ensuring gender concerns are incorporated into policy reviews and implementation. The NCFWA Secretariat implements programs on its behalf.

NCFWA is represented in each oblast by the vice-governor and is supported by one staff member. Coordination for implementation of key programs is facilitated through the vice-governor's office, giving added impetus. An electronic network has also been established between all NCFWA levels and with NGOs to facilitate the exchange of information. The main areas of NCFWA's activities have been implementing the National Action Plan; implementing programs to promote women's economic advancement; combating domestic violence and trafficking, including

¹² No English version had been released as this report was being prepared.

the establishment of crisis centers and telephone hot-lines; and providing activities coordinating women's advancement with international partners and NGOs.

The effectiveness of NCFWA's work remains limited due to staff capacity, especially in areas such as reviewing legislation and policies or monitoring program implementation. All ministries report on activities to NCFWA every 6 months, based on which it submits a report to the government with suggestions for improving the operations of certain agencies. In addition, the work of the ministries, agencies, and regions on implementing the National Action Plan is reported at the NCFWA meetings and specific recommendations given on eliminating current shortcomings. The recommendations are recorded and action is monitored. NGOs provide technical support and UNIFEM and UNDP have provided financial and technical resources to assist NCFWA.

C. Recommendations

Recommendations to enhance frameworks to promote gender equality are as follows:

- Increase the allocation of financial, technical, and human resources to NCFWA so it can improve the effectiveness of its work in fulfilling the commitments made to mainstreaming gender equality concerns across the government.
- Improve the capacity of all levels of staff to carry out gender impact and budget analysis and to monitor programs to ensure that policies and programs to promote gender equality are effectively implemented at all levels. Improve technical capacity to facilitate the provision of support to other ministries and departments to improve the mainstreaming of gender equality concerns into all priority areas of programming.
- Encourage collaboration with NGOs experienced in identifying and designing programs that effectively target women and narrow gender gaps. Several NGOs can help strengthen the capacity of NCFWA staff to analyze impacts of policies and facilitate gender mainstreaming across the government.
- Widen the scope of microcredit programs to address a broader range of concerns for unemployed women, especially in rural areas, by providing a range of social services together with business development training to ensure the effective use of credit.
- Ensure that monitoring indicators identified for the new gender strategy are closely aligned with those already identified for other key areas of programming, especially indicators for poverty reduction. This will facilitate coordinated monitoring and improved tracking of gender gaps in areas of priority to women.

Chapter 5 Gender Dimensions of Economic Development

Women's participation rate in the workforce—around 65% compared with 76% for men—has been steady since the transition from the Soviet period.¹³ These relatively high participation rates (which compare favorably with those of the strong CIS economies) are built on the inheritances of the Soviet period, including high levels of education for women and the requirement for women to contribute to social production. Workforce participation rates are higher for both men and women in rural areas, in response to high levels of poverty. The proportion of GDP generated by men is much higher than that of women (see Figure 2), reflecting gender-based biases and inefficiencies in the labor market and access to economic resources that limit economic growth and poverty reduction. To address these constraints on women's potential contribution to economic development, it is important to examine where inefficiencies and distortions exist and how government policies and programs can be adjusted to achieve more equitable outcomes from poverty reduction efforts.

A. Structure of the Kazakhstan Economy

Financial indicators for the economy are strong, but the country's manufacturing base remains weak. High commodity prices, particularly in recent years, have enabled the extractive industries to modernize, but other sectors are being left behind. Oil, gas, mining, and metals directly account for 35% of GDP (Appendix 1), nearly 80% of industrial output, and more than 80% of exports, but generate few new jobs (World Bank 2005b). After initial gains from aggressive economic reforms, productivity has remained stagnant in other sectors since 2001. As illustrated in Table 3, employment in agriculture had increased to 35% of all jobs in 2003, while agricultural labor productivity has been falling for more than a decade. By 2003, women's employment in the agriculture sector had more than doubled, from 3.384 million (25% of the total) in 1998 to 7.095 million (29% of the total) despite the low returns on their labor, because of the lack of other job opportunities in rural areas.

Table 3. Agricultural Labor Productivity in Kazakhstan and Percentage of Women in Hired Employees

Agriculture Sector	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Labor Productivity ^a (\$ per worker)	1,309	1,178	738	833	838	894
Employment (%)	22	22	31	35	35	35
Women Employees (%)	25	24	24	24	26	29

^a \$ per worker normalized against Ukraine/Russia.

Source: World Bank 2005a.

The challenges faced by the government, despite the benefits of the oil boom, are to effectively diversify the non-oil economy, ensure that oil windfall benefits are spread, and avoid the negative effects from the economic boom that have been experienced by such countries as

¹³ Workforce participation rates are down from 85.8% for women and 84.4% for men in the early 1990s according to Agency of Statistics and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) analysis.

Mexico, Nigeria, Venezuela, and even Norway (World Bank 2005b, x).¹⁴ One area of particular concern to government and international analysts is how to strengthen human capital. Falling productivity is compounded by low investments in health care and education. Labor mobility is also important to promote flexibility and capacity to respond to new areas of employment as the economy diversifies. The segmented structure of the labor market and the several gender distortions need to be mitigated if labor productivity is to be maximized and government economic diversification policies successfully implemented. Investments need to be targeted to ensure that women are prepared to compete in new sectors of growth.

B. Gendered Characteristics of the Labor Market

1. Vertical Segregation

Women hold only 3% of management positions, despite being just under 50% of the workforce. Most notably, within the public service, 77% of lower positions are held by women despite their higher education (Agency of Statistics 2004). This reflects gender stereotypes in which women are regarded as less suitable than men to be decision makers and the reluctance of employers to promote women, who have been struggling to balance domestic responsibilities with work since social services were severely cut. Employees cite career interruption for child rearing as a reason for laying off women before men, or as a disincentive for promotion. These prevailing attitudes have to be overcome if women are to be more equitably represented in management (and better-paid) positions and accorded workforce participation rates that use their high levels of education. If women's potential is not maximized, these forms of discrimination against women will undermine the overall competitiveness of the labor market.

2. Horizontal Segregation

Patterns of employment established during the Soviet era are persisting, with women primarily employed in social or service sectors. Some of the gender stereotypes are reinforced through labor laws that identify specific types of jobs that women are not permitted to hold, e.g., those involving the use of heavy equipment. Table 4 shows that women make up a high proportion of employees in health care and education, but the proportion has fallen slightly between 1998 and 2003 as these sectors have continued to shrink. The proportion is growing in the hotel and restaurants sector, in agriculture, and of women as traders, but not in sectors of high growth such as industry or processing. Feminized sectors tend to have lower average salaries, which contributes to the overall average wage gap between men and women.

3. Growing Wage Gap

The average wage gap between men and women grew from 30% in 1990 to 38% in 2002, highlighting women's increasing segregation in the labor force, both vertical and horizontal, even

¹⁴ The "oil curse" is associated with overheating of the economy in one sector, which drives up the value of currency and labor costs, while decreasing the potential of other sectors to compete in global markets, especially where there is competition from countries where the cost of labor is lower—a possible scenario for Kazakhstan's agriculture sector.

as the economy has grown. As illustrated in Table 4, sectors with high proportions of women workers have significant wage gaps. For example, in 2003 women made up 75% of the hired workforce in the hotel and restaurant sector, but earned only 49% of the average salary of men. Wages also vary significantly between urban and rural areas: rural wages were less than half the average urban wage in 2002¹⁵ (World Bank 2004, I:18).

Table 4: Women in Employment and the Wage Gap

Sector	Proportion of Women in Total Employees		Average Monthly Salary (T)	2002 Wage Gap Between Women and Men (%)
	1998	2003	2003	2002
Agriculture, Forestry	24.8	28.5	9,567	75
Education	74.9	74.2	14,406	86
Health Care and Social Services	81.6	80.0	12,112	82
Other Social and Domestic Services	53.7	54.5	24,175	67
Hotels and Restaurants	70.2	75.2	40,012	49
Industry	35.5	31.7	10,481	69
Mining	27.0	22.2	45,594	70
Processing	39.6	36.8	24,823	
Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles, etc.	50.2	59.9	22,797	78
Generation and Distribution of Electricity, Gas, and Water	29.6	27.1	23,339	77
Transport and Communication	32.7	28.7	34,140	75
Financial Activity	66.4	64.6	55,207	59
Real Estate Operations, Leasing, and Consumer Services	45.5	44.7	36,624	
Public Administration	44.3	40.6 ^a	18,045	77
Construction	20.8	20.8	34,473	68
Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations		79.2		78
Fishery	28.6	15.8	9,567	77
Total	45.8	45.9	23,128	62

^a In its report to the UN Committee on CEDAW in 2005, the National Committee on Family and Women's Affairs reported 57% in 2003.

Source: Agency of Statistics, UNIFEM, and UNDP 2004.

The impacts of these gender-based distortions on the labor market include lower average incomes for women, which increases their vulnerability to poverty, and loss to the economy of highly educated workers. When taking into account the wage gap of 25% for agriculture workers, women earn close to the government's minimum living standard of T5,200. The wage gap is also a disincentive for women to seek employment, especially when little child care is available. The gap may also account for low investments to increase women's productivity in sectors such as light manufacturing and to correct additional inefficiencies in the labor market. Horizontal and vertical segregation also leads to inflexibility in the female labor supply. Women are reluctant to seek retraining in sectors where they may not be hired or promoted.

¹⁵ These statistics are not corrected for rural-urban price differences.

4. Unemployment

Unemployment rates are marginally higher for women than for men, especially for young women, and the discrepancy is greatest for the two poorest deciles. Thus, poor women have the hardest time by far finding a job, and earn the lowest incomes based on 2002 Household Budget Survey data (World Bank 2004, I:14). Unemployment rates are also significantly higher for women aged 25–54 years, who comprise 62% of total unemployed.

Unemployed women generally have a higher educational background than unemployed men. The difference is marginal: 10% of women compared with 9.5% of men. However, the difference in unemployment rate is much greater between men and women with vocational secondary education: 29.4% of women compared with only 20.6% of men (UNDP 2005a). This undervaluation of the educational capital of women is reinforced by high levels of miss-matched skills for women who are employed.

In addition, long-term unemployment is more frequent for women of child-bearing age, who find it difficult to reenter the workforce after caring for children. Employers' prevalent attitudes are that women are likely to leave again to have more children or are unreliable and will take more time off to care for children than men with equivalent education. Labor laws provide for maternity leave, which is costly to employers and reinforce these attitudes. Women spend more time than men finding employment and women's durations of unemployment are becoming longer. In 2002, women who had been unemployed for 5 or more years comprised 73.3% of the total unemployed population.

5. Mismatch of Skills in Employment

The skills of graduates from higher educational institutions are failing to meet the demands of the labor market, perpetuating unemployment among school leavers. In 2002–2003, 61% of the labor market demand was for workers with vocational training, whereas only 38% of all graduates were from vocational institutions. Especially in the rural sector, the less skilled are able to find jobs while the more educated are not (World Bank 2004). This illustrates a lack of mobility in the labor force caused by such factors as labor market segmentation, particularly for women. Women continue to seek higher education in the social and service sectors, where employment is falling and remuneration is low. Furthermore, even in rural areas, vocational training institutions tend to offer skills more useful for the urban and industrial labor market than in rural areas (UNDP 2004a, 34).

6. Self-Employment and Participation in the Informal Sector

Women make up 51.2% of all self-employed people, but self-employment is generally considered a stop-gap measure while seeking other forms of employment. About 42% of all women rely on self-employment, compared with 36% of men; in rural areas, 64% of women are self-employed in low-skilled agricultural activities. Women generally have poorer access to economic resources than men, and with comparatively less time for extra training, self-employment may not offer them a reasonable return on their labor. Several government programs seek to encourage self-

employment through provision of microcredit. Without other support, such as business training, or access to markets for products or services, it is difficult for many women to expand self-employed activities into feasible enterprises.

7. Unpaid Work

No clear data are available on the proportion of unpaid work. Time-use studies, as presented in the report, *Men and Women of Kazakhstan* (Agency for Statistics 2004), do not include unpaid work for own consumption. Poverty studies do not clarify whether the national accounting system takes into account production for own use within households. Nonetheless, Available data indicate that women have less spare time than men, as they spend more hours caring for children and other household tasks associated with cleaning and cooking.

The UN has estimated the market value of the unpaid sector as 70% of world GDP, and this proportion can be projected into national accounts. As women have primary responsibility for most domestic tasks in Kazakhstan, their contribution of unpaid labor to household survival is highly likely to be greater than that of men. The following aspects of unpaid labor have to be taken into account when considering ways to maximize benefits from women's participation in the paid labor market:

- *Opportunity costs of unpaid labor.* Unpaid labor limits the time women can engage in paid labor, and hence increases income poverty among them because it limits their capacity to find employment or other sources of income. It also reduces leisure time and has a significant impact on the health and well-being of women and an indirect impact on their children.
- *Disproportionate burden on poor women.* Subsistence production for household consumption requires unpaid labor from family members, particularly women, in post-harvest activities and preparing food. In poorer households, the time required is greater than in households that are able to purchase food.
- *Low productivity of unpaid labor.* Men's income is typically not invested in activities that are women's responsibilities. This limits women's productive capacity. Women may try to use household-based skills to earn income in the informal sector, for example in food preparation or selling the small surplus from subsistence production. This traps them in low-productivity activities.
- *A replacement/substitute for social services.* Women's unpaid labor is supposed to replace/substitute for services previously supplied by the state. Moreover, in times of crisis own-account activities such as subsistence food production tend to be done mostly by women. Over time, the use of unpaid labor can lead to a reduction in aggregate demand from low-income families, limiting economic growth in such communities as rural small towns (OECD-DAC 2005, 15).

C. Government Policies and Programs

1. Policies and Programs Addressing the Labor Market

Existing labor laws and government policies have focused on the protection of women as mothers and “weaker” workers, following previous approaches during the Soviet era. Legislation provides special protection for maternity leave and prohibits women from taking some jobs that are considered to be hazardous, such as operating heavy machinery. In practice, this legislation tends to reinforce gender stereotypes and discourages the employment of women, especially those of child-bearing age. It also ensures that women continue to be in low-paying, low-growth sectors of the economy. The CEDAW Committee particularly noted the need to revise this legislation and to create measures to discourage discrimination in the labor market and encourage affirmative action policies by employers. Such measures would improve women’s competitiveness in the workforce and make more efficient use of all human resources in the economy.

In 1999 the government ratified two International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions: the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (Convention 111) providing protection to employees to “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of... sex” and the Equal Remuneration Convention (Convention 100) requiring adoption of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. Draft labor laws are currently under consideration and several women’s organizations have expressed concern that neither CEDAW recommendations nor the principles of either convention have been fully incorporated into this legislation.¹⁶

The State Program and other strategic economic growth policies have noted the higher rate of unemployment among women. Other gender gaps, however, are not identified, such as horizontal segregation in the labor market. The 2003 Concept of Gender Policy notes the need to reduce discrimination in the labor market, but no specific programs to challenge gender stereotypes have been put in place. Employment creation programs have tended to focus on establishing microenterprises through the provision of microcredits and temporary employment with social or community services.

D. Gender Gaps in Access to Economic Resources

1. Rural Farming Areas

To improve productivity in the agriculture sector and reduce the high poverty rates in rural areas, the government launched a rural revival program designed to enhance the country’s “sociopolitical atmosphere and investment image” (ADB 2004a). Between 2004 and 2006, Kazakhstan will have set aside \$204 million for the construction of hospitals, roads, water conduits, and schools in rural areas. As part of its plans, the government also foresaw moving agriculture workers from economically depressed or environmentally hazardous regions to those with a stronger farm industry. The 3-year initiative is part of the 6-year State Program for the

¹⁶ Consultation with several women NGOs doing fieldwork, January 2005.

Development of Rural Territories that was approved in 2004. The initiative co-exists with a 3-year, \$1 billion campaign, initiated in 2003, to modernize the agriculture sector's infrastructure and agriculture inputs/technology. Recent reforms contained in legislation to permit private landownership make up the final elements in this program.

The legal status of property in marriage or the right to tenure of land owned by spouses is determined by civil marriage and family laws regulating matrimonial property relations. Land or allotments owned by spouses before marriage or gained as a gift or inheritance are the property (land tenure) of both spouses. Upon divorce, widowhood, or change of residence, women do not forfeit their right to land if they can legally protect their rights.

Until 2004 land was registered for use rather than ownership, starting with employees from collectivized and peasant farms in rural areas. No studies are available presenting a gender analysis of the distribution of these assets and data that are easily disaggregated by sex are not available. The Land Code of 20 June 2003 grants women the right to land, including agricultural land, on terms equal to those for men. However, most women cannot exercise their right to land for farming purposes.

Discussions with government officials, NGOs, international organizations, and rural people for this country gender assessment, clearly indicated that most land rights, particularly those reserved for agricultural use, are held by men. The Land Code (Article 101 [1]) and the Law Concerning Farming of 31 March 1998 (Article 8) state that land can only be granted to individuals with special agricultural knowledge or qualifications, or practical agricultural experience. Only two professional categories are identified as suitable for women. In practice, this has made it for easy district officials to refuse to approve registration by women, on the grounds that they are not competent professional farmers or entrepreneurs, despite their having previous professional positions or training or years of experience on state or collective farms.

A woman farmer, an experienced veterinarian who had worked in senior positions in collective farms, noted during interviews that she had great difficulty convincing local officials to register her current landholding in her name. She had to make several appeals with her husband, who holds an influential position in the community. This would have been impossible for most women (Box 1). A recent study in the Virgin Lands region estimated that only 3% of land is registered in the names of women (World Bank 2004). This has left rural women without secure access to land, even though they make up 29% of the workforce in the agriculture sector and 64% of rural women are self-employed, mostly in activities directly related to agriculture.

Box 1. A Woman Farmer's Experience

In 1998, Zhuldizai Salibekova a veterinarian by education and experience, convinced her husband and community leaders to let her take over a failing farm enterprise in Alexandria village, Astana. This village had previously operated as a single collective farm with a community of 300, but had been forced to release its registration because of debts of over T7 million.

The farming operation now employs 26 people working with animals in winter and up to 80 in summer, all from the village. Zhuldizai bought all the existing buildings so she could revive the bakery and local shop to provide basic supplies for the community. These operations and the farm office now employ a further 6 people. She has also recognized the need to maintain some of the basic social services to keep the village alive. The school now has 60 students, but can offer classes only to grade 9. The farm is providing food for school lunches to improve children's nutrition and their capacity to learn. Zhuldizai has also convinced the local authorities to reopen the small clinic and to keep the roads cleared of snow more regularly.

Many villages told stories of other communities where absentee landowners have ignored the social needs of the communities and conditions are deteriorating. The improvements in Alexandria have been attributed to the fact that the farm owner is a woman, who naturally understands that communities are more than just workers.

Zhuldizai is now making a profit from the farming operation and has paid off all the pre-existing debts. She has many plans for expansion but is still constrained by limited markets and poor mechanization.

Source: Interviews with the Kazakhstan country gender assessment team.

Following registration of land rights, most farmers continued to participate in cooperative operations, but many fell into debt as markets for products collapsed and supplies of inputs and new technologies became intermittent or overpriced. Some individuals (mostly men) were able to step in and accumulate land by taking over debts, and many of these absentee landlords now employ the former owners to work the land, but under insecure terms. Several landowners have hired migrant labor at much lower wages than they would have to pay nationals of Kazakhstan (reported to the country gender assessment team).

Access to new technologies and inputs remains very difficult for small farmers and particularly for women. The Agriculture Ministries Research Station outside Astana reported to the country gender assessment team that no women have attended their training sessions. Women face particular difficulties in accessing required resources, such as credit, as they are not "taken seriously" by bankers. Few women have been able to buy farm enterprises and own land.

2. Small Towns and Villages

Small, single-industry towns have been particularly hard hit by unemployment and limited opportunities for economic growth, and now have high levels of poverty. Men and most young

people are often forced to leave to find employment. Even in towns close to oblast centers, deteriorating infrastructure and communications have left communities behind growth areas. Women find it particularly difficult to survive in these communities, as housing and basic services are in very poor condition, health care services may be nonexistent, and families have to survive on what they can produce on the small plots of land surrounding their houses. Education levels, even of women, are generally much lower in these communities, and traditional values have kept women in their households and isolated from new ideas for income generation. These conditions have led to a high degree of dependence on government social welfare programs that may not be well suited to their needs, especially those for self-employment or business development.

Some NGOs have been working with government agencies to try to reduce poverty, especially for women in such communities. Box 2 describes the work of the women-led NGO, Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women's Support and illustrates how self-help groups have been an effective approach to understanding the needs of a community and building human potential within the local communities to address these needs.

Box 2. Self-Help Groups Build Human Potential

The objectives of the self-help group (SHG) approach adopted by the Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women's Support (TRCWS) are to enable communities to identify and articulate their own needs, develop social partnerships with local authorities, and increase their potential to influence planning and delivery of services in their community. As a means to encourage organization of SHGs, and to address the most pressing needs of members, the TRCWS also develops income-generating opportunities and supports them through microcredit services. TRCWS also offers legal awareness training, public health services, and a broad range of services through these SHGs in response to the needs that emerged from regular meetings.

In most cases, however, local authorities are not ready for a participatory approach to poverty reduction. Officials are used to receiving instructions from the central government on how to deliver social programs, without assessing their appropriateness to local conditions. TRCWS had to take a step-by-step approach to changing these attitudes, involving community members and government officials, to build trust and credibility for all three parties.

Now the citizens of the villages easily discuss their problems and the means to solve them, without fear of the *akim* (administrative head) of the village, and can influence village development. The lawyer of the regional Land Committee twice conducted field legal consultations on the application of the new Land Law; the director of the region's Electric Supervision Department promised to install five street lamps before 2006 and the *akimat* (local government) started improving three streets of the village: one is being asphalted, the other two are being covered with gravel.

In another example, the Village Public Council in Mambet needed a high-quality water supply. The *akimat* had been searching for funds to repair the water pipeline. Meanwhile, the Village Public Council decided to consult the local people for a solution of the problem. The people, decided that each household would contribute a definite sum of money and TRCWS, jointly with an international development organization, should also make a contribution. Thus, all three parties—the NGO, the governmental structure and the population at large—are engaged in solving the problem. Joint participation proposes both equal division of liability and control over further use of the equipment. It will also make the village people more careful about their water consumption.

Source: Interviews with the Kazakhstan country gender assessment team.

3. Urban areas

Poverty rates are lower in urban areas, but women still face difficulties in overcoming barriers to employment, developing their own small enterprises, or improving their own welfare and that of their families. The case study described in Box 3 provides insights into the experience of urban women through the transition period and options for addressing their specific concerns.

Box 3. Helping Women Help Themselves

In the area of Almaty a textile factory laid off 11,000 workers, mostly women, but these workers still had to pay for housing attached to the factory. Moldir, a nongovernment organization in Almaty, started by providing handouts, but then realized they had to assist the women to help themselves. So Moldir provided skills training and the women brought ideas for income-generating activities to the organization.

Moldir started work in 1999 with mothers and other women living in difficult circumstances following cuts in social benefits. Initially, the women were very disillusioned and did not want to join groups, but slowly they started to come forward as Moldir offered free services from a lawyer and psychologist as well as ideas for income-generating activities. Businesses started to work, but then the women wanted to address other issues that were affecting their ability to work and improve their family welfare, for example, the dirty and dangerous streets and the absence of a playground for their children. Other women, still employed, also came to Moldir with problems regarding their pension payments and concerns that their employers were not investing contributions properly. Moldir began to realize they had to work with both unemployed and employed women if the whole community was to improve.

In 2003, when the new microcredit law came into effect, Moldir had to register if it was to continue to provide financial services. It was decided that the work to support social concerns of women and to build self-reliance through the organization of self-help groups should continue under a separate organization from the one providing microcredit. Leading members of self-help groups could continue to run networks to build new community-based organizations. At the same time, a focused microfinance organization could be formed to provide the credit and technical support required by women who showed promise as entrepreneurs.

The network of SHGs is now linking with rural NGOs, such as the Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women's Support, and providing opportunities for rural producers to access markets through women traders in Almaty, as well as additional mentoring and support in areas like improving product quality and marketing potential. Moldir works closely with local governments to address legal and regulatory concerns of women entrepreneurs, and seeks ways to address the many problems that women members bring forward. Moldir is conducting research into job opportunities in urban and rural areas, conditions of work (personal safety of women, double work load, etc.) and women's inability to retain control over their own income within the household, so that these issues are better understood and strategic approaches taken to resolving related problems in the future.

Source: Interviews with the Kazakhstan country gender assessment team.

E. Social Protection Programs

Clearly, social security and welfare benefits reduce poverty. Social protection transfers are responsible for halving the poverty headcount, from 30% to 15% of the population by 2002 (World Bank 2004, I). Pensions also have a significant redistributive effect (World Bank 2004, I:33). The proportion of the state budget allocated to social protection increased sharply, from 5.4% in 2002 to 11.5% in 2003 as government resources available for poverty reduction increased (see Figure 3).

Social protection programs were extensively restructured during the transition period to bring the systems more in line with market reforms. Social protection is now targeted toward the poor rather than being universally available, and inefficiencies in delivery have been removed (USAID 2003, 9). Nationwide, 57% of the population benefited from at least one cash transfer, including pensions, for at least 1 month during 2002, with 66% coverage among the poor (World Bank 2004, I).

Despite extensive reforms, uneven distribution remains a concern: in the poorest oblast, Kyzylorda, only 14.7% received assistance, compared with 25% in Almaty City, the richest area. Responsibility for social welfare payments is decentralized to local levels and has tended to become a residual category in the spending patterns of oblasts. Now oblast administrations have the freedom to adjust benefits to a level commensurate with their revenue-raising capacities (i.e., higher payments in oil-rich oblasts), but for poorer areas—those with populations most in need of more support—payments have a low priority and in some cases have fallen into arrears. In 1999, for example, child allowances were 2 years in arrears in some areas. This has discouraged many of those most in need from applying for assistance.

Only limited sex-disaggregated data are available regarding recipients of social welfare benefits and it is not clear from policy statements whether specific differences in the needs of men and women are taken into account in the targeting of benefits. In 2003, 60.7% of recipients of state social benefits were women (UNDP 2005a). The following outlines the main programs currently delivered by the state.

1. Social Welfare Programs

The main poverty-focused program is the Targeted Social Assistance Program. Its eligibility criterion is a household's poverty status based on established oblast-specific poverty lines. Recipients are required to participate in work programs. This program reaches 30% of the lowest income quintile, and up to 40% in rural areas. However, in poorer oblasts, allocations for the program are limited, leaving many poor families without core income supplements. Direct income supplements are vital to women, who are most frequently responsible for managing meager household resources to feed the family. The Housing Benefits program is also vital to many families, particularly those living where the cost of housing is rising because the supply is limited. Housing poverty remains of concern in Kazakhstan, but the program is less effective than it should be in targeting the income poor (World Bank 2004, I:34).

In 2003 the one-time child birth benefits were introduced. These are paid to all mothers irrespective of income, and special allowances are paid to mothers with large numbers of children. Further benefits are being introduced to restore a comprehensive system of social protection for children. These benefits should be paid directly to mothers, as payments to mothers reach children more effectively than those paid to household heads as a general category. These measures are designed to address child poverty, but may also be in response to the falling birth rate by offering an incentive for families to have more children.

As adjustments and reforms are prepared, women should be carefully consulted to ensure that their specific needs as caregivers and managers of family resources are met. It is also important that welfare-based programs build self-reliance rather than dependence on state allocations. This requires careful coordination and targeting of programs, such as those promoting self-employment and income supplements.

2. Pensions

Old-age pensions cover the largest share of the population (36%, of which 67.5% are women because of differences in longevity) and accounts for more than half of total social protection spending. For many poor and middle-income families, pensioners are not considered dependents because they bring a regular cash income into the family. Pension amounts are linked to the Living Standard Assessment and women currently receive 80.2% of the average amount of pensions paid to men, a narrower gap (19.8%) than the average wage gap of 38%. Payments are considered to be adequate to keep pensioners above the poverty line, but dissatisfaction is widespread.

In 1998 a funded cumulative pension system, based on mandatory contributions, was introduced. Recent retirees receive pensions based on two systems, but the cumulative system will prevail gradually. Concern is growing that as the new cumulative system matures, women in particular will see a steep decline in the value of their pensions. This is because of their much lower accumulations, as they earn less and have to leave the workforce for child bearing/rearing periods. However, they will require greater total payments because of their earlier retirement age and greater longevity. This will increase the prevalence of poverty among elderly women and hence the demands on other welfare or minimum subsistence payments. Low pensions in the future will also discourage contributions from the self-employed and those in the informal sector (World Bank 2004, I). Return on the capital used to operate a farm or small business is much higher than that on pension savings, so many will opt to stay out of a pension system that imposes a high opportunity cost. These concerns must be addressed, as 64% of all women are self-employed and will remain in the informal sector without any protection if their social security needs are not met.

3. Unemployment Benefits

Responsibility for supporting the unemployed has also devolved to local governments in recognition of their ability to target low-income households and to understand local job markets. Depending on the region, a range of supports is available including retraining schemes and potential to access other programs such as microfinance and enterprise development schemes.

These programs seem to be a mixed success, depending to a large extent on the ability of the local government to maintain and deliver unemployment benefits and other social transfers. Many officials do not necessarily have the skills to implement some programs, such as those promoting small businesses. Almost half of local government officials questioned in the country gender assessment survey did not know about participatory approaches to understanding the needs of the unemployed or poor, or the benefits of self-help group methods.

In offices visited by the country gender assessment team, no monitoring has occurred of outcomes from programs taken up by the unemployed, particularly of whether training for entrepreneurship resulted in the establishment of viable businesses. Many unemployed people are placed with social or community organizations in return for unemployment benefits. These placements may improve their skills, but are often not converted into employment when the year of government support is over. In some areas, allowances are now paid in one lump sum for the year so this larger amount can be invested in a small business. But training and other business support are not always in place to back up this approach, and may leave beneficiaries without further payments for the remainder of the year after funds are exhausted. This is a particularly risky approach for unemployed women, who need several sources of support (e.g., care for children or sick family members) to take advantage of self-employment opportunities. Men also have better access than do women to other economic resources such as credit.

F. Recommendations

Labor market. Recommendations for enhancing gender equality in the labor market are as follows:

- Ensure that labor market policies respond more effectively to the needs of women as well as men through the articulation of a specific framework to understand gender differences in access to employment and to reduce unemployment levels. Special measures that should be considered in new policies are (i) introducing effective profiling mechanisms for unemployed men and women to facilitate the collection and analysis of data by gender, age, and socioprofessional group; (ii) providing equal access to services to all groups based on actual expenditure; and (iii) improving the targeting of programs to ensure that the most vulnerable people have access to appropriate services.
- Institutionalize capacity building for carrying out gender analysis within the civil service. Draw upon the growing international experience in gender analysis of policy impacts and budgets to provide lessons learned and good practices to be applied in Kazakhstan.
- Put mechanisms in place to ensure that labor laws and regulations protecting women from discrimination are enforced, including capacity building for inspectors, lawyers, and judges. All legal provisions that are premised on the notion that women are the primary caregivers of their family should be amended to challenge gender stereotypes (as recommended by the CEDAW Committee). Apply more actively the provisions of the international conventions ratified by the government regarding discrimination in the workplace on grounds of sex and

regarding equal pay for work of equal value, to ensure that women's rights are fully protected.

- Address mismatched skills through targeted programs to reskill or retrain people seeking to move into new sectors of employment. Offer the programs in ways that are sensitive to the needs of women as well as men (see also Chapter 6, section A).
- Create public campaigns and other proactive measures to break down job segregation (vertical and horizontal); include measures to encourage employers to hire women in senior positions, encourage women to take up training in nontraditional but more productive sectors, and encourage men to take more responsibility for child rearing and other household tasks.
- Give high priority to relieving women's double burden. The survival of many families has relied on women's absorbing cuts in social services while still having to earn incomes. This double burden limits women's competitiveness in the labor market. Time pressures also limit women's capacity to participate in other activities outside the household, such as community decision making. Initiatives that could be included are as follows: (i) Increase child care services. This was identified in the previous National Action Plan for Improving the Status of Women, but action has had limited impact. Investments are urgently required, for example, in preschool and kindergarten services. (ii) Implement public campaigns to challenge stereotypes of women only as mothers, to counter reluctance of employers to hire young women. (iii) Increase investments in basic infrastructure, such as domestic water supply, for which women are responsible. (iv) Analyze gender relations within households, to understand how best to address women's double burden (e.g., time use surveys).

Economic opportunities. Recommendations for increasing women's access to economic opportunities are as follows:

- Combine different types of programs to respond to the range of needs identified, such as microcredit coordinated with other types of support (e.g., child care, business information, and skills training) delivered through NGOs and community groups. Mechanisms for identifying needs should build the community's capacity to analyze its own situation and identify which combination of services is required from the government, their own resources, and from NGOs or elsewhere.
- Develop resource centers in rural areas that can be used to provide a range of information regarding poverty reduction programs, business development (including farming information), and services to address women's needs. The Ministry of Agriculture is establishing such centers and has agreed to incorporate resources for women from NGOs. NGOs can also seek funding from local or oblast-level governments. Cost recovery from services delivered through these centers could be used to sustain activities over a longer term.
- Increase women's awareness of their rights, especially to land. Additional services may be required to ensure that women can take up this right in an effective manner, including access to information and support (financial and legal support, with technical information on assistance with land reclamation, use of fertilizers,

and marketing). Women will need empowering to deal with government officials who do not normally interact with women farmers.

- Improve the monitoring of land reform processes by ensuring the collection of sex-disaggregated data e.g., on landholdings and transfers and the proportion of farm enterprises managed by men and women. Monitoring such indicators will enable program planners to identify areas where progress toward equitable access is slow. Moreover, monitoring can lead to improved targeting of special assistance to women to ensure that they can claim their rights.

Social protection. Recommendations for improving women's access to social protection are as follows:

- Monitor gaps in pension incomes between men and women and ensure that women are not penalized for their more limited opportunities in the labor market due to wage gaps and interrupted workforce participation from child bearing and care.
- Provide gender analysis training to government and NGO staff to ensure that social protection programs are planned, implemented, and monitored to meet the needs of men and women.
- Improve targeting and creation of innovative social assistance that builds independence through improved monitoring of existing programs, and ensures that findings from gender-sensitive monitoring are fed back into the program planning and implementation cycle.
- Reexamine the negative impacts of the erosion of social protection on women and vulnerable groups. Advocate as a long-term measure the reestablishment of affordable or free child care for those in particular need, through NGOs and community-organized childcare facilities.

Chapter 6 Gender Dimensions of Human Development

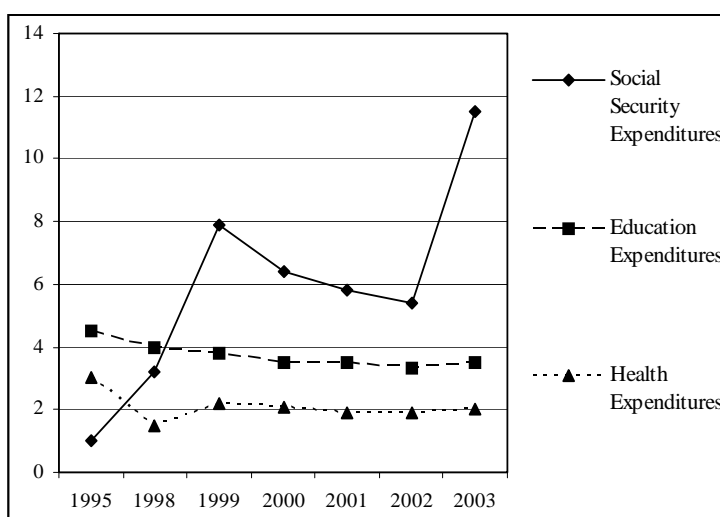
Investments in human capital were severely cut back after 1991 as the government struggled to control public expenditure. The health status of the whole population, and especially that of the poor, fell dramatically from the double impact of deteriorating services and increasing poverty. As the fiscal indicators have improved in the past few years, the government has started to increase expenditures in social security, in line with its focus on reducing poverty through targeted support payments. Yet increases in health care and education have only been marginal, as demonstrated in Figure 3. While social welfare payments are contributing to poverty reduction, the impact of long-term deficits in education and health care investment are turning out to be difficult to reverse, despite recent economic growth.

A. Education

1. Gender Gaps in Enrollment and Achievements

Kazakhstan has achieved universal primary education, with balanced enrollment of girls and boys (UNDP and GRK 2005). Girls comprised 49% of students enrolled in elementary and secondary institutions in 2003, and 57% in higher education institutions (Agency of Statistics 2004). However, the quality of education and overall achievements have seriously deteriorated as a result of continued low public investments. The “reverse gender gap” in educational achievements between boys and girls (as illustrated in Figure 4) is cause for concern.

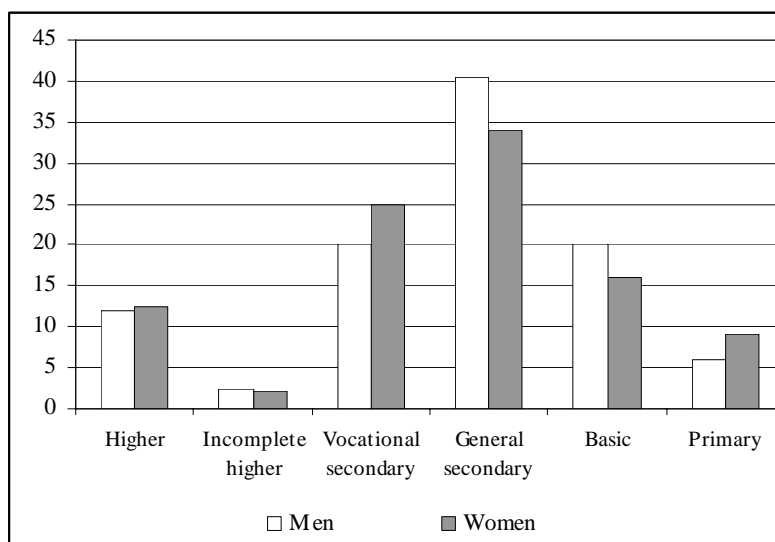
Figure 3. Proportion of Public Expenditure on Social Security, Education, and Health Care
(percentage of gross domestic product, 1998–2003)



Source: World Bank 2005a.

Although girls remain in school longer than boys, they cannot convert their higher education into well-paid jobs, resulting in an inefficient use of investments in education. In the agriculture sector (with 29% of its workforce female), education (74% female), and health care (80% female), the incomes of qualified workers do not compensate for their investment in education. These workers belong to the low-income group of the population, despite education levels that are normally associated with higher-income groups such as qualified workers in processing industries, trade, and public administration (World Bank 2004, I:36). Thus, higher education does not necessarily guarantee a decent standard of living for women.

Figure 4. Education Levels of Females and Males, 1999
(age 6 and above)



Source: Agency of Statistics 2004.

Overall access to education remains high, with a majority of the population living within 20 minutes' walk to a school facility (World Bank 2004, I:36). Rural areas are almost as well served as urban areas. However, the quality of education is falling: investments in capital equipment and infrastructure remain inadequate, and that is compounding low morale among teaching staff. In 2003, 31% of secondary schools needed major repair (UNDP 2004b, 64). Teachers' salaries are only 62% of the average national nominal wage and payment in some areas is frequently late, forcing teachers to find additional sources of income. The low salaries and status of teachers continue to discourage men from entering the profession, so gender stereotypes of women teachers are perpetuated. Teachers complain they do not have books or other basic resources, and with increasing frequency are forced to teach classes in which they have no training (UNDP 2004a, 34).

About half of rural schools provide only primary and incomplete secondary education, hence more rural than urban children have not been completing general secondary education (UNDP 2004a, 34). But this trend varies across oblasts: Kyzylorda, one of the poorest oblasts, has the highest secondary school net enrollment rate (World Bank 2004, I:22–23). An estimated 40% of total unemployment in rural areas among the two poorest quintiles are people who have at least completed high school. However, the highest achievement levels remain among the highest income quintile, with almost 40% reaching university level compared with less than 5% among the lowest quintile.

Access to Preschool Education. Less than 20% of children in the relevant age group attend preschool. In 1991, 47% of preschool children had access to preschool facilities. This figure dropped sharply, to a low of 11% in 1998, but recovered to 19% in 2003. However, it still does not meet the needs of working women in Kazakhstan. Many women are forced to leave their preschool children with relatives or women offering informal services of unreliable quality. Improvements in access to quality child care were identified as the most important priority for women in a survey in northern Kazakhstan villages (TRCWS 2004). Insecure economic conditions have forced women to earn incomes, but they worry about how to care for their children at same time. The government has committed to increasing spending on preschool institutions.

Promoting Gender Equality through Education. Boys have higher dropout rates than girls in secondary and higher levels of education. Furthermore, 3–4 times more boys than girls have to repeat grades (UNDP 2004b). Boys may be taken out of school periodically to assist in income generation for the family and fall behind with their studies. Boys and girls also select different types of education in rural and urban areas. A higher proportion of girls attend vocational secondary institutions and higher education (university) in urban areas, whereas more boys than girls attend general secondary institutions in rural areas, which means rural boys are more often leaving school ill-prepared for the labor market.

The government has recently acknowledged the potential of the education system to challenge gender stereotypes and help overcome discrimination faced by women in the home and workforce. The Concept of Education Development, approved in 2004, established an extensive plan to revise the curriculum in primary and secondary schools to eliminate gender stereotypes from textbooks. Gender equality courses have been developed for all levels of education, with the objective of eradicating gender biases at all levels, from preschool to university. These courses examine and question stereotypes of men and women and teach women's rights versus discrimination. This program, which is unique among CIS countries, is being implemented by the Women's Pedagogical Institute and has strong support directly from the President's Office.

A project supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) complements the aforementioned program and examines the feminization of the teaching profession and how this can be changed. The structure of the workforce is examined, and issues such as differences in teaching styles between men and women. Indicators have been developed to track progress on eliminating gender disparities in education, to track the impact of these new programs. The indicators can be used to comprehensively track gender sensitivity in education in areas such as appropriateness of furniture and equipment for both sexes, the classroom setting, relationships between staff and children, and content of educational materials. The President's Office intends to include these indicators in the new gender strategy. The challenge is to build the capacity of teachers and educators developing curricula to understand and address gender equality issues in their work and promote the status of women.

B. Health

Compared to other lower-middle income countries, health indicators in Kazakhstan are low and some health outcomes continue to deteriorate. Life expectancy of men and women is below

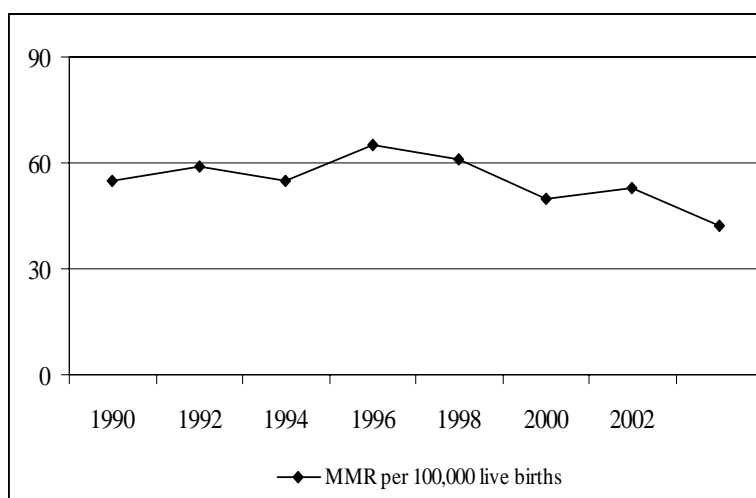
international averages and falling (62 years in Kazakhstan compared with 69 for other European and Central Asian countries), while infant mortality rates, if measured according to international definitions of live births, are higher at 81 compared with 33 (World Bank 2004, I:21).

1. Women's Health Status

The status of women's health has deteriorated significantly in the past 15 years, as reflected in maternal and infant health statistics, despite improvements in some regions of Kazakhstan. In the Presidential Decree regarding the National Program on Health Sector Reform and Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005–2010, the government acknowledged in 2003 that the index of women's health was only 20–30%. The decline in the average maternal mortality ratio to 42 per 100,000 live births in 2003 has not been steady (see Figure 5) and remains high in some areas, including Astana City. Some experts note that official data may be overestimating progress, as they are based on the Soviet definition of live births, rather than the internationally accepted norms (UNDP 2004a).

The maternal mortality rate should be taken as a proxy indicator for several factors contributing to women's health status. In a 2004 survey by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) regarding access to and quality of health services, 96% of women received support from a trained health professional during delivery. Nonetheless, one of the two major causes for maternal mortality in 2002 was obstetrical bleeding (33.9%). The second major factor was abortions, accounting for 23.8% of maternal deaths. These incidences could be considerably lower if related services were improved, e.g., better quality emergency obstetrical services and information about and availability of contraceptives.

Figure 5. Maternal Mortality Ratio, 1990–2003
(per 100,000 live births)



MMR = maternal mortality ratio.

Source: Agency of Statistics, UNIFEM and UNDP 2004.

Anemia prevalence rates had fallen to 61.1% of women in 2002, but rose again to 63.4% in 2003. Anemia is caused by iron deficiency and is linked to poor nutrition. Chronic anemia raises the risk of complications in childbirth, and debilitates women over the longer term as it limits absorption of nutrients and depresses the immune system. Only two thirds of pregnant women are under regular observation in early pregnancy and only 69.2% of mothers use antenatal care services. Use of the services is greater in urban areas (UNIFEM 2005). The low usage occurs even

though health care services are within a 30-minute walk for 85% of the population; but only 6% of the poorest quintile used these services, compared with 16% of the richest (World Bank 2004, I:22). This could reflect the fact that poor or inappropriate health services are offered at primary health care delivery points, but a significant proportion of the people report difficulties paying for health care (World Bank 2004, I:22).

Significant environmental hazards exist in some regions of Kazakhstan. Near the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Center and near the Aral Sea, more than 90% of women have chronic anemia.

Breast cancer is major cause of female mortality and a major challenge to improving women's health status. Incidence rates are 35.5 per 100,000, but 60% of women only applied for medical care in the later stages of the disease, leading to high mortality rates. The incidence is still much lower than in developed countries,¹⁷ but low survival rates point to the need for improved health-care-seeking behavior among all people of Kazakhstan and an accompanying and increased availability of affordable health care. Men and women have very different health-care-seeking behavior and opportunity costs for using health care services. Thus, to affect health care outcomes, different public health messages are needed for men and women. It is important to improve the general understanding of how to address high mortality rates among cancer patients, especially because of the high levels of exposure to radioactive materials in some areas of Kazakhstan.

The relatively high infant mortality ratios are closely linked to women's more constrained ability to care for children. Nutrition levels have deteriorated with poverty, and access to health care services for mothers and children remains low compared to similar countries. Infant and child health are a special concern: in poor oblasts such as Kyzylorda infant mortality rates are higher, at 19.47%, than in Almaty City, at 12.86% (Agency of Statistics 2004).

2. Government Policies and Programs

In the Program of Health Sector Reform and Development, 2005–2010, the government recognized the need to improve access to maternity and obstetric services by reopening facilities and establishing new centers. The government's focus on improving primary health care service points will benefit women. ADB has supported a program to improve the nutrition of mothers and children as part of a program to reduce iodine deficiency diseases and anemia. Most of these initiatives focus on improving maternal and child health. Attention also has to be given to resolving women's health issues that are not associated with reproductive functions, such as mental health and the health concerns of elderly women.

The 2005 MDG Report notes the need to ensure, through legislation, that all girls and women have access to high-quality education on sexual life and child birth, safe maternity and breastfeeding, nutrition, the dangers of substance abuse, and adverse environmental conditions that can have a lifelong effect on their health and well-being. It further notes the importance of

¹⁷ According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, incidence rates of breast cancer are 121 per 100,000 among white women in the United States.

increasing understanding of the multiple factors contributing to women's health and well-being in the longer term.

3. HIV/AIDS

Prevalence rates in Kazakhstan for HIV/AIDS are higher than among neighboring countries, at 0.14%. A recent World Bank study (2005b) predicts that if the rate of increase continues, the epidemic will slow economic growth by 11% annually. In October 2004, 22.8% of registered cases were women and unofficial sources indicate that the infection rate among women is growing. The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) of all types has stabilized, but official rates are still quite high (over 100/100,000). As the proportion of injecting drug users (IDUs) among HIV/AIDS cases has been decreasing and HIV prevalence rates have fallen among drug users, growth is coming from sexual transmission. HIV/AIDS infection rates are highest among the following groups:

- *IDUs*. The number of registered drug users increased fivefold between 1990 and 2003 in Kazakhstan, with women representing 17% of IDUs (World Bank 2005b).
- *Commercial sex workers (CSWs)*. Most of the estimated 50,000 CSWs are women. Sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS is increasing and the risk is particularly high among the 30% of CSWs who also abuse drugs. In a recent study, half of CSWs reported not using condoms, and only 20% of IDUs use condoms regularly. The sex partners of CSWs are at high risk.
- *Young women*. The UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that women aged 15–24 years are three times more likely to be infected than young men of the same age. These high risk levels are associated with lack of awareness about the risks of transmission and lack of control over the use of condoms. About 33% of all women and 17% of women aged 15–19 do not know how to prevent HIV transmission, and 27% of men and 65% of women do not use condoms during casual sexual intercourse. Moreover, high abortion rates also emphasize that more needs to be done to increase contraceptive use, particularly among groups at high risk for HIV/AIDS and STDs.

In 2001 the government established programs to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS. Awareness programs have been undertaken in all oblasts and large cities, with campaigns in mass media and educational institutions to increase understanding of the health risks from HIV/AIDS. Surveillance systems were put in place and available data are now sound. NGOs have funded innovative projects to establish “trust points” for IDUs and 21 AIDS centers. Government policies that ignore gender perspectives in their policy documents or programs, as noted in UN and World Bank materials, continue to undermine overall efforts to combat HIV transmission. A gender analysis be made of different risk behaviors of men and women is vitally needed, and the sexual partners of men in high-risk categories (e.g., labor migrants, transport workers, and soldiers) should be incorporated into prevention and care programs.

4. Status of Men's Health

The different health risks faced by women and men are highlighted in the discrepancy in life expectancy. The gap between rural and urban areas is significant: life expectancy is generally higher in rural areas, especially for men. In 2003 men's life expectancy at birth was 58.9 in urban areas and 62.9 in rural areas, whereas the difference for women is insignificant—71.9 years in rural areas and 71.2 years in urban areas (Agency of Statistics 2004). High levels of unemployment and anxiety regarding poverty place considerable stress on men, contributing to high-risk behavior such as alcohol abuse. Every fifth Kazakhstani aged 15–49 has tried a drug at least once in his/her life (UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2000). Such "curiosity" is five times higher among men than women (Zhusupov 2000).

High accident rates, stress-related disease such as hypertension, and attitudes that make men reluctant to seek health services are all concerns. Prevalence rates are also higher among men for tuberculosis and malaria: 56% of tuberculosis infections are among men and the morbidity rate gap between men and women is 13.2%. For tuberculosis treatment to succeed, the patient must complete a long course of medication, and men need different public health messages than women regarding health risks.

C. Gender-Based Violence

Violence against girls and women is prevalent in Kazakhstan. It takes many forms, including threatened or actual physical, sexual, or psychological harm. Gender-based violence occurs within households or in public spaces and is often linked to pressures from poverty and social dislocation. An estimated 60% of women in Kazakhstan have been physically or sexually assaulted (UNIFEM 2005). The impact on women's health and productive potential is considerable, and severely disrupts economic and social development.

The following data document the extent of gender-based violence in Kazakhstan and how some forms are increasing, based on official data of convictions (UNDP 2005a).

- *Violent crimes.* In 2001, 18% of such crimes were committed against women, rising to 21.3% in 2003.
- *Torture.* In 2001, 83% of such crimes were committed against women, falling to 79.8% in 2003.
- *Beatings.* In 2001, 66% of beatings were committed against women, rising to 70.5% in 2003.
- *Violent acts of a sexual nature.* In 2001, 59% of such acts were committed against women, rising to 65.2% in 2003.
- *Rape.* Approximately 1,200 rapes per year were reported in 2001–2004.

(Increases may be due to improved provision of support services to women, encouraging reporting to the police, rather than to other factors. Data of this kind should be treated as an indicator of types of crimes or trends rather than an accurate reflection of actual numbers of incidents, as social factors still strongly discourage women from reporting such incidents to police.)

Most women's NGOs, and others working to combat gender-based violence, note that a sharp increase in domestic violence took place during the transition period. Rapid social change and dislocation caused by rapid increases in unemployment and economic shocks put great pressure on families to survive. For many men, this led to alcohol abuse and depression, which are significant contributors to domestic violence. For many families, these pressures remain, despite the reduction in rates of poverty. The media reported that in 8 months during 2002, 89% of the 3,125 people killed were victims of domestic crimes, and a majority of the victims were women (UNDP 2005a, 47).

Of crimes and offenses against women, 68.5% are domestic crimes. This means that many incidents of gender-based violence take place in the public sphere. Harassment in all its forms, including teasing, inappropriate touching, and in some cases explicit sexual abuse, is believed to be prevalent in the workplace and other public places, but is rarely discussed publicly in Kazakhstan. An indication of this problem can be inferred from the common practice of women mentioning in job-wanted advertisements that they do not provide sexual services (UNDP 2005a, 47). Sexual harassment in the workplace restricts women's economic rights and opportunities and should be perceived and addressed as a contributing factor to discrimination against women in the labor market. In Kazakhstan, no legal definition of sexual harassment exists, nor is it specifically identified as a concern in any labor legislation.

1. Government Policies and Programs

Legal and social measures to change attitudes and the behavior of perpetrators, law enforcement officers, and the judiciary are being introduced as well as programs delivering support to victims of violence (including human trafficking). The scope of these programs remains limited and funding is not adequate. Economic dependence is a source of women's vulnerability to domestic violence. Therefore, increasing women's potential to find employment or start their own income-generating activities can reduce this vulnerability. Involvement in community groups can also offer abused women an opportunity to seek assistance and recover self-esteem, while providing access to economic resources.

Because no specific legislation covers domestic violence or marital rape, other criminal provisions must be used to prosecute domestic violence. The *2003 Country Human Rights Report* cites a Ministry of Interior study finding that 52% of women had reported domestic abuse, but only 30% of these cases were prosecuted (USAID 2003). This reflects the general reluctance of police to intervene in domestic violence cases unless they find the situation to be life-threatening. In 2002, however, a draft law on prevention and suppression of domestic violence was proposed. The draft law, which applies to spouses, relatives, and former spouses or partners who are living together, outlines definitions, social protection, and plans to prevent and respond to situations of domestic violence. NGOs and international organizations have been consulted and the bill has reportedly been included on the list for government consideration in 2007 (UNDP 2005a, 47).

For other forms of gender-based violence, the Criminal and Criminal Execution Codes were amended in 2003, increasing punishment and strengthening mechanisms of cooperation between law enforcement and other agencies dealing with violence issues. These reforms conform

to international standards, whereby rape cases are no longer private convictions that may lead to women victims dropping cases if they are intimidated or reluctant to provide testimony in court. As noted earlier, this legislation does not cover marital rape.

NCFWA has been implementing a campaign to inform the public about government programs on violence. The campaign is called the “Education of Children and Youth in Non-Violent Behavior” and is financed by UNICEF. To implement the campaign, NCFWA has been working with an NGO, the Research and Practical Center for Social and Psychological Services. The number of crisis centers for combating violence against women increased from 2 in 2000 to 38 in 2003, covering almost all oblasts. The centers offer services such as hot lines, counseling, and other support to victims of violence. In 2003 the hot lines received over 27,000 calls, of which 23% reported physical abuse and 22% emotional abuse. Most are run by NGOs, with support from international development partners. A basic limiting factor for women in taking action against perpetrators is economic dependence, and the crisis centers have limited scope to address these issues.

By instruction of the President, special divisions on violence against women have been established in the Ministry of Interior and all the oblasts. In 2004, 137 officers were assigned to these special duties (NCFWA 2005). These divisions are receiving awareness training through NGOs operating the crisis centers, which also facilitates close collaboration.

D. Recommendations

Education. Recommendations for improving gender equality indicators in education are as follows:

- Ensure that adequate resources are applied to the implementation of findings and recommendations from the work currently funded through international development partners to integrate gender equality considerations into the education system, including training teachers, revising textbooks, and halting the feminization of the teaching profession.
- Ensure that all programs to improve the quality of education, particularly in rural areas, take into account the specific needs of both boys and girls to facilitate equitable educational achievements. This can be promoted by encouraging the participation of more parents (including mothers) in the governance and management of schools to ensure that they respond to the needs of all students.
- Encourage girls to take up nontraditional vocational and technical training to improve their potential to access higher-paid careers, through initiatives such as provision of basic technical skills so girls may enter these programs, and challenges to gender stereotypes in materials promoting these training courses.
- Monitor key indicators identified through the government’s proposed gender strategy and other program areas of the Ministry of Education to track and address gender gaps in educational achievements, including concerns about lower enrollment and performance of boys compared with girls.

Gender-Based Violence. Recommendations to decrease the incidence of gender-based violence are as follows:

- Provide funding, which is urgently required, to establish more crisis centers, toll-free crisis lines, and shelters and safe houses for women. The funding should support a range of services, including financial, legal, medical, and psychological counseling, and skills-building and income-generating opportunities, so women are not forced to return to dangerous situations simply through economic dependence on men.
- Establish residential alcohol and drug treatment programs that take violent perpetrators outside their households. Provide trauma counseling and skills building for perpetrators and victims.
- Advocate the inclusion in school curricula, from primary level on, of awareness of the criminality of violence against women, women's rights to protection under the law, and the definition of sexual harassment and its consequences. Encourage boys to increase their respect for girls from an early age.
- Provide adequate funding and technical support to develop culturally appropriate outreach and public education and media campaigns to challenge widespread social attitudes and claims that "culture" and "family" traditions endorse violence against women. Bring into public debate issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Give priority to the adoption of the draft law on the suppression and prevention of domestic violence and to providing the resources necessary for all follow-on activities, such as sensitization programs so that the police and judiciary learn that domestic violence is a criminal act, not a private family matter.
- Support broad-based capacity building to ensure that judiciary and law enforcement agencies can apply new legislation.
- Support specialized sessions integrated into training programs for all health care professionals so they can identify and address the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence. Health care professionals also require training to prepare and give evidence in court as new laws are enforced. Similar skills are required for working with victims of other forms of sexual abuse and harassment.

A. Women's Involvement in Political and Other Forms of Decision Making

Attitudes concerning gender roles within the family and household are carried out into the public sphere and lead to discriminatory practices, reinforced—usually unintentionally—in policies and practices of public institutions. If discriminatory practices in public institutions are to be challenged, women will have to participate equitably in political and economic decision making. In the public sphere, women's participation in the workforce has not changed significantly from the Soviet to transition periods, but women's direct participation in economic and political decision making has fallen dramatically. Consequently, the potential for women to influence constitutional and legal reforms to reflect their needs and interests more effectively has been limited, making it more difficult for them to challenge the emerging post-transition gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices.

As noted in Chapter 3, the present Kazakhstan Constitution and recent legal reforms are founded on principles that stress equity of access for men and women to the benefits of economic growth. But in practice the proportion of women in all forms of decision making is low, particularly in comparison with the Soviet era. Significantly, the Constitution does not contain a definition of discrimination against women,¹⁸ making it difficult to challenge the impact of discriminatory behavior on women through debate or judicial means. The Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women has been drafted and consultation with national stakeholders carried out, but it has yet to be presented to Parliament for approval. By decree of the President in 2002, the position of Ombudsman on Human Rights was established, and a gender specialist is included in the Ombudsman's staff to facilitate investigation of discrimination cases. UNDP is developing a project to establish an equal rights office for the Ombudsman.

The level of participation of women in government decision making was reported to the 49th Session of UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2005 as follows:

- *Women in Parliament.* In 2003, 568 women deputies (17.1%) were elected to legislative bodies, a drop from 19.2% in 1999: 11 women deputies (9.5%) sit in the Parliament—8 (10.4 %) in the Lower House (*Mazhlis*) and 3 (7.7%) in the Senate (*Maslikhat*). For the first time in 2003, a woman was elected Deputy Prime Minister.
- *Local decision-making bodies.* More women are active at lower levels of government, because political responsibilities are carried out closer to home, but they still find it hard to have their voices heard. Five women are vice governors (deputy akims) of oblasts. Women make up 17% of regional deputy akims, 11% of the akims of rural and village districts, and 18% of the deputy akims in rural and

¹⁸ As noted by the United Nations (UN) Committee on CEDAW in response to the report on CEDAW implementation from the Republic of Kazakhstan presented in 2002.

village districts. In Almaty and Astana the share of women represented is higher than the national average, but variation between urban and rural districts is minimal.

- *Women in executive positions.* In compliance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Public Service,” a new model of public service has been used in Kazakhstan since 2000. The principle of equal rights to access public service and promotion according to abilities and professional training forms the basis of the model. The proportion of women government staff has steadily increased, from 56% in 2000 to 58% in 2004. Women hold about 22% of positions as heads of executive bodies and 11% of the judiciary. On the instruction of the President, every ministry, agency, and oblast administration has established a reserve of women specialists to be promoted into decision-making levels.

The UN CEDAW Committee has urged that legal measures to increase the participation of women in all forms of political decision making be implemented through new initiatives. Women’s leadership skills in political decision making have been developed through projects supported by international development partners such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) project “100 Percent of Women in Politics” and the “Women’s Leadership and Network Programs,” through which 2 conferences and 11 seminars and workshops were held for the most active women with a demonstrated interest in politics, but much remains to be done. Women’s limited access to financial resources is a further constraint to running for political office (UNDP 2005a, 44).

B. Civil Society and Women’s NGOs

Civil society organizations play a vital role in shaping norms that influence gender relations and assisting women to understand and claim their rights. NGOs are taking a growing role in delivering social services in most developing and transitional economies. More than 4,500 NGOs have been established in Kazakhstan since independence, including 150 NGOs that specifically address women’s concerns (UNDP 2005a, 9).¹⁹ Moreover, about 85% of NGOs are headed by women. This high proportion may be explained by two main reasons: first, women are more actively involved than are men in addressing social and human development concerns, feel marginalized from centers of decision making, and are the majority of the unemployed even as they have to meet the needs of their families; and second, the noncommercial sector is financially unattractive to men (UNDP 2003).

1. Relationship between NGOs and the Government

The relationship between the government and NGOs has evolved during the transition period in Kazakhstan. The primary emerging objective is creating trusting partnerships that facilitate the delivery of quality services on behalf of the government, especially at the community level. With limited powers devolved to village-level governments, NGOs are less able to be

¹⁹ Lists of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and resources are available through CASDIN (a Russian language web site www.casdin.freenet.kz) and www.cango.net. UNDP also maintains databases on NGOs active in Kazakhstan on www.undp.kz.

involved in mediating or representing community interests at this level than is the case in some other countries. However, NCFWA does consult regularly with interested NGOs as key policy documents and laws are developed. Leading women's NGOs noted that they take care to collaborate with village- and district-level governments as they develop programming. The head of the Department of Internal Policy for Taldy-Korgan Oblast noted in an interview that she receives good information regarding the needs of women in the region through her meetings and consultations with the Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women's Support. She also noted the importance of using strong organizations such as this to deliver a combination of programs to unemployed women.

The Concept and Program of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2003–2005 sets out the legal framework and requirements for consultation between the government and civil society. The landmark Civil Forum was held on 14–15 October 2003 in Astana, with the President, government bodies, and NGOs participating. The main objective of the Civil Forum was to identify priorities in state support to the nongovernment sector to create conditions for sustainable development of NGOs as part of the civil society (NCFWA 2005). Recent legislation has provided a clearer regulatory framework for the provision of credit and other financial services through NGOs to strengthen and ensure transparency in the emerging microfinance services sector.

Many women's NGOs have been involved in key areas of promoting women's well-being, including directly supporting women victims of violence, promoting women's economic development, and helping to implement certain government poverty reduction programs such as the microcredit facilities targeting rural women.²⁰ However, some stakeholders argue that some of the NGOs have been established simply to implement government programs and do not have a strong analytical grasp of gender equality issues or the skills and commitment to work in a participatory manner at the community level.

Several successful NGOs are operating in Kazakhstan, but many government officials are unfamiliar with their potential to implement effective poverty reduction programs. Some NGOs and microfinance organizations are building networks to expand the scope of services available to the community and complement government poverty reduction programs (see Box 3).

C. Recommendations

The six main recommendations to improve gender equity in governance are as follows:

- Make the public aware of the importance of increasing women's political participation. Civil society in particular has an important role to play in increasing awareness within political parties and among voters. This will require working

²⁰ A focus group discussion with Astana-based NGOs and the country gender assessment team included representatives of the range of issue-based NGOs, including those working on children and women's rights, consumer rights, legal education, support to women farmers, single mothers, pensions, the disabled, women with large families, and women's environmental sustainability concerns.

with men to create an environment where women's priorities are seen as credible and are given attention.

- Increase women's awareness as voters of their role in making elected officials accountable to them regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, and ensuring that their specific needs are addressed in policies and programs.
- Increase the capacity of elected officials—especially women, but also men—to address gender equality and women's empowerment issues (UNDP has funded some initiatives).
- Strengthen the capacity of local government officials to consult with women and incorporate a gender perspective into the budgeting and planning process at all levels of government (e.g., gender analysis, gender budgeting, and gender-sensitive indicators for program monitoring), to ensure that the needs of women are addressed.
- In the public sector, implement employment equity programs that demonstrate leadership in creating workplace environments where women can reach decision-making positions.
- Increase support for community mobilization and consolidate the impressive experience of some NGOs with building community self-reliance through self-help groups and community-based organizations.

A. Migration and Human Trafficking**1. Migration**

An impact of unemployment and poverty in Kazakhstan and the surrounding countries has been a rise in labor migration, which is linked to the increasing incidence of human trafficking. The outflow of labor migrants is primarily to the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation for employment, but labor migrants from surrounding countries constitute a net inflow. Official Ministry of Labor and Social Protection statistics showed 4,810 migrant workers in Kazakhstan in 2003 (Nugmarova 2005)²¹ but this is considered to be a vast underestimation, as the many who work without visas are not included in the statistics. Significant numbers of illegal workers are employed in construction and agriculture, where migrants receive lower wages than Kazakhstan citizens and may be forced to work under poor or illegal conditions. Kazakhstan's transportation system also provides transit routes for thousands of migrant workers from surrounding countries to Russia and on to the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Europe.

Immigration controls at airports are now at international standards. But in several communities along the borders, particularly in the south with Uzbekistan and the north with Russia, thousands of people cross the borders daily to buy from markets or exchange goods, and no visas are required. Illegal migrants regularly cross these borders to find whatever work they can, using highways and regular transport once they have crossed the border and then disappearing easily. The border with Uzbekistan is particularly porous.

Many people are moving from rural to urban areas in search of employment. Numerous rural communities are very isolated and employment or alternative income-generating opportunities are extremely limited. Young people do not see a future for themselves in these communities. Pockets of poverty are formed in the wealthier urban centers such as Almaty or Astana when these young people, who are inexperienced and often unskilled for the jobs available, have difficulty finding regular work in urban centers. Employers and contractors go to find casual laborers in areas of Almaty where young men congregate. Young women who have difficulty finding casual work are easy prey for human traffickers. There are about 50,000 CSWs in Kazakhstan.

Labor-recruiting agencies assist migrants to travel out of and into Kazakhstan and are licensed for operation under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, which is mandated to regulate labor standards and migration. Regulations are being reviewed to ensure that employment agencies take greater responsibility to protect the rights of migrants working in Kazakhstan and outside the country.

²¹ No official sex-disaggregated data are readily available in English regarding migration flows.

2. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking,²² a gross violation of human rights, has adverse implications for economic efficiency and growth and the regulation of labor markets. It deprives countries of origin of their precious human capital and is an important element in economically and socially corrosive systems of corruption and illegal activities.

Kazakhstan is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking and evidence is growing of internal rural-to-urban trafficking. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) noted that 139 trafficking cases were reported to them in 2003–2004 (IOM 2005): 40 involved people coming into the country (3 from Kyrgyz Republic, 3 from Tajikistan, and 34 from Uzbekistan); 85 involved trafficking out of the country (of which 71 were women and 14 men); and 14 were in the region. IOM assisted 69 trafficked people who returned from other countries—57 of them were women. At the Kazakhstan border in 2003, 84 people were stopped with illegal or irregular papers; 56 were women (information from Border Control Department data).

Poor women are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked, especially those already uprooted through a search for employment. The demand is strong inside and outside Kazakhstan for trafficked women for commercial sex work and for domestic and factory work. Traffickers meet this demand by seeking out women and other vulnerable people (including children and already illegal male migrants) who are desperate for work and easily misled or coerced into dangerous situations. Ethnic conflicts in the region have also created internally displaced people who are vulnerable to traffickers' promises of better work and prospects. Some victims understand the risks they face but have few or no other options because of unemployment and pressure from family to find income. People most at risk for trafficking include the following:

- *Women.* The majority of trafficking cases involve women, especially for sexual exploitation. CSWs are particularly at risk of being moved on by pimps or brothel owners and losing all control over their lives.
- *Young people.* The 15–34 age group is at very high risk. No good data exist regarding children.
- *The poor.* Most trafficked people are poor and lack funds to travel; hence they are prone to accept offers of assistance from strangers.
- *Educated and unemployed people.* A high proportion of trafficked persons had completed secondary education but could not find employment.
- *Illegal migrants.* Many labor migrants overstay their tourist visas. They then become vulnerable to threats of deportation and can be more easily coerced within Kazakhstan or moved out to other countries.

²² For the purposes of this paper, human trafficking means the recruitment, transportation, purchase, sale, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by threat or use of violence, abduction, deception, coercion, or debt bondage, for placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in forced labor or slavery-like conditions, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original act of coercion.

Because no visas were required for CIS citizens to enter Russia until recently, traffickers have well-established transit routes through Kazakhstan. Groups pass into Russia through northern Kazakhstan and then move on to a further transit point, such as Egypt or Turkey. The trafficked person may then be purchased for work in Israel, Europe, or North America or may remain in Russia. Women have been picked up at the Almaty international airport traveling to the United Arab Emirates with false papers. One victim was returned from Bulgaria where she had been held for 6 years. She had left Kazakhstan at the age of 14 under a false passport prepared by the traffickers. Women and some men are convinced to travel with traffickers on the promise of a high salary in United Arab Emirates or Europe. The trafficked cases that have been investigated use identical transit routes through Kazakhstan and means of transportation as regular labor migrants, legal or otherwise.

Some trafficked people find their way to a Kazakhstan Embassy, are rescued by other individuals, or manage to contact someone at home. However, it is often difficult to organize repatriation, as in some countries trafficked people face charges as illegal migrants or may be suspected of involvement in other criminal activities. Authorities may also wish to detain victims to act as witnesses against trafficking perpetrators.

Trafficked people have usually been physically and mentally abused and require support and counseling. They may face discrimination and difficulties reintegrating into their home communities. Economic circumstances may continue to be very difficult and cases of re-victimization are numerous. Special programs are required to address each of the steps from rescue to reintegration, including the prosecution of perpetrators. Preventive measures are needed to reduce vulnerabilities to trafficking, ranging from targeted poverty reduction activities to mass campaigns warning those most at risk of the dangers traffickers present.

The government, in partnership with IOM and several NGOs, has taken up programs and other initiatives that start to address this multifaceted problem. The Minister of Justice now heads a new special interdepartmental commission on combating illegal export, import, and trafficking in people. A national plan was approved for combating, preventing, and suppressing trafficking during 2004–2005. The current Criminal Code is being revised to strengthen antitrafficking legislation. In 2004, 27 instances of trafficking were investigated, 14 cases were prosecuted, and 12 traffickers were convicted (US Department of State 2005, 133). However, NGOs report that the police have few resources and insufficient equipment to collect evidence and suspects may escape across the international border.

Prevention activities have included public service announcements and campaigns in schools raising awareness of the risks of traveling abroad for employment. Employment and travel agencies have to be licensed to operate, and the government inspects them to ensure they are not assisting traffickers. IOM has been supporting efforts to improve national legislation, promote support for victims of trafficking, and train law enforcement officers in combating trafficking.

Several NGOs are working on prevention and rescue programs with the government under IOM auspices. NCFWA was a national coordinator with 19 NGOs that arranged hot lines in all oblasts. In 2004, the Union of Crisis Centers was established; its member NGOs run nationwide

trafficking hot lines and shelters to assist all types of victims of violence, including trafficking. Some shelters have closed due to lack of financing. Coordination between NGOs and local law enforcement agencies has improved (US Department of State 2005).

Many challenges remain, as noted by the US State Department in the 2005 *Trafficking in Persons Report*. Few traffickers have been punished and corruption remains a major barrier to achieving convictions even if trafficked people are willing to file cases. The revisions to the Criminal Code are not sufficient to ensure that traffickers can be prosecuted in all cases, and they generally have sufficient money to bribe investigators.

B. Gender, the Environment, and Infrastructure

1. Environmental Conditions

Kazakhstan is faced with serious environmental degradation resulting from desertification and poor or irresponsible natural resource management, such as the crisis in the Aral Sea region and contamination from the nuclear testing stations established during the Soviet era. Women of reproductive age who were exposed to radioactivity are now suffering significant health problems. The problems include a much higher than average incidence reproductive organ cancer and of birth defects. This causes distress and puts heavy burdens on the children, the women, and the caregivers.

The poverty that has resulted from severe loss of natural resources in the Aral region has had significant impacts on women and children: the highest rates of anemia and iodine deficiency are reported from this region. Anemia damages immune mechanisms, leading to chronic illness, low productivity, and a high risk of complications in pregnancy and after, for the mother and the infant. Insufficient food is generally the cause, but severely depleted or polluted soils produce nutrient-poor food, worsening malnutrition. Women in these regions are weakened by poor nutrition and anemia, and are responsible for caring for chronically sick children. This places additional pressure on their physical and emotional health.

Special programs to combat these conditions have been established at the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site and in the Aral region, but the development indicators remain low, with significant gender gaps showing that women find it more difficult than do men to overcome the effects of extreme environmental degradation. It is vital that women be encouraged to participate in the design and implementation of any programs that address these significant environmental disasters in Kazakhstan.

2. Water Supply and Sanitation

The 2005 MDG Report notes that “ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation is one of the most urgent and problematic goals of Kazakhstan’s national policy due to the pollution of water sources and the unsatisfactory technical condition of water supply systems” (UNDP and GRK 2005, 46).” With rehabilitation schemes being implemented all too slowly, the MDG targets associated with access to water supply and sanitation are not likely to be met by 2015.

At one time, an estimated 80% of all rural villages had a piped potable water supply. This coverage is now officially reported at 40%; in reality, however, coverage may be substantially less and the number of working systems provides less than 35% coverage (ADB 2003b). The poor oblasts of Akmola, Karaghandy, North Kazakhstan, and South Kazakhstan are especially badly off: only about 30% of villages have a reliable water supply. The average amount of drinking water delivered to the population is being reduced by 3–5% a year because of the continued deterioration of the existing infrastructure. Funds with which to carry out routine maintenance are not available, and repairs are mostly performed on an emergency basis. As a result, tens of thousands of people every year lose their piped water supply. The rate of new construction is also very slow.

The lack of adequate water supply and sanitation services has a significant negative impact on the health and overall capacity of rural communities, and especially on women. Women retain responsibility for finding and managing water resources for household use. Many are forced, with their children, to walk long distances to find water, which may be from untreated and contaminated sources. Until recently, many villages maintained public bath houses (*banyas*), which have now largely fallen into disuse due to the lack of water supply. This has led to an increase in skin diseases and other conditions associated with lack of cleanliness. Few working wastewater collection systems exist in rural areas, or any acceptable level of human waste disposal. Insufficient and polluted drinking water supplies, combined with poor sanitation and hygiene practices, are directly linked to the high incidence of waterborne diseases. This also affects women significantly as they have to care for the sick and find cash to pay for health services, while themselves suffering from the effects of disease.

Government schemes for rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation services are being put in place, but implementation is slow and tends to follow more traditional, centrally planned approaches; the participation of local governments and communities is limited. This results in continued problems for operation and maintenance and limits the potential for implementing more sustainable user-driven schemes. It also means that the specific needs and priorities of women may not be reflected. ADB and other international development partners have funded in the Northern Region of Kazakhstan a rural water supply and sanitation project that adopts an approach engaging local communities (including a minimum of 50% women) and the private sector with local government officers in the design, operation, and maintenance of rehabilitated infrastructure. The government is intending to replicate this approach in other regions of the country.

3. Transport

Improving international transit corridors (north-south and east-west) to address regional linkages, upgrading railroads, and developing rural feeder links to the national trunk road network are high priority in Kazakhstan. Little analysis has been done on the impacts of improvements in transportation systems in Kazakhstan; but, in other countries, increased traffic volumes have been accompanied by increased demand for support services (food, accommodation, and vehicle services), bringing additional income opportunities to communities along the routes (a high priority for men). The flow of goods in and out of communities will improve as will access to health and other services (a high priority for women). In the design of transportation systems, both men and women should be consulted regarding their specific needs.

Along with opportunities come less welcome impacts: with increased traffic, demand increases for services such as CSWs. Poor and desperate women in communities along rural road corridors are tempted into this form of work, which often leads to coercion, violence, and even human trafficking and has a high risk of infection from STDs such as HIV/AIDS. Thus, a gender analysis of the impacts of increased vehicular traffic, economic opportunities, and mobility should be taken into account and appropriate services and awareness raising regarding potential risks offered. Cost-benefit analysis should incorporate more than income measures to ensure that social development benefits are accruing in an equitable manner.

C. Recommendations

Human Trafficking. The following recommendations pertain to eliminating or reducing human trafficking:

- Increase, on an urgent basis, the government's understanding of the current dynamics of human trafficking in Kazakhstan. Put mechanisms in place to track migrants, follow up on the experience of trafficking survivors, and seek experience from other countries.
- Improve the monitoring of labor regulations inside Kazakhstan to limit potential for abuses and trafficking of migrant labor.
- Strengthen the process of prosecution in areas such as witness protection, provision of support to victims, revision of laws, and training of police and prosecutors.
- Improve the collection and dissemination of trafficking data through a strengthened network of NGOs and government departments.
- Integrate trafficking prevention activities into infrastructure and community development programs. In the design of infrastructure projects, for example, consider how opening up the flow of goods and services across international borders will also influence the flow of migrants and other factors that intensify risks of trafficking.
- Make safe migration guidelines and information about risks more available to migrants, and integrate the specific risks women face (e.g., sexual harassment and trafficking) into these messages. Experience in pre-departure training programs in other countries can offer good practices to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and other organizations providing support to migrants.
- Strengthen awareness and capacity of government officials in border areas and in relevant ministries, including the Foreign Ministry, so they can offer protection and support to migrants, and so that sensitivity to specific concerns or experiences of women are increased.
- Countering trafficking activities should not be mainstreamed as an issue of concern into many areas of work.

Environment. Recommendations to mitigate or avoid deleterious environmental impacts are as follows:

- Increase research on and understanding of the impacts of environmental degradation on men and women in areas such as health as well as economic security.
- Ensure that women participate in any decision making concerning programs to mitigate impacts of environmental degradation—natural or otherwise—to ensure that their concerns and priorities are met and that they have equitable access to any resources available.
- Ensure that social impact monitoring indicators for environmental programs are disaggregated by sex and track differential impacts on men and women.

Water Supply and Sanitation. Recommendations to improve water supply and sanitation by increasing women's participation are as follows:

- Ensure that women participate in planning of all future water supply and sanitation projects and that gender issues are taken into consideration as priorities are set. Access to household drinking water must be balanced against improved management of water resources for agriculture. This should involve consultation on a regular basis with NGOs that are led by women and that work in rural areas, to identify emerging issues of concern to women.
- Ensure that women participate in community-based water management committees, training opportunities, etc. Participating in community water resource management can provide opportunities for women to build their skills and experience in decision making and encourage more women to become involved in a wider scope of resource management activity.

Transport. Recommendations to improve women's participation in and benefits from the transport sector are as follows:

- Incorporate social as well as economic performance indicators into projects and other assessment frameworks, to determine nonincome poverty impacts. Increase opportunities to raise women's priority needs and benefits and hence the potential for women to influence the selection of priorities in future planning (i.e., contribute to women's empowerment).
- Work with local NGOs familiar with the risks presented by human traffickers to build resistance against the risks among those most vulnerable, for example, poor women and CSWs.
- Build a combined information campaign to encourage safe sex and counter trafficking in project areas (i.e., along proposed road routes and in rest areas for transport workers) to raise public and official awareness and understanding of these issues. To implement the campaign, collaborate with local NGOs, with support from relevant national NGOs in order to build local NGO capacity.

- Raise awareness among government and law enforcement officials of the potential impacts of increased volumes of vehicles and flow of goods and migrants, particularly regarding human trafficking and health risks from mobile populations (e.g., transport workers).

A. Focal Areas of the Country Strategy and Program Update

ADB's Country Strategy and Program Update (CSPU) for 2005–2007 (ADB 2004) identifies focal areas of private sector development for inclusive growth, human development, environmentally sustainable development, and regional cooperation. The continued inflow of oil revenues has increased the government's own resources significantly. The need for external borrowing for financing investment priorities has decreased accordingly and this trend is expected to continue in the medium term. The private sector remains a key engine for diversification of the economy and support from ADB has been identified for infrastructure facilities, institutional reforms, and mechanisms such as lines of credit to support small and medium enterprise development. Support for human development will continue through water supply and sanitation rehabilitation in rural areas; technical assistance that builds on previous ADB support for the development of preschool education (a vital priority for women), distance education, and quality vocational and technical education; and support for monitoring poverty reduction programming. ADB is also committed to supporting regional cooperation.

ADB's long-term strategic framework and policy statements reiterate the need to take gender equality concerns into account as crosscutting themes in strategies and programs. ADB's lending and technical assistance operations and commitment to continued policy dialogue on poverty reduction provide some concrete opportunities to mainstream gender at both the strategic and the operations levels. Ensuring that women participate fully in project activities can give them equitable access to economic opportunities, improve their capabilities (access to improved education and health care services), and contribute to decision making regarding project and community development (empowerment).

The following sections provide a general framework for gender mainstreaming activities and suggestions for strengthening project interventions in 2005–2007 CSPU sectors of focus. The aim is to support the narrowing gender gaps and empowering of women so they can benefit equitably from ADB operations.

**B. Gender Mainstreaming in Strategic Program Areas
Identified in the Country Strategy and Program**

This section examines sectors of focus from the Country Strategy and Program (ADB 2003) to identify gender entry points and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming. It begins by listing mechanisms that have proven essential in project design and monitoring²³ so that gender

²³ For further details regarding lessons learned in gender mainstreaming in Asian Development Bank (ADB) operations, see the series of four country gender assessment reports published in 2005–2006, including, in addition to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, and the synthesis report.

mainstreaming effectively contributes to achieving results, particularly those associated with poverty reduction.

The following are general recommendations for strengthening gender mainstreaming in projects:

- Carry out a detailed social and gender analysis during the project design phase to systematically identify constraints to men and women participating in and benefiting from projects. Include recommendations as to how these constraints might be addressed.
- Develop a gender action plan (GAP) or gender strategy for all projects. The GAP should include specific realistic targets, linked to loan objectives, through step-by-step progress. Allocate adequate resources (financial and human) for implementing the GAP or gender strategy. The gender targets should be incorporated into the overall project logical framework, with objectives and corresponding indicators identified to ensure systematic monitoring and reporting on these aspects of the project's implementation, including the collection of sex-disaggregated baseline data.
- Include gender capacity building in the GAP or gender strategy to ensure that the executing agency and project team members are familiar with the rationale for mainstreaming gender concerns and understand how they can contribute to and promote gender-related project targets. ADB Kazakhstan Resident Mission staff can also benefit from gender training to facilitate monitoring of projects and awareness of gender concerns that need to be incorporated into policy dialogue.
- Support and encourage the employment of women on project management teams, particularly at senior levels, and ensure that all employment opportunities are available to women on an equitable basis. Make available whatever special facilities (e.g., separate toilets and safety gear of suitable sizes) and conditions of employment are needed to ensure that women can work on an equitable basis with men.
- Ensure wage parity for men and women staff on project teams and under contracts.
- Ensure that a gender specialist is contracted to participate in regular ADB monitoring of project progress to facilitate identification of constraints to the implantation of the GAP or gender strategy and resolution of problems as they occur.
- Work with women's NGOs wherever possible, or NGOs with an active female constituency. Engaging with women in NGOs provides opportunities to support women's leadership and participation in forums beyond a project's immediate scope and hence promotes women's empowerment.
- Monitor key gender gaps in poverty reduction and raise these concerns regularly in policy dialogue. This will give impetus to people in government and civil society seeking to increase the visibility of gender issues.
- Seek specific ways that ADB operations can support the government's National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and proposed gender strategy and

the work of NCFWA. Consult regularly with NCWFA regarding gender priorities in different sectors, or include NCFWA representatives during policy dialogue on issues beyond health care and education such as private sector development (i.e., challenge stereotypes on issues of concern to women).

C. Strengthening Sector Results Through Gender Mainstreaming

1. Transportation

Operations to improve rural road networks provide opportunities to ensure that women benefit equitably from increased access to markets and social services. To track the full impact of road rehabilitation in rural areas, include social development indicators in monitoring frameworks that specifically track benefits beyond economic growth, e.g., access to health care and education

Increasing the volume of vehicles through remote regions can bring risks. Transport workers will increase the demand for CSWs at rest stops, bringing new dangers especially to poor and destitute women and adolescent girls. HIV/AIDS has been spread along transportation routes. Women also face risks of being trafficked out of roadside brothels to other countries where coercion and risk of violence is greater.

Strengthened project interventions to be considered include the following:

- Incorporate social as well as economic performance indicators (e.g., nonincome poverty impacts, such as improved access to health care services) into projects and other assessment frameworks. This will increase opportunities to raise women's priority needs and benefits. It will also increase the potential for women to influence the selection of future planning priorities, by contributing to women's empowerment and enhancing their potential to participate in community decision making.
- Work with local NGOs familiar with risks presented by human traffickers to build resistance against these risks among the most vulnerable people, (e.g., poor women and CSWs). The NGOs can help assess potential risks and changes in migration flows during the project planning phase and recommend project initiatives to ensure that human trafficking concerns are addressed.
- Build a combined information campaign to encourage safe sex and counter trafficking in project areas (i.e., along proposed road routes and in rest areas for transport workers) to raise public and official awareness and understanding of the issues. Collaborate with local NGOs, with support from national NGOs experienced in awareness campaigns, to build local NGO capacity.
- Raise awareness among government and law enforcement officials of the potential impacts of increased volumes of vehicles and flow of goods and migrants, particularly as regards human trafficking, and health risks from mobile populations (e.g., transport workers). While training of officials on these issues may not be within the scope of a particular project, it may be possible to create avenues for collaboration between the government and other organizations addressing

migration and related issues. For example, offices or desks for NGOs working with migrants can be incorporated into rehabilitated bus stations or border crossing areas and government officials encouraged to collaborate with NGOs in identifying migrants in difficulties and creating services to address their needs.

2. Rural Development

The CSPU supports rural poverty reduction through assistance for rural water supply, rural development, natural resources management, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and rural education. Women in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to living in poverty, have fewer opportunities than men to access economic resources or decision makers, make up a majority of the agriculture labor force, and contribute significantly to food security through household production. The limited return on women's labor is compounded by a growing wage gap reinforced by attitudes that women are less efficient and knowledgeable workers than men. Moreover, more women seek work than there are jobs available, so even greater downward pressure is exerted on their wages. When their husbands migrate looking for employment, women may be left to take on additional responsibilities. Women are also responsible for finding and managing household water resources, which may take up a considerable amount of their already limited time.

Small and micro enterprises are forming in rural areas, but women lack access to resources and face discrimination and harassment from officials and other entrepreneurs, discouraging them from increasing the return on their labor. The pressure on women's time has intensified with the deterioration of social services, a situation sorely felt in more remote rural areas where infrastructure has yet to be rehabilitated. Living conditions are deteriorating. This impacts the health and well-being of family members and increases pressure on women to care for the sick while having to contribute to family livelihood.

Women's access to new opportunities to increase productivity in rural areas needs to be assured. This may require the identification of special measures to ensure that they participate fully in the design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of rural infrastructure, particularly for water supply and sanitation. Special care must also be taken to ensure that women are aware of new financial services or technologies, because agricultural suppliers and bank officials may not communicate frequently with women farmers or small entrepreneurs or may consider women to be unimportant as customers, despite their potential.

Strengthened project interventions to be considered include the following:

- Ensure that women participate in the planning of all future rural development projects and that gender issues are taken into consideration as priorities are set. This may be accomplished through (i) specific technical assistance activities to fill information gaps (e.g., understanding attitudes toward women farmers and how these can be changed through project interventions; de facto access to land following reform measures; and time use surveys to understand in particular agriculture systems where flexibility exists in women's time and how new technologies might be developed to relieve drudgery that limits women's

productivity); (ii) regular consultations with NGOs that are led by women and that work in rural areas, to identify emerging issues of concern to women, as has been done in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project.

- Seek means to proactively support women's efforts to access privatized land, through joint registration with male household members, sole registration, etc.
- Ensure that the constraints women face in accessing credit, new technologies, and market information are understood and addressed in future projects. Particularly in the area of microfinance, growing experience of lending to women can be drawn upon to design appropriate financial service packages.
- Seek ways to make prevailing attitudes more positive regarding women's potential contribution to increased agricultural productivity and private sector development in rural areas. Having women participate fully in project activities and decision making can lead by example. This may require some additional activities and effort by executing agencies. Gender training for all team members can help explain how women can contribute to achieving more effective project results.
- Ensure that women participate fully in all phases of design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of new water supply and sanitation projects. This can be achieved through measures such as preparation of a GAP that sets out appropriate proportions for women's participation in specific project components such as water user committees, and for women to be trained as technicians for operation and maintenance of water infrastructure. The GAP should also stipulate that project team members provide capacity building on gender issues and gender awareness training for local government and other stakeholders. The aim is to encourage the effective participation of women in project and community decision-making regarding the development and management of water resources. The GAP should also establish key monitoring indicators that track project impacts in areas such as the use of women's time, to ensure that participation in project activities is not conflicting with other important household responsibilities.

3. Education

Although girls' enrollment slightly exceeds that of boys and their overall achievements are higher, concerns remain that these higher levels of education are not preparing girls for the labor market. Unemployment is higher among women than among men, and most women are unable to apply their education in senior positions in either the public or private sector. Furthermore, despite higher educational achievement, women earn on average only 62% as much as men. Proposed support to strengthen vocational and technical training offers an opportunity to encourage girls to take up nontraditional careers, especially in growing sectors of the economy with a higher return on their labor.

In many studies, women identify access to quality preschool education as a high priority need. At present, women are forced to rely on relatives or informal networks of neighbors to care for their preschool children while they work. Much of the infrastructure of kindergartens has been removed or is now run down, and trained teachers have had to find alternative employment. Improving preschool education will better prepare young children for primary school, and provide

much needed relief and time so their mothers can engage in income-generating opportunities or training.

Strengthened project interventions to be considered include the following:

- Carry out studies of the constraints girls face in taking up nontraditional vocational and professional training, to identify measures that can be taken to challenge stereotypes and encourage girls to move into careers in growth sectors of the economy. Options include media campaigns targeting parents, changes in curricula and textbooks to present images of girls in nontraditional jobs and careers, and follow-up on recommendations from current programs to integrate greater gender sensitivity into the education system.
- Ensure that a wide range of women are consulted regarding the design and location of preschools, and that NGOs working in areas most in need participate in the design and delivery of any project activities.
- Build the capacity of education officials at all levels of government to carry out gender analysis to understand constraints on both boys and girls in accessing education at all levels.

4. Governance

Analysis of trends and gaps in poverty reduction and the relative effectiveness of poverty reduction programming can be significantly enhanced through the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators.

Interventions to be considered include the following:

- Encourage the incorporation of gender-sensitive indicators into the monitoring of the government poverty reduction strategies and programs. This country gender assessment identifies some key areas where gender gaps are emerging and need particular attention.
- Key staff of monitoring agencies and NCFWA must strengthen their capacity to analyze data and survey findings to identify emerging gender gaps and their causes, then develop appropriate measures to address these concerns in future programs.

Appendix 1. The Structure of Kazakhstan's Gross Domestic Product, 2003 (%)

Nominal GDP by Sector	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Oil and Gas	10.3	15.0	14.1	15.3	15.8
Oil Services	10.4	9.2	10.6	11.0	12.0
Non-oil Mining	4.4	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0
Metal Manufacturing	5.4	8.3	7.4	6.6	7.0
Other	69.5	63.4	64.2	63.7	62.2
Agriculture	10.5	8.7	9.4	8.6	7.8
Manufacturing, excluding metals	8.8	8.3	8.9	7.8	7.0
Power, Water	3.9	3.3	3.0	3.1	3.1
Construction	3.1	3.0	3.1	4.2	3.9
Trade, Commerce	14.4	13.3	13.0	13.1	13.0
Transport and Communication	12.1	11.2	11.0	11.3	11.7
Public Services	12.2	10.7	10.5	10.5	10.5
Other Services	4.5	5.0	5.4	5.1	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Agency of Statistics, Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Staff estimates from World Bank, 2005.

Appendix 2. Persons Met During Fieldwork

18 January to 9 February 2005

Government:

- Karaiganov Argyngazy Toktabayevich, Deputy Head of Secretariat, National Committee on Family and Women's Affairs
- Baigutdinov Timurlan Serikovich, Chief of Sector
- Bespalinov Tleugazim Department Head, Regional Policy, Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning
- Monobayeva Gaini, Head, Social Protection Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
- Greta Salovyova, Director of Sociology, Women Pedagogical Institute
- Gaukhar Kushalievam Deputy Director, Research Center of Sociology and Gender

Nongovernment Organizations:

- Maigul Nugmanova, Director, Astana, Educational Development Center, "BILIM-Central Asia" (formerly Soros Foundation)
- Valentina Andreyevna Sevryukova, President, Confederation of Nongovernmental Organizations of Kazakhstan
- Gulzi Nabieva, Director, Zharia
- Svetlana Shakirova, Director, Gender Studies Centre
- Zulfiya Baisakova, Chair, Taldi-Korgan Regional Women's Support Center, and of Union of women's Crisis Centers of Kazakhstan
- Gulmira Dzhamanova, Executive Director, CASDIN
- Irina Khabibulina, Executive Director, Moldir organization
- Zaitsev Yuriy, Feminist League
- Tlenchiyeva Gulsara, Legal Expert, Almaty Women's Information Center
- Shalkar Zhusupov, Kazakhstan Loan Fund
- Maria Seisenbayeva, Head of Union of Women in Agriculture

Meeting Participants: 22 January 2005

NGO Representatives:

- Gulzi Nabieva, Zharia
- Raikul Duikenova, Union of Mothers with Many Children
- Timur Kuliev, Mission on Human Rights
- Bayan Akhmetzhanova, Law Forum of Astana NGOs
- Akilya Shabayeva, Center on Chemical Security
- Kulnazira Usenova, Astana Branch of the Asian Society on Disabled People's Rights
- Kanat Alipova, Movement Women of Kazakhstan
- Klara Erzhanova, League of Muslim Women of Astana and Oblast
- Galina Bikovets, Consumers Advocacy

- Alena Fetonova, Pensioners' Movement Ardager
- Ainur Yeshchanova, Umai
- Nadezhda Mukhametzhanova, Source for Hope
- Anna Akubekova, Single Mothers Fund Ana Alakani
- Gulmira Tatanova, Center for Social Adaptation for Children
- Gulmaira Baimakova, Head of Farmers' Unit Olzhas

International Development Partners and Organizations:

- Malin Berger, Poverty Dialogue Project Manager, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Selima Salamova, Poverty Specialist, UNDP
- Gulmira Myrzibayeva, Gender Focal Point, UNDP
- Damira Sartbaeva, Head, United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- Alma Esirkegenova, UNIFEM
- Gulnur Bolyspaeva, UNIFEM
- Linda Cloutier, First Secretary (Development), Canadian Embassy
- Nailya Okda, Canada Fund
- Michael Tschanz, Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Karima Jambulatova, Countertrafficking Program Coordinator Kazakhstan, IOM
- Katerina Badkova, Regional Countertrafficking Program Officer, IOM

Field Trips: Northern Region Outside Astana:

- Gulmaira Baimakova, Farmer
- Aleksandrovka, Novo-Alekseevka
- Zhulduzai Salibekova, Research Institute of Seeds, Astana

Field Trips: Taldy-Korgan:

- Abdikadirov, Vice Akim, Sariozek, round table discussion with representatives from police, health, internal policy, teachers, community organizations
- Round table discussion with representatives from internal policy, health, community organizations working with disabled, veterans, and unemployed
- Ushtobe—village, meetings with SHG members from TGRWC, Polish Crafts Training Center, Empower
- Head of Department of Internal Policy, Taldy-Korgan Oblast
- Staff of Taldy Korgan Regional Women's Support Centre

**Appendix 3. National Consultation Workshop:
Aspects of Mainstreaming Gender Approaches
into Poverty Reduction Strategies
Astana, 14 April 2005**

**National Commission on Family and Women's Affairs under the
President of the Kazakhstan Republic and the Asian Development Bank**

Agenda

9:30–10:00	Registration of participants
10.00–10.10	Opening of the seminar: Iskakova Saida, Head of the secretariat of the National Commission on Family and Women Affairs (NCFWA)
10.10–10.20	Welcome: Helen Thomas, Team Leader, “Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies in Four Central Asian Countries”
10.20–10.45	On state policy on poverty reduction: Baisakalov Alim, Vice Head of the department on employment and social partnership of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
10.45–11.10	Main findings of the ADB project, gender country assessment: Helen Thomas, Team Leader
11:10–11:30	Progress on addressing poverty among women: Baigutdinov Temirlan, chief of sector, Secretariat, NCFWA
11.30–12.00	Coffee break
12:00–12:30	Research findings: Problems of gender and poverty reduction in Astana rural areas: Nabieva Gulzi, Director of NGO Zharia, Astana
12.30–13:00	Research findings: Poverty and gender issues in Taldy-Korgan rural areas: Baisakova Zulfia, Head of NGO “Taldy-Korgan Regional Center for Women’s Support” and President of the Union of Crisis Centers of Kazakhstan
13.00–14.00	Lunch
14.00–14.25	Microcredit as an effective means of poverty reduction in Kazakhstan: Khabibulina Irina, Executive Director of microcredit organization “Moldir”
14.25–14.50	Poverty reduction in rural areas—example of the farm: Baimakova Gulmaira, Head of the farm, Akmola oblast
14:50–15:10	Coffee break
15:10–16:00	Discussion of future steps for gender mainstreaming and monitoring gender issues in poverty reduction programming.
16:00	Closing remarks: Karaiganov Argyngazi, Vice Chief, Secretariat, National Commission on Family and Women Issues

Participants

Government Representatives

Name	Position	Institution
Iskakova Saida	Chief of the Secretariat	NCWFA
Abishev Tastemir	Chief of Sector	Presidential Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Secretary of the Commission on Human Rights

Ministry and Akim Representatives

Name	Position	Institution
Ilyasova Gulnara	Chief of Department	Ministry of Culture, Information and Sport
Nurabayeva Zaida	Chief of Department	Ministry of Justice
Valiyeva Ainur	Chief of Department	National Center on Human Rights
Baisakalov Alim	Deputy Chief of Employment Department	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
Gabdulina Zaresh	3rd secretary of OSCE	Department on International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Turgunova Bakhyt	Chief of Department	Ministry of Economics and Budget Planning
Imakova Gaziziat	Chief of Department	Ministry of Agriculture
Izgutiev Nurlan	Chief	Department on Violence on Women
Mamataev Kadirzhan	Chief Prosecutor	Justice in Social Sphere, General Prosecution
Zhunosova Madina	Staff Member	Department on Organized Crime, Ministry of Internal Affairs

Members of National Commission on Family and Women's Affairs under the President of Kazakhstan

Name	Position	Institution
Soltieva Zhumagul	Vice-editor in Chief	Republican newspaper "Egemen Kazakhstan"
Sivryukova Valentina	President	Confederation of NGOs
Asangazi Orazkul	Deputy Akim	District of Astana

NGO representatives

Name	Position	Institution
Shakirova Svetlana	Director	NGO "Center for Gender Studies"
Nabieva Gulzi	Director	"Zharia" NGO, Astana
Baisakova Zulfia	President	Union of Crisis Centers
Baimakova Gulmaira	Chief of farming	Akmola oblast
Salibekova Zhuldizai	Chief of farming	Akmola oblast
Nugmanova Maigul	Director	Education branch "Bilim", Astana
Khabibulina Irina	Executive Director	Micro credit organization "Moldir"

Secretariat of the National Commission on Family and Women's Affairs

Name	Position
Karaiganov Argyngazi	Vice Chief
Naubetova Rashida	Chief of sector
Baigutdinov Temirlan	Chief of sector

Representatives of International Organizations

Name	Position
Helen Thomas	Team leader of the ADB technical assistance “Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies”
Dina Mukhamedkhan	Expert, ADB technical assistance “Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies”
Selchenok Elena	Coordinator of the UNICEF program
Abdigalieva Gaukhar	Coordinator of the UNICEF program

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