

# Synthesis Report

Azerbaijan  
Republic of Kazakhstan  
Kyrgyz Republic  
Tajikistan





# **GENDER ASSESSMENT SYNTHESIS REPORT**

## **Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies in Four Central Asian Republics**

**Azerbaijan  
Kazakhstan  
The Kyrgyz Republic  
Tajikistan**

**Asian Development Bank**  
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## Abbreviations

ADB	—	Asian Development Bank
CAR	—	Central Asian Republic
CGA	—	country gender assessment
FHH	—	Female Headed Household
GDI	—	Gender-Related Development Index
GDP	—	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	—	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	—	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IOM	—	International Organization for Migration
MDG	—	Millennium Development Goal
MFI	—	microfinance institution
MHH	—	male-headed household
MMR	—	maternal mortality rate
NGO	—	nongovernment organization
SME	—	small and medium enterprise
UN	—	United Nations
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	—	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UN CEDAW	—	United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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## Executive Summary

One of the most distinctive features of the Soviet era was formal gender equality in the public sphere, which led to significant changes in gender relations within households and communities. However, most reforms in the post-Soviet period (1991 onward) have not improved gender equality or responsiveness to the different needs and interests of men and women. While the transition period has been marked by economic growth, including privatization of state-owned assets and access to capital, unemployment has grown and changing gender relations have limited women's opportunities economically, socially, and politically. Nation building has seen the reemergence of traditional values and religious ideologies that have underscored women's eroding place in society and perpetuated negative stereotypes about women. This report draws on findings from country gender assessments in 2004–2005 in four Central Asian republics (CARs)—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan. Contributions were also made from discussions at the 2005 Regional Meeting held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The assessments were supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through a regional technical assistance (TA#6177).

The economic, social, and political developments in the four CARs vary considerably based on localized conditions, and care must be taken when generalizing about factors influencing gender equality and women's empowerment or outcomes from poverty reduction programming in the region. However, women are falling behind men in benefiting from recent economic recovery and growth.

ADB adopted a policy on gender and development in June of 1998. Through the policy, ADB has extended its commitment to mainstream gender concerns in all areas of operations, including macroeconomic and sector work, lending, and technical assistance; and to integrate gender concerns, not only in social sectors, but in all sectors. This synthesis report discusses the symptoms of gender inequality and aims to recommend ways in which the gender concerns can be addressed in the four CARs.

**Changing Gender Relations in the Four CARs.** Chapter 1 ends with a summary of changing gender relations in the four CARs, and is positioned to frame the rest of the paper along four major areas of concern to ADB and development partners. The concerns are as follows:

- *Diminishing opportunities.* Unemployment among women is increasing and more women are withdrawing from the formal labor market because of pressures on their time. Other issues contributing to diminished opportunities include reduced access to economic resources, and women having to compensate for cuts in social services through unpaid labor.
- *Deteriorating capabilities.* Gender gaps in educational achievements are growing in most countries. Women often have inappropriate skills for the emerging labor market. Women's health status is affected due to the opportunity costs of gaining access to health services.

- *Disempowerment.* Pervasive attitudes regarding women's role in family and community decision making are leading to sharp declines in women's participation in political processes and reflect an overall decline in women's role in decision-making processes in the post-Soviet period.
- *Reduced security.* Personal security has deteriorated (during and since civil strife) in general and from pervasive gender-based violence. Economic security is also significantly undermined as women are less able to manage associated risks (e.g., due to unemployment or long-term disability) because of deterioration in social protection and safety nets and lack of access to alternative economic opportunities.

**Economic Development Issues and Trends.** Especially in the early years of transition, the sharp decline in economic performance led to significant increases in poverty rates. The economic performance of several former Soviet Union countries has improved, in varying degrees, but even in countries that have improved the most, such as Kazakhstan, poverty persists in some rural areas at levels unknown less than a generation ago. The major trends, as noted in Chapter 2, are as follows:

- Vulnerability to income poverty is greater for women than for men.
- Due to discriminatory factors and distortions in the labor market, women face greater economic insecurity than do men.
- Across the four CARs, women have more limited access than men to economic resources such as credit, agricultural inputs, and land.
- Increases in gross domestic product are not necessarily reaching women.
- Women find it more difficult to overcome the effects of pervasive and extreme environmental degradation.
- While infrastructure development could benefit women, it also presents immediate risks, e.g., human trafficking and HIV/AIDS.
- Consumption poverty rates (i.e., where consumption is below the absolute poverty line) are slow to improve in the region, reflected in alarming rates of micronutrient deficiency that are linked to persistently high maternal mortality.

**Social and Human Development Issues.** Chapter 3 examines social and human development issues in the four CARs and presents evidence that women's deteriorating capabilities are increasing their vulnerability to poverty faster than is the case for men. The capability poverty of women (i.e., their inability to lift themselves from poverty) in the CARs is presented through indicators and information on health, education, water and sanitation, social protection measures, and gender-based violence including human trafficking. Key assertions in this portion of the paper are as follows:

- Social development indicators remain persistently low in all four CARs despite improvement in economic indicators, with striking differences between men and women, contributing to women's capability poverty.
- Economic insecurities that result from capability poverty are exacerbated by deterioration in social protection programs.

- Social security and welfare benefits reduce vulnerabilities to economic insecurity, but despite extensive reforms, distribution of benefits remains uneven and little consideration is given to the needs of different target groups.

**Gender Considerations of Governance Issues.** Chapter 4 discusses institutional structures to address gender inequality, including government and civil society. The examination of gender considerations in governance includes a detailed overview of national women's machinery as well as the vital role for women's nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Democratization has not resulted in equality of political representation or responsiveness of government programming to the different needs and interests of men and women. However, the growing body of tools and good practices can be shared across the region as part of the ongoing policy dialogue on economic integration policy.

**Conclusions and Recommendations.** The last chapter supplies recommendations that are achievable and offers short-to-long-term means to close gender gaps. The four areas of concern identified in the first chapter can be addressed through more effective mainstreaming of gender equality concerns as development programming is designed, implemented, and monitored by all stakeholders.

Mainstreaming gender into poverty reduction programs and projects is the overall recommendation. This requires

- *detailed social and gender analysis;*
- *a gender action plan or gender strategy* for projects, which includes specific realistic targets with accompanying adequate resources (financial and human) allocated for implementing the plan or strategy;
- *gender capacity building* in the gender action plan or gender strategy to ensure that implementing agencies are familiar with the rationale for mainstreaming gender concerns and understand how they can contribute to and promote gender-related project targets;
- *work with women's NGOs* wherever possible, or NGOs with an active female constituency; and
- *monitoring of key gender gaps* in poverty reduction and raising of these concerns regularly in policy dialogue to back people in governments and civil society who seek to increase the visibility of gender issues.

The collapse of the Soviet system of centrally planned economies and the process of independence led to high unemployment and reorganization of production, including privatization of state-owned assets and access to capital, in the process of independence. However, most reforms have not resulted in greater gender equality or responsiveness to the different needs and interests of men and women since the Soviet era.

One of the most distinctive features of the Soviet era was formal gender equality in the public sphere, leading to significant changes in gender relations within households and communities. The command economy counted on women's participation in the workforce. State-funded social services and protection schemes facilitated the release of women from many household responsibilities, such as child care, so they could enter the paid workforce. The Soviet system also guaranteed women's access to education, resulting in high education achievements among women. However, women were educated in areas considered "suitable," e.g., the provision of social services. The result was a highly segregated workforce.

Most state-funded social services and social protection programs were cut back or eliminated almost immediately following independence, which had significant impacts on women. Cutbacks in employment are continuing in these sectors, disproportionately affecting the predominantly female workforce. Furthermore, women are compelled by economic insecurity to continue to contribute to family income but without support for domestic responsibilities or social protection. At the same time, pressure is increasing on women to fulfill their domestic responsibilities under more traditional restrictions, social expectations of modesty, and limited autonomy and mobility.

Deteriorating health services have resulted in a serious fall in women's health status, with persistently high maternal mortality rates even as funding for health services has been reinstated during recent years and other health indicators have improved. Many women's organizations in the region have been sharing experiences of addressing the deterioration of social services and the impact on their lives in particular (see Appendix 1).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) adopted a policy on gender and development in June of 1998. The policy built on ADB's earlier efforts to improve the status of women and shifted ADB's support from applying targeted interventions in the social sectors to promoting gender equity as a cross-cutting strategy in all aspects of ADB's operations (ADB 2002b). Through the policy, ADB has extended its commitment to mainstream gender concerns in all areas of operations (including macroeconomic and sector work, lending, and technical assistance) and to integrate gender concerns in all sectors.

Pursuant to the policy, ADB supports mainstreaming gender and development in the poverty reduction strategies in the four Central Asian republics (CARs)—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan. To this end, ADB commissioned country gender assessments

(CGAs) in each country, based on fieldwork in 2004 and 2005 (ADB 2006a and b, 2005a and b, and 2004g). This report draws on the findings from the four CGAs. The report also benefited from discussions at the 2005 Regional Meeting held in Baku, Azerbaijan (see Appendix 2). The discussions broadly concluded that while the transition from the Soviet era had many impacts common to all four CARs, each also had some unique responses.

The four CARs cover a vast land mass and have similar climatic and environmental features, including extreme temperatures and desert and steppe lands. Only 8% of the area is cultivable. Three of the four CARs share waters from two major river systems. Environmental degradation is occurring in some places on a truly catastrophic scale, e.g., in the Aral Basin. Elsewhere, environmental degradation is more gradual, e.g., desertification, but no less problematical. Although historical links are strong across the whole region, creating deep economic, social, and cultural connections, the following distinctions must be made between the countries:

- The fighting between *Azerbaijan* and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh region continued for 6 years and ended in a ceasefire in 1994 with 20% of Azerbaijan's territory occupied and almost 900,000 Azerbaijani citizens.
- *Kazakhstan* has enormous fossil fuel reserves and plentiful supplies of other minerals and metals. It also has a large agriculture sector featuring livestock and grain. With its physical size and resources, Kazakhstan's economy is the largest among the four CARs.
- *The Kyrgyz Republic*, one of the poorest of the former Soviet states, is a "low-income country" (World Bank). It is the second poorest ex-Soviet republic after Tajikistan, and 65% of its population live in rural areas.
- In *Tajikistan*, the economic shocks of the immediate breakup of the Soviet Union were compounded by a bitter 5-year civil war in which more than 50,000 people were killed, 25,000 women widowed, and 55,000 children orphaned. Tajikistan's mountainous terrain and harsh climate expose its people to periodic natural disasters, which increased the suffering during the tumultuous civil war period.

While the four CARs generally share Turkic-Persian heritage and Russian language, their ethnic groups have many unique differences in their historical and cultural perspectives. National solutions and self-sufficiency are needed in the wake of the post-Soviet chaos. However, recent nationalist movements have emphasized differences rather than commonalities. Nationalism has been expressed in economic terms (e.g., limiting cross-border trade and closing borders during period of sensitivity) as well as in political and social spheres. Political and social tensions have led to civil unrest and war, with mistrust between communities lingering and spilling out across national borders.

Much of the contemporary nationalist discourse has its roots in traditional notions of ethnic identity, which exert a strong influence in changing gender relations. Women are stereotyped as guardians of identity and authenticity, but have limited or no rights to participate in decision making. A reemerging ethnic ideology of domesticity sees women's role idealized as within the home rather than in the workplace. For many women this is bringing increased isolation in the

home, especially in remote rural regions, and often intensifies their vulnerability to violence and other forms of exploitation.

The consequences for women of these changes in gender relations are complex and vary widely across the region according to historical or ethnic differences.<sup>1</sup> Some key common outcomes include significant limitations on their autonomy, rolling back the greater gender equality attained during the Soviet period. Access to privatized economic resources is limited by assumptions that only male household heads register assets, particularly land. Economic insecurities often force women into accepting polygamous marriage or subordinate positions within multi-generation households.

The impact of civil conflict has been different for women than for men across the region. The use of violence against women during civil unrest was not as significant in the emerging CARs as in other regions of the world. The longer term impact of traumatic stress disorders and loss of livelihood and social stature on men is also linked to increasing domestic violence, victimizing. Women throughout the region have to face these abuses alone—social consequences to exposing sexual violence are severe, usually results in rejection from the family or community, and the state offers little legal protection. The social consequences of violence have been divisive within and between countries that continue to limit social and economic development. The women are left highly vulnerable when economic dependence, reinforced through changing social expectations, requires them to remain in high risk situations within their families or communities. Traditional practices discouraged during the Soviet era, such as payment of bride price, polygamy, and (in several regions) bride kidnapping, are returning.

Care must be taken when generalizing about factors influencing gender equality and women's empowerment or outcomes from poverty reduction programming in the region. However, women are clearly falling behind men in sharing the benefits of recent economic recovery and growth.

## **A. Gender Dimensions of Poverty**

To capture an accurate picture of the scope of women's poverty requires commitment and capacity to obtain sex-disaggregated data. Development partners are increasingly recognizing participatory approaches to gathering data as a mechanism to obtain a more accurate picture of gender-based differences in poverty statistics. The four CARs had limited scope to take on new studies, but in all four CARs, the assessment teams did seek to verify data through interviews with a range of stakeholders and to explore gender dimensions of poverty in ways that national household-level survey mechanisms may obscure.

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<sup>1</sup> According to March C. et al (1999), gender relations are simultaneously relations of co-operation, 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, ethnicity among others.

At a macro level, discrepancies in benefits from economic growth and poverty reduction programming can be tracked by comparing the United Nations (UN) Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) with the Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>2</sup> The GDI measures inequalities between men and women in the three HDI component indexes, i.e., life expectancy, education attainment, and income measure of average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. A GDI lower than the HDI indicates that women benefit less than men from development (UNDP 2002b, 23). Data for the four CARs are provided in the table.

**UN Gender and Human Development  
Indexes for the Four Central Asian Republics**

Country	GDI	HDI	HDI-GDI
Azerbaijan	0.725	0.729 <sup>a</sup>	0.004
Kazakhstan	0.759 <sup>b</sup>	0.774	0.015
Kyrgyz Republic	0.696 <sup>c</sup>	0.698	0.002
Tajikistan	0.534 <sup>d</sup>	0.652	0.118

Sources:

<sup>a</sup> [hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_AZE.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_AZE.html)

<sup>b</sup> [hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty\\_f\\_KAZ.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty_f_KAZ.html)

<sup>c</sup> [www.undp.kg/english/publications/1999/nhdr/chapter\\_1.html](http://www.undp.kg/english/publications/1999/nhdr/chapter_1.html)

<sup>d</sup> [www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country\\_Briefing\\_Papers/Women\\_in\\_Tajikistan/chap\\_01.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Tajikistan/chap_01.pdf)

The data in the table indicate that Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic have the least differentiation between male and female rates of absolute poverty, with their GDIs only slightly higher than their HDIs. Tajikistan, the poorest of the four CARs,<sup>3</sup> has the largest measure of inequality between men and women based on the GDI-HDI gap. Targeted poverty reduction measures have been in place since 1998 in Kazakhstan, which is the only one of the four CARs not to have had civil strife during the transition. Due to this and the rapid increases in income from mineral resources, its overall level of absolute poverty is at only 19.8%. But 60% of the poor are women, illustrated by the lower GDI compared to the HDI. In the Kyrgyz Republic the percent of people in absolute poverty declined from 44.4% in 2002 to 40.8% in 2003. The narrow gap between HDI and GDI implies limited inequalities between men and women, but the paucity of sex-disaggregated data limits the reliability of the indexes. The poverty situation for women in the four CARs varies from place to place and is most pronounced in rural areas throughout the region.

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<sup>2</sup> The Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) measures the average achievement of a population in the same dimensions as the HDI while adjusting for gender inequalities in the level of achievement in the three basic aspects of human development. It uses the same variables as the HDI, disaggregated by gender.

<sup>3</sup> Data vary considerably. The 2003 *Annual Progress Report of the Republic of Tajikistan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* reported a combined calculation by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and World Bank purchasing power parity (PPP) calculations, that 61% of the population was below the poverty level.

## **B. Consumption Poverty**

Consumption poverty rates are slow to improve in the region, and are reflected in alarming rates of micro-nutrient deficiency problems for women. The deficiencies are linked to persistently high MMRs in many rural areas. Consumption poverty levels, as illustrated through food insecurity, are slow to improve in the region. Food consumption levels have fallen dramatically since the early 1990s and continue to decline. High infant and child mortality rates are strongly linked to the status of women and their ability to access household and economic resources. Poor health during pregnancy starts a cycle of high risk to the development of infants and continues as the child grows. In the 2003 Living Standard Survey in Tajikistan, alarmingly high numbers of families, headed by both men and women, reported consuming one meal or less per day in the previous week (Falkingham and Baschieri 2004). The figure had risen from 10% in 1997 to 13% in 1999 and approximately 50% in 2003.

The impacts of these high levels of food insecurity are clear: 36% of children under 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition and 5% suffer from acute malnutrition (GRT and UNDP 2005, citing UNICEF 2000 data). High levels of malnutrition significantly influence the overall health of children and young mothers and health outcomes for the community as a whole. Anemia rates are high in the region; among pregnant women they are as high as 80%, contributing to problems such as elevated MMRs. Food security remains a key concern for women and should be accorded high priority as economic growth strategies are developed.

## **C. Summary of Changing Gender Relations**

The economic, social, and political developments in the four CARs vary considerably based on localized conditions, making generalizations misleading. But all CGAs placed the gender dimensions of poverty within an analytical framework that examines gaps in major development indicators between men and women. This provides insights to development programmers on how to ensure that women benefit more equitably from economic and social development. Four areas are emerging as priority concerns for women in all four CARs: (i) diminishing opportunities, (ii) deteriorating capabilities, (iii) disempowerment, and (iv) reduced security.

**Diminishing opportunities.** Women's opportunities are declining, as shown by

- trends of higher unemployment among women;
- increasing numbers of women withdrawing from the formal labor market because of pressures on their time, or being forced to shift into the informal sector;
- growing distortions in the labor market limiting women's opportunity to apply their education or skills to full potential; and
- limited access to economic resources and time constraints from having to absorb cuts in social services (e.g., for child care and housework) through unpaid labor, while also doing paid work in the informal sector; these burdens limit their capacity to take up alternative or more productive economic opportunities emerging in the new market economy.



**Deteriorating capabilities.** Women are being deskilled, as shown by

- growing gender gaps in educational achievements in most countries or their having inappropriate skills for the emerging labor market; and
- the slow recovery of women's health status as opportunity costs to access even improved health services are not being addressed—in some regions, for example, rates of micronutrient deficiencies, such as anemia and iodine deficiency disorders, contribute to persistently high maternal mortality rates.

**Disempowerment.** Attitudes regarding women's role in family and community decision making are leading to sharp declines in their participation in political processes. In nationally elected parliaments, women's representation is low: only 13.0% in Tajikistan, 10.4% in Azerbaijan, 9.5% in Kazakhstan, and 1.3% in the Kyrgyz Republic. In the post-Soviet period across the region, women's participation in prominent and/or decision-making roles has declined very dramatically, and not just in political life.

**Reduced security.** Women are subject to increasing security issues, particularly personal security (during and since civil strife) in public and private places and from pervasive gender-based violence including

- sexual harassment at the workplace; and
- the growing risk of trafficking for women, as some poor women are forced into decisions they would not otherwise take because of economic and social insecurities (e.g., considering jobs offered by a stranger, or migrating alone).

Women's economic security is significantly undermined as they are less able to manage associated risks (e.g., unemployment and long-term disability) as social protection and safety nets deteriorate and access to alternative economic opportunities dwindles.

## **Chapter 2      Economic Development Issues and Trends**

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Especially in the early years of transition, the sharp decline in economic performance led to significant increases in poverty rates. Economic performance has improved in several former Soviet countries in recent years, in varying degrees, but even in countries such as Kazakhstan, poverty persists in some rural areas at levels unknown less than a generation ago. The impacts of economic collapse and transition have been different for men and women but generalizations are possible in the following areas:

- Vulnerability to income poverty (i.e., income below that needed to subsist, measured by means such as \$1 per day) is greater for women than men.
- Discriminatory factors based on stereotypes of what are suitable types and levels of work for women lead to distortions in the labor market, leaving women with limited access to higher paid jobs and security.
- Women have more limited access than do men to economic resources such as credit, agricultural inputs, and land.
- Increases in GDP are not reaching women equitably.
- Women find it more difficult than do men to overcome the effects of extreme environmental degradation.
- Infrastructure development offers potential for women to benefit from improved access to markets and social services, but immediate barriers (such as lack of mobility) need to be addressed so women can access these benefits.
- Consumption poverty rates (i.e., “the expenditure necessary to achieve a minimum level of well-being” [Pendakur n.d.]) are slow to improve in the region, and are reflected in alarming rates of micronutrient deficiencies among women. The deficiencies are linked to persistently high maternal mortality rates (MMRs).
- Economic insecurities that result from capability poverty<sup>4</sup> are exacerbated by inappropriate or gender-blind reforms to social protection programs.

### **A.      Women’s Vulnerability to Income Poverty**

Women are more vulnerability to income poverty than are men. Although poverty data within households is not consistently tracked and poverty assessments do not explore the comparative ability of different household members to command resources, women bring less cash into the household and therefore may have much reduced access to shared income. Women tend to use what income they do control first for children and food security, whereas men tend to keep a greater proportion for their own needs, rendering women’s welfare at greater risk in low income households. The understanding of intra-household relations must be increased to effectively combat these factors.

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<sup>4</sup> Capability poverty refers to the “lack of basic, or minimal essential human capabilities, which are...needed to lift one from poverty and to sustain strong human development.” (Womenaid International 2006)

The vulnerability of female-headed households (FHHs) to income poverty is mixed within the region, as in many cases de facto FHHs receive income from migrant workers. Despite this, FHHs have greater difficulty in accessing economic resources. This limits their livelihood options and hence increases their vulnerability to poverty and requires specific programs to ensure their needs are met.

**Tajikistan.** More is known about the situation of FHHs in Tajikistan than in the other CARs, partly because the government monitors the high rates of male out-migration. With conservative estimates of at least 500,000 men migrating out of the country, some for many years, there are corresponding numbers of de facto FHHs. Sources of income vary between FHHs and male-headed households (MHHs), but also between different types of FHHs, influencing vulnerability to poverty. Not all FHHs are vulnerable to poverty: analysis of the Tajikistan Living Standards Survey 2003 data showed no significant difference in overall headcount poverty between FHHs and MHHs (Falkingham and Baschieri 2004b). Among FHHs, 15.2% fall within the quintile of all households with the highest income. Poverty is higher than average in FHHs and MHHs with large numbers of children. However, FHHs face particular problems such as less access to land and irrigation services, leaving them less food secure. Overall, more female household heads reported being very unsatisfied with their living conditions than male household heads in all income quintiles, indicating that female household heads face higher levels of psychological stress than male household heads at a given level of welfare (World Bank 2004a, 1:4).

**Kazakhstan.** The government has identified single parent families and single mothers to be particularly at risk of living in poverty. However, the prevalence of poverty among FHHs is somewhat different than in the three other CARs. Only 33% of all FHHs were in the lowest expenditure quintile in 2003, with the majority, 52.5%, in top quintile (World Bank 2004a, 1:4). These data do not back the government's conclusions regarding FHHs. The income quintile data may reflect that many women pensioners heading households are past child bearing age and hence have fewer children and expenses. Furthermore, despite migration of men, FHHs are less prevalent in rural areas in Kazakhstan as wives tend to join households with other family members, but are more prevalent in urban areas where poverty levels are lower. Thus, care has to be taken to avoid assumptions that all FHHs share the same concerns or difficulties in accessing economic resources.

**Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic.** More research and analysis is needed to determine the level to which intra-household decision making is affecting women who head households in Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

## **B. Discrimination and Distortions in the Labor Market**

Discriminatory factors and distortions in the labor market mean that women face greater economic insecurity than do men. Women have more difficulty finding secure employment and earn less than men for several reasons. In all four countries, women's unemployment rates are higher than those of men (particularly among young women), as demonstrated by the following data on unemployment rates:

- *Azerbaijan*—40.5% for women versus 16.4% for men;
- *Kazakhstan*—10.8% for women versus 8.8% overall;
- *Kyrgyz Republic*—14.3% for women versus 11.2% for men

(There are no comparable data for Tajikistan.)

However, official data are highly unreliable, with significant discrepancies between the number of people registering for unemployment programs and reports from household surveys. Even with higher education levels, women have increasing difficulty finding employment and remain unemployed for longer periods on average than men (UNDP and GRK 2005a). This is especially the case for women seeking to return to the workforce after childbirth or child rearing. Stereotypes regarding women's low productivity because of child care responsibilities are frequently cited as the reason that women of child-bearing age find difficulty securing jobs. In Kazakhstan women spend more time than men finding employment and have longer durations of unemployment. In 2002 the share of women unemployed for 5 and more years was 73.3% of the total unemployed population.

Although the principle of equal wages for equal work is guaranteed by law, none of the four CARs have yet achieved wage parity between men and women. This wage gap is most pronounced in Tajikistan, where women earn on average only 46% of what men earn. Within certain sectors, as found in the Azerbaijan CGA, the wage gap increases from 22.3% in the lowest paid sector of education (despite women outnumbering men two to one) to 45.6% in the higher paid health and social service sectors. In Kazakhstan the highest wage gaps between men and women are in regions with the highest gross regional product, as 90% of jobs are taken by men in the mining and mineral extraction sector, with higher than average salaries. The average wage gap increased from 1999, when women earned 67.6% of men's wages, to 2000, when women earned only 61.7%. In all four CARs, women consistently earn less than men (see Box 1).

Vertical segregation contributes to wage gaps as women rarely hold management positions even in sectors with high proportion of female labor force, such as education or health service provision. In Kazakhstan women hold only 3% of management positions, despite making up 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, 92). In Tajikistan the proportion of women who are skilled agricultural workers has fallen from 10.6% in 1999 to only 0.6% in 2003 (Falkingham and Baschieri 2004).

#### Box 1. Wage Gaps

- **Azerbaijan:** Women earn 54.4% the average wage that men earn in health and social service sectors—a gap of 45.6%. Women earn 77.7 % in education sector—a 22.3% gap.
- **Tajikistan:** Women earn on average 46% of what men earn—a 54% gap.
- **Kazakhstan:** Women earn on average 61.7% of what men earn—a 38.3% gap.
- **Kyrgyz Republic:** Women earn on average 64.9 % of what men earn (2002)—a 35.1% gap.

### C. Unpaid Work

No clear data are available on the proportion of unpaid work by men and women in the four CARs. Available poverty studies do not show whether national accounting systems take into account production for own use within households.

The UN has estimated the market value of the unpaid sector at 70% of world GDP, and this proportion can be projected into national accounts. As women have primary responsibility for most domestic tasks in the four CARs, their contribution of unpaid labor to household survival is likely to be much greater than the contribution of men. Women are finding it harder to remain in full-time employment due to pressure from unpaid work, especially as they have had to absorb extra tasks as social protection programs stopped in the transition period. Time pressures are forcing women to seek income in the informal sector or insecure part-time jobs.

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:

- *The opportunity costs of unpaid labor time.* These limit the supply of female labor in the paid labor market and women's capacity to find employment or other sources of income, and hence increase income poverty among women. They also reduce leisure time and have a significant impact on women's health and well-being and an indirect impact on those of 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 food preparation. In poorer households, the time required is greater than in households with higher incomes that are able to purchase food.
- *Low productivity of unpaid labor.* Typically, men's income is not invested in activities that are women's responsibilities. This limits women's productive capacity. Thus, women may try to use household-based skills to earn income in the informal sector, for example in preparing food or selling small surpluses from subsistence production, trapping them in low-productivity activities.
- *Women's unpaid labor is expected to replace/substitute for social services previously supplied by the state.* Women now have to do much more home-based work, e.g., caring for the sick and children. In times of crisis, own-account activities, such as subsistence food production, tend to be mostly carried out by unpaid labor by women. Over time, the use of unpaid labor can reduce aggregate demand from low-income families, limiting economic growth in their communities, for example in rural small towns (OECD-DAC 2005, 15).

#### **D. Women's Access to Economic Resources**

Women have more limited access than men to economic resources such as credit, agricultural inputs, and land across the region.

**Assets for micro and small enterprise development.** Many unemployed women and those seeking to balance family care responsibilities resort to starting small businesses in the informal sector. Although only limited data are available in the four CARs regarding the relative productivity of men and women in the informal sector, evidence is growing that more women than men are in low return sectors, based on women's inability to access capital for investment in machinery, new technologies, etc.

Although Azerbaijan has only limited official data on the size and structure of the informal labor market, anecdotal evidence suggests that women make up a large share of it, as "shuttle traders" (traders who cross international borders to purchase goods to sell on return to the home country), market vendors, home workers, and paid care givers. The 2004 Labor Force Survey notes that 17% of women who reported being employed defined themselves as engaging in a "private entrepreneur activity without forming of a legal person," which suggests informal sector work (SSC 2004c, 31). The growing numbers of women seeking credit to start and/or continue privately run small "informal" sector businesses also indicates that, in contrast to the Soviet period, many women may now be operating outside of the formal sector.

There has been very little analysis of the extent of and barriers to women's entrepreneurship; however, limited access to sources of financing, including credit, is a key barrier many women face to establishing a small or medium enterprise (SME). Inability to meet collateral requirements, difficulties in negotiating their way through the maze of banking regulations and requirements, and unresponsiveness from largely male lending officers have combined to push women away from the formal financing sector. Most women entrepreneurs source funds from immediate family members, relatives, friends, and (less often) their own savings.

Almost all credit and business development services are made available to women in the informal sector through nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs). Evidence from MFIs shows that women are either as good entrepreneurs as men, or better (information to CGA team, 2004). Women appear to be more adaptable to business risks inherent in the market economy, repay loans more consistently, and take a longer term perspective in business planning than men. NGOs offering services through group mobilization note that women appreciate contact and support from other members, especially to address the many social constraints they face. For example, when women are unable to access formal training, they are eager to search out other women engaged in the same area of business to learn from their experience. Group mobilization has enabled many women to leave their households under what are considered to be more "suitable" circumstances than working alone. Many MFIs note that women become more confident when they can see they are not alone and are encouraged to participate more fully in household and community decision making.

A recent ADB study in Tajikistan indicated that most women beneficiaries have accessed small-scale credit lines to engage largely in trading and service-based activities (ADB 2003e). Some recent surveys of international NGOs have shown that incomes derived from this informal source have improved beneficiaries' revenue streams by 20–60%, and many female-headed and poor households have been able to overcome their food insecurity. Group activities build women's confidence and skills to participate in community development activities, participate in local governance, and network with other women's groups.

In 2002, 56% of the women reporting themselves as employed in the Kyrgyz Republic said that they were employed "without a contract." They included women who defined themselves as employers, self-employed, members of production cooperatives, unpaid workers of family businesses, and workers on individual land plots (GKR 2003d). A recent meeting of the Organization for European Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and ADB on the informal economy noted that the Kyrgyz informal sector accounts for about 25% of GDP and that although both men and women participate, women's participation is understated as current statistical surveys (including Labor Force Surveys) do not include casual or informal working activities undertaken by women (OECD-UNESCAP-ADB 2004, 8).

Many women in the Kyrgyz Republic are intimidated about entering what is clearly a male domain. In 2002, 60.4% of people in management positions in the finance sector and more than 70% of all owners of banks and insurance companies were male (OECD-UNESCAP-ADB 2004, 59 and 73). Women have reported difficulties negotiating with male loan officers as an individual female. Some women were even told to go home and bring back their husbands if they want to apply for a loan.<sup>5</sup> Many women lack the information and knowledge required to start SMEs. Business advisory services for women are lacking in the Kyrgyz Republic, making it difficult for them to understand and negotiate the bureaucratic requirements of starting an enterprise and developing the skills required, such as creating business and financing plans and proposals.

**Access to land.** Extensive land reforms have taken place across the region based on equity principals, but in practice only 3–10% of women have land registered in their names and very few have land in joint names with their spouses or other male relatives. The purpose of the land reforms is to establish a fully functioning market for land, and hence improve its value. But women cannot access the benefits or use land as collateral to access other economic resources such as credit. Under these circumstances, women are highly vulnerable and dependent on others in situations of economic crisis or family disruption, for example when they become widowed or divorced.

In 2002 the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) funded an assessment of rural women's needs for land-use rights in Tajikistan (Sabates-Wheeler 2002). It concluded that women, despite proclaimed legal equality, have unequal access to economic resources, including land. When women do access land, it tends to be the farthest from irrigation facilities or of marginal quality. Women are also frequently denied their right to land previously held by their husbands upon divorce or becoming widows.

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<sup>5</sup> From interviews conducted during fieldwork for the country gender assessment (CGA) in November–December, 2004.

The CGA-sponsored survey in Tajikistan noted that women farmers are as productive as men, despite having more difficulty accessing credit, agricultural inputs, and market knowledge, and often being barred from registering privatized land in their names. All these factors limit women's opportunities to be more productive, although their total contribution to overall production may be more than that of men.

Since the recent land reforms, citizens may sell their land allocations or lease them for up to 49 years in Kazakhstan. District officials determine how much farmland can be privatized, with the price set by the government according to market demand. The reforms do not address the major concerns of small-scale farmers. Registration procedures are complex and not well understood, particularly when disputes arise. Rural communities perceive high levels of corruption between district officials and large-scale farmers. Prices for leased land are often far more than individual farmers can afford. In east Kazakhstan, for example, 1 hectare cost \$506, which is more than one third the annual per capita income.<sup>6</sup> Land leased for less than 5 years can no longer be sublet, meaning that a common form of income could be lost for small landholders, including the women left behind when men from their households migrate to urban areas seeking employment. The net effect may be to increase productivity among the few large farming operations, but not of the vast majority of small-scale farmers, who may be increasingly squeezed off their land with no alternative means for income generation.

#### **E. Women's Share of Gross Domestic Product**

Increases in GDP are not necessarily reaching women as evidenced by the following trends in all four CARs. Box 2 (p. 14) provides an example from Kazakhstan.

- Long-term unemployment rates tend to be higher among women than men, especially among young women.
- Horizontal segregation in labor markets has women concentrated in sectors that are contracting, such as social services, rather than in growing sectors such as mineral extraction or transportation.
- Higher proportions of women than men have been forced into unskilled agriculture jobs and have difficulty returning to more skilled employment.

#### **F. Social Protection Mechanisms**

Social security and welfare benefits reduce vulnerabilities to economic insecurity. In Kazakhstan, for example, social protection transfers are responsible for halving the poverty headcount, from 30% to 15% of the population in 2002. Pensions also have potential for a significant redistributive effect (World Bank 2004, I:1 and 33).

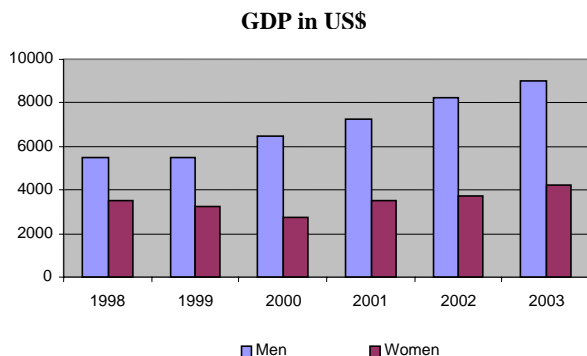
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<sup>6</sup> Reported during interview with the CGA team



### Box 2. Gross Domestic Product and Gender: The Case of Kazakhstan

The gender gap in benefits from recent economic growth can be illustrated through a comparison of gross domestic product per capita—there has been an almost steady increase for men, but uneven progress for women with the gap widening from 2000–2003. This is mostly due to labor segregation in sectors with high economic growth, where over 90% of jobs are taken by men in the mining and mineral extraction sector, with higher than average salaries. Hence the highest wage gaps between men and women are found in regions with highest gross regional product according to the 2005 Millennium Development Goals Report (UNDP and GRK 2005a). The higher income regions also have higher unemployment levels for women than men.



Social protection programming has been extensively restructured throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>7</sup> during the transition period to bring the systems more in line with other market reforms. Social protection is now targeted to the poor rather than being universally available, to improve efficient use of the resources (USAID 2003, 9). Despite extensive reforms, distribution remains uneven and of concern, due to limited monitoring of who actually receives benefits and how appropriate many of these programs are to meet the needs of target groups. For example, the needs of well-educated women displaced from some sectors of the economy are very different from those of the hard core rural poor. In most countries reforms have encouraged or entirely displaced responsibility for program delivery to local levels of government. But this may not have been balanced with adequate resources or capacity building among government officials to deliver the programs efficiently or effectively.

In Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic, social protection mechanisms are not effectively targeted by governments to help households mitigate income shocks and programming does not reach half the poor, including 40% of the extreme poor in the Kyrgyz Republic (World Bank 2003a and b and USAID 2003, 9).

Limited sex-disaggregated data are available in the four CARs regarding recipients of different social welfare benefits and policy statements are not clear about whether specific differences in needs of men and women are taken into account in the targeting of benefits. Key programs include social welfare programs, pensions, and unemployment benefits, which may include retraining or other job creation schemes.

<sup>7</sup> An association of former Soviet republics, formed in 1991, and with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as members.

**Social welfare programs.** These are vital to women, who are most frequently responsible for managing meager household resources to feed their families. These programs generally include child, housing, and in some cases food benefits. As adjustments and further reforms are prepared, women should be carefully consulted to ensure that their specific needs as caregivers and managers of family resources are met. Welfare-based programs should 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.

**Pensions.** Among welfare schemes, old-age pensions cover the largest share of the population in all four CARs and account for more than half of the total social protection spending. Many poor and middle-income families do not consider pensioners as dependents because they bring a regular cash income. Reforms in all countries have introduced funded accumulative pension systems, based on mandatory contributions through places of employment. In some countries such schemes have also been established for the self-employed. However, as the new cumulative systems mature, women in particular will see a steep decline in the value of their pensions—women have much lower accumulations than men because they earn less and have to leave the workforce for child bearing/rearing periods. Yet they will require greater total payments because of lower retirement age and greater longevity. This will lead to increased poverty among elderly women and hence increased demands on other welfare or minimum subsistence payments. Low pensions may in future discourage contributions from the self-employed and people in the informal sector. Return on capital used to operate a farm or small business is much higher than that on pension savings; thus many people will opt to stay out of new systems where participation imposes a high opportunity cost. These concerns must be addressed, as high proportions of women are self-employed and will remain in the informal sector without any protection if their social security needs are not met.

**Azerbaijan.** In Azerbaijan, the social assistance benefits such as child allowances are too small to reduce the consumption deficit of the poor (World Bank 2003a). But pensions are and will remain a key income source for over 20% of the total population, including many women. According to the 2003 Household Budget Survey, benefit payments (including study grants and social grants) provide the basic income source for 19.5% of the population. By gender, pensions are the basic income source for 9.5% of women surveyed compared to 5.5% of men. (Subsequent to the information gathered for the country gender assessment on which this report is based. Azerbaijan is implementing substantial social sector reforms.)

**Kazakhstan.** Old-age pensions account for over half of the social spending in Kazakhstan, and 67.5% of these pensions are paid to women, due to their longevity. Payments are considered adequate to keep pensioners above the poverty line. On average, women pensioners receive 80.2% of the average amount paid to men. However, in 1998 a funded cumulative pension system was introduced. Because the payments from this system are based on lengths of contribution, women who take time out from working and contributing to the system will be disadvantaged on retirement. Low pensions will discourage the self-employed from contributing, and 64% of all women are self-employed. Thus, these concerns must be addressed (ADB 2006a, 38).

***The Kyrgyz Republic.*** For many poor people in the Kyrgyz Republic, social assistance payments, however inadequate, remain critical contributions to family income. Pensions are and will remain a key income source for over one third of the Kyrgyz population. In 2002 almost two thirds (62%) of all pensioners were women,<sup>8</sup> with more female than male pensioners in every region of the country. However, pension rates are extremely low and significantly lower for women, whose average pension is only 81% of the average pension of men. This is largely because the pension payments are linked to contributions over time, which penalizes women who take time out from work for child rearing or who retire early (GKR 2003e, 85). There are also chronic delays in payments and payments are often provided in the form of food or other products—placing extra pressure on families to seek additional income. While both men and women are affected by these pressures, it is often women, as the principal carers and those expected to purchase and cook food and provide for the basic living necessities of the family, who bear the brunt of the day-to-day burden of basic survival.

***Tajikistan.*** As in the other CARs, the pension system has changed with the end of the socialized economy. A pay-as-you-go scheme was introduced. As the recipient level is very low (91 people out of every 1,000), many people have to survive without pensions. Networks and kinship systems have been filling the gap, with women sharing child care in order to work, and men relying on sharing assets through kin groups. Such gender differences must be understood if programs are to respond to women's needs (ADB 2006b, 77–78).

**Unemployment benefits.** The four CARs have different schemes and programming, with mixed successes. In Kazakhstan and Tajikistan the success of employment retraining, job creation, and temporary support programs seems to depend 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 have the skills to implement some programs, such as those to promote small businesses. Few know about participatory approaches to understanding the needs of the unemployed or poor, or benefits of self-help group methods.

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<sup>8</sup> In 2002, the Kyrgyz Republic had 511,231 registered pensioners, and 319,497 of them were women (GKR 2003c, 85).

This chapter discusses social and human development issues in the four CARs and presents the evidence that women's deteriorating capabilities are increasing their vulnerability to poverty faster than is the case for men. The key assertions are as follows:

- Social development indicators remain persistently low in all four CARs despite improved economic indicators, with striking differences between men and women contributing to women's capability poverty.
- Economic insecurities that result from capability poverty are exacerbated by deterioration in social protection programs.
- Social security and welfare benefits reduce vulnerabilities to economic insecurity. But despite extensive reforms, the distribution of benefits remains uneven and little consideration is given to different needs of target groups.

#### **A. Capability Poverty**

Even as GDP and incomes grow in the region, social development indicators remain persistently low in all CARs, with striking differences between men and women. The capability approach to assessing poverty looks beyond income to include health, education, political participation, security, and access to social capital as measures of well-being. Health indicators such as MMRs and closely related infant mortality rates are strongly influenced by women's overall status. Risks from HIV/AIDS and increasing drug abuse, among other preventable diseases, have significantly different impacts on men and women. In several countries, gender gaps in education are growing wider for secondary level completion and higher education. Even in countries where so-called "reverse gender gaps" (with higher participation rates among girls than boys) are emerging, women are unable to convert higher educational attainment into jobs as they are not skilled for employment in growth sectors or face discrimination in the job market. In all four CARs, unemployment rates are higher for women, and significant and increasing income gaps demonstrate that women are becoming increasingly marginalized into low wage employment.

#### **B. Health Indicators**

While other health indicators have improved, as seen in marginal improvements in economic growth in all four CARs, the key macro indicator that illustrates women's vulnerability to health risks is the MMR, which remains relatively high and persistently hard to address. As noted at the end of Chapter 2, micronutrient deficiency symptoms contribute to the region's high MMRs. These physiological factors are exacerbated by deteriorating and inaccessible health services resulting in high rates of unattended births, poor quality professional services, and limited

availability of drugs. The MMRs (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) in the four CARs are as follows:

- *Azerbaijan*: 37 (in 2000),
- *Kazakhstan*: 36.9 (in 2004),
- *Kyrgyz Republic*: 49.3 (in 2003), and
- *Tajikistan*: 43.1 (in 2004).

But in all countries, UN reports note that this data is unreliable because of inconsistencies in definitions of live births and unreliable data collection methods. In all cases UN sources cite higher MMRs than those provided through official data.

**Azerbaijan.** Poor nutrition is one of the most serious health issues in Azerbaijan and women and children are particularly vulnerable. The State Statistics Committee estimated that in 2003, 16.4% of all pregnant women suffered from anemia (GRT and UNDP 2005). In contrast the Reproductive Health Survey, which tested 1906 women of childbearing age throughout the country, found a 40% prevalence rate overall—with 38.4% of pregnant and 40.2% of other women testing positive for anemia. Rates were higher in the central and southern regions of the country, at 54.1% and 49.0% respectively (USAID-CDC-UNFPA 2003, 119-120). Government data put the prevalence of iron-deficiency anemia among pregnant women at 52.5% in 2001 (ADB 2003h).

High abortion rates and poor quality pre- and post-natal health services contribute to high MMRs. In Azerbaijan, as in all four CARs, many people lack adequate access to affordable high quality services and the system is under considerable stress. Out-of-pocket expenses (informal costs) of health care are rising as the health care system has suffered from steadily declining government expenditures since 1995. This has placed significant financial burden on consumers, with the poor least able to meet the extra costs. Decreases in utilization rates of health services suggest that many of the poor are simply not able to afford medical services, making them more vulnerable to developing chronic illnesses including tuberculosis, anemia, and iodine deficiency disorders.

**Kazakhstan.** The poverty that has resulted from severe loss of natural resources in the Aral Region of Kazakhstan has had significant health impacts on women and children. The highest rates of anemia and iodine deficiency are reported from this region. Malnutrition is generally the cause, and severely depleted or polluted soils produce small volumes of nutrient-poor food. Women weakened by malnutrition have to care for chronically sick children in these regions, placing additional pressure on their physical and emotional health. Among the women, 60% are iron deficient and suffer from anemia, although moderate to severe incidence has fallen from 12% to 9% (UNDP 2004b).

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** In 2002 more than one in ten of all children in the Kyrgyz Republic aged 1–11 were underweight, with more underweight girls than boys. Iodine deficiency remains a serious health problem and just over half of all children and adolescents in the republic suffer from diseases related to iodine deficiency. In 2001, 60% of women of reproductive age

suffered from anemia. Moreover, MMRs in the Kyrgyz Republic are among the highest in the region. Steadily rising active tuberculosis rates are also a major concern.

**Tajikistan.** Nutrition was found to be unsatisfactory in 61% of families in Tajikistan. Per capita consumption of all food categories has declined significantly since 1992, with almost half of all households reporting having one meal or less per day to the World Bank 2003 Living Standard Survey.<sup>9</sup> The most significant factor influencing child nutrition and health is the capacity of women to command resources within the family and to access information regarding care and nurturing. With the increasing isolation of young women, health programming will have to address social as well as medical risk factors if Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets are to be met.

### C. Education Indicators

The four CARs have high levels of primary enrolments and governments are committed to maintaining basic education systems. However, the government expenditures are not adequate to cover all costs. In Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, parents have to provide considerable financial support for recurrent expenditures, maintenance, library books, and other teaching materials. These “informal” costs of education place a severe burden on poor families and have been linked to the growing non-attendance rates, particularly in rural areas. Recent assessments of educational outcomes in the four CARs point to declining learning achievements and highlight a poor learning environment including deteriorating infrastructure, frequent heating and electricity cuts, inadequate sanitary facilities, and lack of running water. Data available from the four CARs regarding enrolment rates are as follows:

- *Azerbaijan:* Overall primary school attendance rates are 88.4%—no sex-disaggregated data are available (UNICEF-SSC 2000).
- *Kazakhstan:* Rates are balanced by gender in the primary grades (UNDP and GRK 2005a); in 2003, 49% of secondary students were girls, and 57% of students in higher education were female (Agency of Statistics 2004).
- *The Kyrgyz Republic:* Rates are balanced by gender in the primary grades; in secondary education, girls are 52.7% of students, and 54% in tertiary education. Women are channeled into studies pertinent to education, social services, and behavioral sciences, whereas men dominate in agriculture, fisheries, veterinary sciences, and engineering (ADB 2005b, 45).
- *Tajikistan:* In grades 1–4, 48% of students are girls; in grades 5–9, 46% are girls; in grades 10–11, 40% are girls; and in higher education, 25% are girls (SSC 2004a).

At the secondary level, differences emerge within the region, including an evident “reverse gender gap” in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, where more females than males are enrolled in higher education institutions. However, the investment in higher education may not be translated into higher paid professions. In these two countries in particular, younger women as a group remain

<sup>9</sup> Data available at [www.worldbank.org/lrms/country/tajik2003/taj03home.html](http://www.worldbank.org/lrms/country/tajik2003/taj03home.html).

unemployed the longest term. Despite the cuts to employment in health and education, women are still channeled into these studies at secondary and higher education institutions. Such trends illustrate how gender stereotyping is entrenched and reinforced, further limiting girls' possibilities to reach their full potential.

#### **D. Water and Sanitation**

The deterioration of water and sanitation infrastructure has hampered improvements in the standard of living in the region, with significant impacts on women and their ability to fulfill domestic responsibilities. Access to running water, sanitation, central heating, and gas for the lowest income percentiles in urban areas has continued to fall and many people living in rural areas have no access to these basic services. The cost of improving services for the many sparsely populated areas is high, and has yet to be tackled by government policy. Access to water and sanitation in the four CARs is as follows:

- *Azerbaijan*: 62% of the population has access—51.9% of the poor and 78.2% of middle-income groups (UNICEF-SSC 2000, 20).<sup>10</sup>
- *Kazakhstan*: 95% of the population are reported to have access to piped water supply but 13.3% of the systems are inoperable and 23.4% do not meet sanitary and technical requirements.
- *Kyrgyz Republic*: 81.9% of the population has access—99.2% in urban areas and 73% in rural areas.
- *Tajikistan*: 57% of the population has access to piped water; nearly 25% take water from open sources contaminated by waterborne diseases.

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

Rural poverty continues to be significantly higher than urban poverty across the CARs and people in rural areas go without adequate access to public services such as running water, reliable electricity, heating, and public sewerage systems. For example, in 2001, less than 10% of the poorest rural households in the Kyrgyz Republic had access to running water, heating, and public sewerage facilities (World Bank 2003b, vii).

**Kazakhstan.** 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

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<sup>10</sup> This is consistent with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) survey for the Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Project, which found that in Agdash, Gochay, and Nakhchivan on average only 55% of residents had access to reliable safe water supplies. The ADB survey covered 800 residents in these three towns where project interventions were to be based. (ADB 2004f, 55).

systems.” (UNDP and GRK 2005a, 46). The MDG targets associated with access to water supply and sanitation will not be met by 2015 if rehabilitation continues to be slow.

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** Although the government has made considerable progress to ensure access to safe drinking water for the urban population, a key problem is the lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sewage facilities for rural people, who comprise two thirds of the population. In 2002 more than 25% of rural Kyrgyz did not have access to safe drinking water and less than 10% had access to sewage facilities. The health impacts of unsafe drinking supplies and lack of sanitary conditions include illness, costs of medical treatment, and the associated loss of income. Improving domestic water supply can also yield economic returns in time savings for women, allowing them to undertake other productive activities.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has suggested that the Kyrgyz Republic could achieve MDG 7 target 10 of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and identified a lack of state resources as the major constraint. This suggests that a continued focus by ADB and other donors (notably the World Bank, which is active in the sector) on water and sanitation could have considerable positive impacts and be critical to enabling the government to achieve its MDG commitments. To be effective, such investments need to recognize the central role played by women as collectors, transporters, users, and managers of domestic water and promoters of home and community-based sanitation activities. Ensuring that gender-disaggregated baseline data informs project design, that participation strategies include men and women as managers and users, that monitoring and evaluation is participative and gender-inclusive, and that water and sanitation projects are used as entry points to other poverty reduction strategies such as credit, are key to engendering the process of achieving MDG 7 target 10.

**Tajikistan.** Only 57% of the population in Tajikistan has access to piped water and nearly 25% are taking water from pools and irrigation canals where waterborne pathogens thrive. Public sanitation systems are largely not working and little or no investment has been made in improvement of the infrastructure. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the lack of safe drinking water and effective waste treatment are the principal causes of 60% of diseases, particularly diarrhea among young children. As previously noted, the burden of caring for the sick lies upon women, leaving them with reduced time and energy to generate income.

## **E. Environmental Degradation Issues**

Women find it more difficult than men to overcome the effects of pervasive and extreme environmental degradation. Women and children are particularly susceptible to the health effects of chemical contaminants and carcinogens, which are passed through the reproductive cycle and breast milk. Women care for sick, children, and elderly people who are affected by environmental pollutants, birth defects, and contaminated soil and water. The responsibility for collecting wood for cooking and heating most often falls upon women. Due to widespread deforestation, women’s health is deteriorating as they must carry heavy weights for long distances. Consequent scrimping on the use of firewood affects the family diet. Women are more likely than men to have the least desirable land to cultivate and to make do without fertilizers, irrigation technologies, machinery,



and other agricultural resources that mitigate rampant over-cultivation and desertification in the area. All four CARs are afflicted with environmental degradation in one form or another and women throughout these countries are paying the highest price.

**Azerbaijan.** Azerbaijan was one of the principal oil producing regions of the former Soviet Union and a center for industrial activities. It had large chemical, petrochemical, and metallurgical complexes, which caused significant environmental damage with widespread pollution of the Caspian Sea and surrounding areas. Mishandling of mercury from chlorine plants led to infant mortality rates six times higher in than in surrounding areas (World Bank 1998, 78).

**Kazakhstan.** Kazakhstan faces several serious environmental concerns resulting from desertification due to poor or irresponsible natural resource management, e.g., the crisis in the Aral Sea region and fallout from the nuclear testing stations established during the Soviet era. These environmentally hazardous conditions have a different impact on men and women. There is growing evidence of significant health impacts among women from exposure to radioactive materials, including much higher than average incidences of birth defects, causing distress and heavy burdens on women who care for the affected children. There is also growing evidence of a high incidence of reproductive organ cancers among women. Special programs to combat these conditions have been established in the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site, and in the Aral region, but the development indicators remain low, with significant gender gaps pointing to women having more difficulty than men overcoming the effects of extreme environmental degradation.

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** Of 10.6 million hectares of agricultural land in the Kyrgyz Republic, more than 88% are degraded and subject to desertification. Because women are clustered in the agriculture sector and around two thirds of the population live in rural areas, women are facing increasing difficulty eking out livelihoods in the degraded environment, and have more limited access to resources than do men. Women are also less mobile than men, who are the first to migrate away from difficult situations. Many women and FHHs have to remain in fragile regions with no choice but to continue to overexploit meager natural resources.

The Kyrgyz Republic joined the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (1997) and developed a related action plan to fight desertification (UNICEF 2002b, 14). Poverty is cited as a leading cause. Farmers who are trying to survive on marginal lands and with limited access to agricultural resources are often driven to adapting less labor-intensive crops and using practices that may harm the environment. Soil erosion, polluted water, and declining yields are the result. Although the land is a livelihood source for the majority of Kyrgyz men and women, further analysis is required of their respective roles in the different farming methods (such as fallowing, crop rotation, intercropping, and mulching) and their techniques for promoting soil conservation, fertility, and enrichment.

**Tajikistan.** As a short-term measure to address severe environmental degradation, resettlement has been discussed frequently in Tajikistan. This approach should be carefully considered, as resettlement schemes put women and children at risk of losing vital social networks, informal community support, and resources unless their specific needs are taken into account during planning and implementation.

## **F. Infrastructure Development**

Infrastructure development, specifically in the transport sector, offers potential benefits for women but also present immediate risks that need attention first. Improving international transit corridors to address regional linkages, upgrading railroads, and developing rural feeder links to national trunk road networks are priority development needs in the region. As volumes of traffic along transportation routes increase, so does the demand for support services (food, accommodation, and vehicle repair), bringing additional income opportunities to communities through which corridors pass. The flow of goods in and out of communities will also improve.

Tajikistan, a landlocked country with remote, sparsely populated mountainous areas, depends on road links between communities and with its neighbors for access to markets and services. The rehabilitation and improvement of the road network is a high priority for the government. Priority is being given to improving the road network along regional corridors to increase economic growth within the region. These road corridors, for example between Dushanbe and the Kyrgyz Republic border, pass through remote areas. Improved access from these areas to markets and services will provide the poor with greater opportunities to increase incomes by accessing inputs and new markets, and will facilitate communications. Border regulation has been improved to manage the flow of goods and migrants.

But less welcome impacts come with improved road systems, e.g., increased demand for commercial sex workers. Poor and desperate women in communities along rural road corridors are tempted into this form of work, which often leads to coercion, violence, human trafficking, and high risk of infection from sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

A potential risk is unsafe migrations from involuntary resettlement during infrastructure development. Many children without guardians and young women without social support networks work in service enterprises around border crossing areas. These women and children are highly vulnerable to being trafficked during resettlement. Roadway improvements increase the flow of people through communities, including people with a high risk of being HIV-positive (e.g., drivers, migrant laborers, construction workers, and commercial sex trade workers). These are issues for all four CARs.

## **G. Other Sources of Vulnerability for Women**

### **1. Gender-Based Violence**

Violence against women in the region is still broadly understood as a private rather than public issue despite the clear evidence that it has significant implications for women's health, well-being, and economic productivity. Gender-based violence is a cross-cutting issue since it impacts every dimension of women's lives and limits their capabilities. Gender-based violence takes different forms including battery (physical abuse); economic abuse (control of money and resources so that a woman may have no control over spending even when she is a breadwinner); psychological and verbal abuse; sexual abuse; rape and sexual assault (including within marriage);

bride abduction; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions, and elsewhere; and trafficking in women and forced prostitution. Gender-based violence takes place in the home, the community, and the workplace. Women who expose sexual violence at home are likely to be rejected by the family or community, and have no outside protection.

Gender-based violence is not simply a women's issue. The longer term impacts on men of traumatic stress disorders and losses of livelihood and social stature is also linked to increasing domestic violence. With men's self-definitions as breadwinner undermined by unemployment and loss of economic security, they have tended to become abusive, toward themselves through excessive alcohol use and toward their family, especially in the form of domestic violence. Such violence limits social and economic development. Economic dependence, reinforced by changing social expectations, may force many women to remain in abusive situations within their homes or communities.

Gathering data on gender-based violence is very difficult since it requires victims to disclose the matter and a long process of prosecution leading to conviction. The Azerbaijan CGA identified several factors that contribute to tremendous under-reporting of gender-based violence in that country. These issues are shared across the region in varying degrees, and include

- social acceptance of violence against women by an intimate partner;
- a complicated and traumatic reporting process for victims;
- little support and protection offered by police, medical, and judiciary systems; and
- failure to observe confidentiality, especially in non-urban areas, which reinforces women's sense of shame and likelihood of being ostracized.

A 2004 study by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Azerbaijan found that denial was usually the first response to questions about violence against women due a sense of shame and because some kinds of violence, particularly intimate partner violence (e.g., hitting and slapping) were widely understood to be normal. That study found that 43% of married women experienced violence in their current relationship. Despite the pervasiveness of such violence, in 2002 only 317 cases of crimes against women were registered, and in 2003, just 289.

Official data of convictions in Kazakhstan allow for a breakdown on types of crime (UNDP 2005a, 46). In 2001 18% of violent crimes were committed against women, rising to 21.3% in 2003; 83% of crimes of torture in 2001 were committed against women, falling to 80% in 2003; 66% of beatings in 2001 were committed against women, rising to 70% in 2003; 59% of sexual assaults in 2001 were committed against women, rising to 65% in 2003; and approximately 1,200 rapes were registered yearly in 2001–2004. (Any increases may be due to improved provision of support services to women, encouraging the reporting to the police, rather than due to other factors. Data of this kind should be treated only as an indicator of types of crimes or trends rather than an accurate reflection of numbers of incidents as social factors still strongly discourage women from reporting such incidents to police.) Non-physical forms of gender-based violence (e.g., sexual harassment at the workplace) are not reported, which points to gaps in support. Kazakhstan's Strategy for Gender Equality estimates that "60% of all women have been exposed to physical or sexual violence at least once.... Less than 10% of all rapes reach the courts. 28% of married

women suffer violence from their husbands” (GRK 2005b). These estimates are indicative of the scope of the problem for all countries in the region.

Data in the Kyrgyz Republic are insufficient to determine the scope of the problem but reports from women’s crisis centers and shelters showed that during 1997–2001, 29,300 women and girls sought assistance with more than 50% of them stating they had experienced violence within the family. About 10,000 police calls for family incidents are recorded annually (UN CEDAW 2002, 57).

A survey in Tajikistan in 1998–1999 revealed that 50% of women had experienced sexual violence by their husbands, 47% are faced with violence in the family, and 47% had experienced psychological violence from strangers (GRT 2001).

While governments in all four CARs have stated commitments to address violence against women, few programs have been implemented to address the problem, due to a lack of human and financial resources. NGO responses are gaining momentum, but they are also fragmented and under-resourced. In Azerbaijan, for example, research has been undertaken by organizations such as the Azerbaijan Sociological Association, the Centre for Legal Assistance to Migrants, Pathfinder International, and Symmetry. Broad-based information and awareness raising campaigns have taken place, including television commercials. Legal assistance is being provided by the Azerbaijan Young Lawyers Association and the Women’s Crisis Centre, which offers telephone hotlines and legal consultants to offer advice and support to women.

## **2. Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking<sup>11</sup> is a gross violation of human rights and adversely impacts 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. The issue of human trafficking is examined in this section since it is primarily based upon exploitation of women and is thus a facet of gender-based violence.

The four CARs are source countries for trafficked girls and women as well as origin, transit, and destination countries. Girls and women are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation, but may also be coerced into work in factories, in agriculture, or as domestic workers. Obtaining data is extremely difficult since girls and women are trafficked through sophisticated and well-organized crime networks.

**Azerbaijan.** Recent surveys suggested that in Azerbaijan up to 500 women are transported to Turkey each month and up to 4,000 are transported to the United Arab Emirates each year. Internal trafficking for prostitution is also taking place, as in the other CARs, from rural to urban

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<sup>11</sup> 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 or coercion, or debt bondage, for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in forced labor or slavery-like practices, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original act of coercion.

areas, although data are unavailable to determine the scope. Victims interviewed by IOM are primarily women aged 19–35, consider themselves poor, and had accepted offers that they thought would result in improved economic situations for themselves and their families. Some men and boys are trafficked into forced labor. Efforts to curtail trafficking need to be greatly increased (US Department of State 2005), and the legal system revised to focus on trafficking per se: Azerbaijan lacks a specific anti-trafficking law, and cases must be redressed through related laws rather than directly.

**Kazakhstan.** In 2003/2004, 139 trafficking cases were reported to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan (IOM 2005). Forty cases involved people coming into the country (3 from Kyrgyzstan, 3 from Tajikistan, and 34 from Uzbekistan); 85 cases were of trafficking out of the country (out of which 71 female and 14 male); and 14 were in the region. At the Kazakhstan border in 2003, 84 people were stopped with illegal or irregular papers, of which 56 were female (from Border Control Department data).

**Tajikistan.** The Tajikistan CGA notes that many trafficked victims stated they were offered “shuttle” trade jobs that turned into opportunities for traffickers to move them on to other countries as sex workers. IOM estimates that as many as 45,000 women may be traveling regularly to neighboring countries as “shuttle traders,” many of whom are highly vulnerable to being coerced by criminals (IOM and Sharq 2003). An increasing number of trafficked women are also forced into drug smuggling (UNIFEM 2005). The use of Tajikistan as a transit country for drug trafficking is having significant impacts on impoverished communities. Organized criminals involved in trafficking drugs are frequently linked with human trafficking and the commercial sex industry in other parts of the world.

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** IOM has estimated that 4,000 women were trafficked to other countries from the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999, largely for sexual exploitation (US Department of State 2004). Recent studies on the trafficking problem in the Kyrgyz Republic suggest that poverty and scarcity of employment are the primary factors for victims of human trafficking (Winrock International 2004, 7).

Inward (i.e., to Bishkek and other major towns) and outward (i.e., to Russia) migration of women for employment has been growing over the last decade and reflects the lack of opportunities in the formal labor market and women’s growing income insecurity. More women than men have officially left the country in recent years and national statistical data show a higher female than male internal migration rate yearly in 1996–2003 (Winrock International 2004). In addition to increasing the stress on the family that has been left behind, women’s engagement in mobile trading or work away from home also presents risks to their physical security and many report harassment from employers, border guards, and contractors who facilitate their passage.

**Legislation and enforcement.** Criminal codes across the region have been amended in recent years to criminalize trafficking; however, prosecutions remain difficult and penalties of convictions inadequate. A variety of programs are being funded by IOM in the region to provide protection and repatriation assistance to trafficking survivors and to increase awareness in vulnerable communities. These efforts are being limited by lack of access to safe shelters where

survivors can await criminal cases or remain until their families or other resettlement options can be found. The harm to these survivors is often very great and psychological as well as medical assistance is required. Those involved in commercial sex work may also return with HIV/AIDS and require long-term care and other support.

## **Chapter 4      Gender Considerations of Governance Issues**

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### **A.      Women's Participation in Political Decision-Making**

The Soviet system ensured quotas for women's participation in political decision-making and representative bodies. Democratization has not resulted in equality of political representation or responsiveness of government programming to the different needs and interests of men and women. Legal and policy reforms have been relatively effective in addressing some aspects of poverty reduction, but in many areas women's political participation has dropped dramatically since independence. The percent of women elected at the national level in the four CARs is as follows:

- *Azerbaijan*: 10.4%,
- *Kazakhstan*: 9.5%,
- *The Kyrgyz Republic*: 1.3%, and
- *Tajikistan*: 13.0%.

But there have been some successes, especially in improving the capability of elected women to influence the policy process, following targeted capacity building on a regional basis. UNDP and UNIFEM have carried out several small but successful initiatives. Such programs need to be expanded to facilitate the exchange of good practices and to build solidarity among elected women across the region, as they face many similar challenges.

**Azerbaijan.** Women's participation in political processes and governance structures in Azerbaijan has declined sharply in the transition period, although there are no legal restrictions on their participation. While the high numbers of women appointed to political posts during the Soviet era camouflaged their relatively low degree of influence—particularly within the senior echelons of government—women still comprised 40% of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic in 1989, largely due to the quota system. Within 1 year of independence, women's representation had plummeted to only 6%. In 2004, only 13 of the 125 members of the National Assembly were women. At the municipal level, the representation of women is even weaker and in the most recent municipal elections (December 2004) only 4% of elected members were women.<sup>12</sup>

Women's participation in party politics is also extremely low and at present there is no quota system to guarantee a percentage of female representation. With so few women in decision-making positions within party structures, women's nomination to party tickets and eventually as elected parliamentarians is unlikely to increase.

The proportion of women employed within senior levels of government is also very low compared with men, with most women occupying junior or administrative posts. The gender imbalance is considerable in all ministries. Men hold 562 senior management positions (88.4%) of

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<sup>12</sup> Data from the (former) State Committee for Women's Issues.

a total of 636. Only 1 of 29 heads of state ministries and committees is a woman, and she heads the State Committee for Women's Issues.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, considerable sector-level segregation exists, with the few women who are in management positions confined to ministries such as health, culture, and social protection. There is no active policy to recruit more women into management streams within the public sector or to fast-track the careers of women who have demonstrated management potential, suggesting that the current pyramidal management structure of the public service is likely to persist in the foreseeable future.

**Kazakhstan.** The level of women's participation in Kazakhstan's government decision-making was reported to the 49th Session of UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2005 as follows:

- *Women in parliament:* In 2003, 568 women deputies (17.1%) were elected to local governments, a drop from 19.2% in 1999. Currently, 11 deputies in the Parliament are women (9.5%)—8 in the lower house (10.4%) and 3 in the Senate (7.7%). A woman was elected Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, for the first time.
- *Local decision-making bodies.* More women are active in lower levels of government, as political responsibilities are carried out closer to home, but they still find it hard to have their voices heard. Five women are deputy heads of oblasts, and 17% of regional deputy heads are women. Of the heads of rural and village districts, 11% are women, and 18% of the deputy heads are women. In Almaty and Astana the share of women represented is higher than the national average.
- *Women in executive power.* 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. Consequently, the proportion of women government staff increased from 56% in 2000 to 58% in 2004. Of heads of executive bodies, 22% are women, and 11% of the judiciary are female. On the instruction of the President, every ministry, agency, and oblast administration has established a reserve of women specialists to be promoted into the decision-making levels.

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** The republic is a presidential democracy with a parliament of directly elected members. The Election Code, which was adopted in 1999, gives all citizens aged 18 and over the right to vote and be elected, regardless of origin, sex, nationality, religion, and political convictions. However, women's participation in the political process and their representation within elected bodies has decreased significantly since independence. Women's declining political participation in the democratic process, coupled with their lack of representation in decision-making structures, is one of the most pressing gender issues in the Kyrgyz Republic today.

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<sup>13</sup> Data from the State Women's Committee. The State Committee for Women's Issues has been reorganized as the Azerbaijan State Committee for Family, Women, and Child Problems.



The disbanding of the Soviet quota system resulted in a sharp decrease in representation of women at all levels in elected bodies, even though women comprise 52% of the electorate. Following the 2002 elections, only 6.7% of deputies in the parliament were women (7 of the 105 deputies). Only 10.7% of the 65 female candidates gained office, whereas 17.5% of males were elected.<sup>14</sup> In the 2005 parliamentary elections, which followed the political upheavals of 2005, only 38 of the total 397 candidates were women (9.5%). Of these, only 3 made it to the second round of ballots, and only 1 remains following the disqualification of the other 2 candidates for election infringements. Therefore women comprise only 1.3% of all elected deputies in the Kyrgyz Parliament.

In 2004, only 2 women occupied ministerial positions in government, out of a total of 14 such posts. Since 1990, ministerial appointments of women have been limited to three key portfolios: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Only one female was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during 1994–1997. No woman has ever headed the Ministry of Finance.

This low level of representation is evident at oblast and district levels. Figures from the National Statistics Committee for 2003 show that of the 258 deputies at oblast level, only 26 (or around 10%) were women. Although there is some variation between the oblasts (from 29.6% female deputies in Chui oblast to 2.2% in Jalal-Abad oblast), women's representation was consistently well below that of men with only Chui oblast having more than 15% of female deputies (GKR 2003e, 71). Moreover, only 1 of the 7 regional governors was a woman and in 2004 none of the 40 district heads were female.<sup>15</sup>

The percent of women employed in government positions is also very low, particularly at senior levels. As of 1 October 2003, women only occupied 21.8% of “top” (i.e., minister and deputy minister) positions in government, with those positions being concentrated in ministries such as education and culture, health, and labor and social protection. No women hold in top positions in key ministries such as finance or agriculture, the Central Election Commission, or the Administration of the President. Of the 44 listed ministries and agencies, 26 (59%) had no women at top levels of administration. At junior levels, the balance of representation is also strongly in favor of men (62.6% versus 37.4% for women), suggesting a predominantly male cadre of employees from which future “top” and “chief” employees will be drawn (GKR 2003e).

**Tajikistan.** During the Soviet period, as in other CARs, quotas were set for women in administrative posts and in the deputy corps. Thus, women held 26% of these posts in 1989. Women were generally allocated posts in the social and cultural sectors and held middle- or low-level positions.

When quotas were abolished, only 3.9% (9 of 230) deputies were women in the first post-independence Supreme Council of the Republic, reflecting the immediate post-independence attitudes toward women in decision making during this troubled period. Yet the proportion of

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<sup>14</sup> Statistics from Central Election Commission, 2004

<sup>15</sup> Figures from the Central Election Commission, 2004

women in all areas of decision making is gradually increasing. In February 2005, 11 women were elected to the Assembly of Representatives, representing 18% of the total, which is the same proportion as were sitting prior to the election. The proportions are slightly smaller in other elected bodies, with 12.1% in the National Assembly and 11.5% in local assemblies. Almost 21% of judges in all courts are women, and 45% of heads of prosecutors offices are women. This is a higher proportion than in other Commonwealth of Independent States countries (GRT and UNDP 2003b).

More women are in decision-making positions in local- and district-level government—27% of heads of village-level governments and 43% of deputy heads are women (UNIFEM 2005, GRT and UNDP 2003b). This is common in many countries, as it is easier for women to participate in political activity close to home. While it is important that, as programs are delivered within the communities, women are visibly involved in decision making, more women must be present in the highest levels of government.

## **B. Government Responses to Women's Needs**

The capacity to carry out social or gender impact analysis of policies and programs among government officials is almost nonexistent as these skills were not required during the Soviet period. Broader based social and gender impact analysis of policies and programs could be encouraged as part of performance-based budgeting reforms that are being carried out with support from international development partners. Greater political will is required to make these changes effective, and can be encouraged by focusing on the potential for better targeting of poverty reduction programming based on comprehensive social and gender analysis of policy impacts and monitoring of existing programming. Regular consultation with NGOs led by women can also ensure gender concerns are identified and information updated regularly. A growing body of tools and good practices can be shared across the region as part of the economic integration policy dialogues under way.

Judicial reforms do not consistently result in the recognition of discrimination against women in enforcement and judicial rulings. Constitutions in all four CARs provide for protection against discrimination on the basis of gender, but fail to define discrimination. Few officials in the judiciary or law enforcement agencies have the skills or experience needed to recognize or act against discriminatory behavior, especially in their own actions. Legal proceedings clearly show very limited sensitivity to women's special issues, e.g., do not recognize the fear of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. There are excellent examples of regional approaches to judicial training with peers working together outside national boundaries to address sensitive areas such as gender discrimination. Judges and senior law enforcement officials are more comfortable facing their gaps in knowledge or experience under these circumstances.

All four CARs committed to act on gender issues at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, are signatories to the UN CEDAW, and have national action plans (or similar strategic approaches) based on policy frameworks in place to address the commitments. However, their policies and related programs are not well implemented

due to limited funds and institutional capacities.<sup>16</sup> Political will to hasten implementation is generally absent except in areas associated with social sectors such as health and education, and especially areas related MDG targets, which tend to be better funded by development partners.

The many gaps in domestic legislation also limit efforts to address factors contributing to discrimination. For example, limited legal means to address domestic violence increases women's vulnerability as many women leave abusive situations without support or protection from the law and become targets for traffickers. Regional initiatives to stem human trafficking will have to rely on improved national legislation to curb risks and the vulnerabilities of victims. Exchanging good practices from government and civil society organizations to address domestic violence within the region can help to address several core risk factors for women.

## **C. Institutional Structures to Promote Gender Equality**

### **1. Government**

In each CAR assessed, the national women's machinery has made limited progress in advancing gender equality or effectively implementing policies. Commonly, the potential to facilitate and oversee gender mainstreaming in all line ministries is limited by several factors including:

- lack of clarity over the national women's machinery's mandate as coordinator of the state program or policy, as many officials assume it to be the implementer of programming targeting women;
- lack of funds and technical capacity to provide other ministries with advice regarding gender analysis of policies and programs, to implement gender-sensitive programming, or to monitor implementation of the state program or policy—funding received tends to be for specific programs rather than to carry out the function of oversight agency in support of gender equality; and
- limited effectiveness of the gender focal points—while their mandate is broadly understood in all countries, focal points have no clear written terms of reference for their work and often are unclear as to what their specific role should be and how they should fulfill it.

**Azerbaijan.** The State Committee for Women's Issues in Azerbaijan was established by the Decree of the President in 1998 with a far reaching mandate including monitoring the implementation of the state policy on gender (the National Gender Equality Policy and Plan of

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<sup>16</sup> An extensive joint needs assessment was carried out in Tajikistan to calculate the policy and structural reforms and investments needed to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those associated with women's empowerment. The UN Millennium Project Secretariat Task Force on Education and Gender Equality has also adapted a general methodology for assessing all gender-related MDG interventions, i.e., to include those associated with agriculture, transport, water and sanitation, and education and health. A similar process can be applied to assessing funds required to mainstream gender equality in all government actions in other CARs. For additional details see GRT and UNDP 2005, and UN Millennium Project 2005.

Action on Women's Issues); mainstreaming of gender concerns into legislation, public policy, state programs, and projects; and facilitating the preparation and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics and information. The committee has established its own goals, which include developing appropriate national policy on women's employment; improving cooperation between state structures and national and international organizations; assessing and disseminating information on women's rights legislation, including reforms as appropriate; and assisting refugee and internally displaced women as well as women from low-income families. The committee is responsible for producing annual reports on gender issues and for reporting to the UN CEDAW Committee and other UN committees.

Gender focal points have been appointed in all central government ministries and committees as well as at the regional government level. The aim is to improve gender mainstreaming at the policy and program levels and to implement relevant provisions of the National Plan of Action on Women's Issues.

**Kazakhstan.** The President established the National Committee on Family and Women's Affairs in 1998, under the President's office, to develop specific strategic approaches and programming in addressing gender equality concerns. The 28-person body serves as a consultative board to work on the protection of family interests and improvement of conditions for women's participation in political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the country. The chair of the committee is also granted ministerial status to facilitate participation in senior levels of decision-making. The secretariat implements the committee's programs.

The committee is represented in each oblast by the vice-governor and is supported by one staff member. Coordination for implementing key programs is facilitated through the vice-governor's office, giving added impetus. An electronic network has been established among all levels of the committee and with NGOs to facilitate the exchange of information. The main areas of the committee's activities have been implementing the National Action Plan; implementing programs to promote women's economic advancement; combating domestic violence and trafficking, including the establishment of crisis centers and telephone "hot-lines"; and coordinating activities concerning women's advancement with international partners and NGOs.

The Strategy for Gender Equality for 2006–2016, enacted by presidential decree on 29 November 2005, provides an important basis for furthering gender equality in Kazakhstan. It sets out the issues, analyzes them, and provides an action strategy and indicators for progress (GRK 2005b). The government has also revised its National Plan of Action on Achieving Gender Equality, for 2006–2016

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** In 2001, the National Council on Women, Family, and Gender Affairs was established by Presidential decree. The council is under the direct supervision of the President's Office and is tasked with coordinating action on implementing a national policy and strategy to achieve gender equality; monitoring the observance of the Kyrgyz Republic's international obligations in the area of gender development, including the CEDAW Convention; and preparing national reports in accordance with those requirements. Its other tasks include the integration of gender perspectives into national policy and strategies, gender analysis of statutory

and normative documents, and coordination of the targeted use of budgetary financial resources and foreign investments to implement the state's gender strategy. The council's secretariat is a structural subdivision of the President's Office. The secretariat implements the council's decisions and coordinates and monitors the execution of state gender policy and the current National Plan of Action for Achieving Gender Equality for 2002–2006.

**Tajikistan.** In August 2001 the government approved the State Program ("The Principle Directions of the State Policy of Providing Equality Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period 2001–2010"). Following recommendations from the UNIFEM-sponsored study on women's access to privatized land, the State Program was amended in 2003 concerning "Access of Rural Women to Land". The State Program sets out a series of results, mandates for ministries and agencies for achieving the results, and (most importantly) specific allocations from the state-level budget. Additional funding is also anticipated from local governments and non-budget sources.

The national-level Committee on Women and Family Affairs, is given the mandate for financial control and coordination over the State Program. The committee was established in 2001 and is governed by a board chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister with membership drawn from key line ministries such as labor and social protection, and reproductive health. Representatives from key NGOs are also permanent members. Representatives from other ministries or NGOs may be invited to discussions on specific topics. Gender focal points have been identified within each line ministry and form a council to provide additional support and advice to the committee and through which direction can be given for coordination of gender-related activities.

## **2. Civil Society**

**Azerbaijan.** Although Azerbaijan has 30 women's NGOs in operation, only about a handful of these are active (OSCE 2002, 1). The NGOs are involved in a wide range of activities across different sectors including the environment, humanitarian relief, assistance to internally displaced people, and work with street children and the disabled. Women's NGOs comprise a relatively small segment of the overall NGO sector and have tended to focus on issues such as violence against women, trafficking, and the internally displaced and refugee population.

There is a growing recognition in government that reducing poverty and improving Azerbaijan's human development indicators will require increased collaboration and consultation with NGOs and civil society groups.<sup>17</sup> The National Plan of Action on Women's Issues provides the framework for government action on gender issues and was developed by the State Committee for Women's Issues. The plan affirms the important role of women's NGOs in the development process and calls for their greater participation in development initiatives and for stronger links with international women's NGO networks. The committee has established an intersectoral council that includes both government and NGO representatives to monitor the implementation of state policy on gender.

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<sup>17</sup> ADB has been supporting this process through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Secretariat and nationwide awareness-raising activities conducted by the NGO Forum.

Women's NGOs are increasing in both numbers and outreach in Azerbaijan, but face considerable constraints. Their lack of financial and human resources has limited the extent to which they have been able to plan and implement training and capacity-building programs, although such skills development programs are clearly needed.

Recently, efforts have been made to improve cooperation between NGOs in general and women's NGOs in particular. Several NGO coalitions exist, including the National NGO Forum, which acts as an umbrella organization and focal point for over 200 NGOs and has branches in five regions. The Azerbaijan Gender Information Centre coordinates training programs and undertakes research in selected areas. However, no government-donor-NGO consultative mechanism is in place and there is no specific forum or mechanism through which gender-related activities and issues can be more specifically coordinated and considered.

**Kazakhstan.** Over 4,500 NGOs have been established in Kazakhstan since independence, including 150 NGOs that specifically address women's concerns (UNDP 2005a, 9).<sup>18</sup> About 85% of the NGOs are headed by women. This high proportion might be because (i) women are more actively involved in addressing social and human development concerns, feel marginalized from centers of decision-making, and are the majority of the unemployed while having to meet the needs of their family; and (ii) the noncommercial sector is financially unattractive to men (UNDP 2003b).

The adoption of 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 government and civil society. More recent legislation has clarified the 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 (e.g., the microcredit facilities targeting rural women). Some stakeholders argue that some of these 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.

**The Kyrgyz Republic.** In little more than 10 years of post-Soviet independence a vibrant, growing, and increasingly organized civil society and women's movement has developed in the Kyrgyz Republic. To promote outreach, many of these NGOs have established regional networks, which are often staffed by volunteers. Most depend heavily on external funding, usually through international organizations. Outside of these formal NGOs, which are most commonly based in larger cities and towns, there are few formal mechanisms (such as parent-teacher associations) for women to participate at the community level.

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<sup>18</sup> Lists of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and resources are available through CASDIN (Russian language web site [www.casdin.freenet.kz](http://www.casdin.freenet.kz)) and for Central Asia including Kazakhstan at [www.cango.net](http://www.cango.net). UNDP also maintains databases regarding NGOs active in Kazakhstan on [www.undp.kz](http://www.undp.kz)

NGO-state collaboration in the Kyrgyz Republic is still at an early stage of development and further cooperation will be crucial in efforts to reduce poverty and promote economic growth, particularly in ways that improve the sensitivity of government and civil society to gender issues and that promote gender equality. The secretariat of the National Council on Women, Family, and Gender Affairs is making considerable efforts to work collaboratively with women's NGOs and to be as inclusive as possible.

Women's NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic are also beginning to develop stronger links with the international women's movement, largely through the lens of the Beijing Platform for Action and (increasingly) the MDGs. In particular, NGOs (often working collaboratively with the government), have started to cooperate at the regional level on common gender-based issues such as violence against women, trafficking of women and children, HIV/AIDs, gender and governance (most prominently women's low levels of political participation across the region), and the current and potential impact of the re-emergence of patriarchal traditions and customs.

**Tajikistan.** The government has recognized the potential contributions of all sectors of civil society, particularly of NGOs led by and/or focused on women. These NGOs play a central role in mobilizing the women's movement in Tajikistan and delivering services to address gender concerns. By 2003, of the 1,130 registered NGOs, 224 (19.8%) were headed by women and were active from the national to district levels. Most are located in Dushanbe and Sugd Oblast, and few have the capacity to service more remote areas. Organizations led by women are highly effective in many areas of NGO activities.

Many organizations have grown out of the women's committees and unions organized during the Soviet period. Others are more active in supporting social justice concerns and are linked with the global human rights and women's movement. Women's professional associations and research organizations have developed and have specialized in increasing understanding of gender equality issues in Tajikistan.

Many NGOs are consulted in the development of policy and legislation: for example, the drafting of the recent Gender Balance Law involved consultation on several occasions with women's organizations. International organizations have also strengthened the capacity of these organizations to identify strategic interests and build advocacy campaigns in several crucial areas for women and gender equality, e.g., for voter education and women's leadership.

This synthesis paper analyzes four central, common concerns in gender dimensions of poverty in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan: diminishing opportunities, deteriorating capabilities, disempowerment, and reduced security.

These concerns can be addressed through more effective mainstreaming of gender equality as development programming is designed, implemented, and monitored by all stakeholders. The following steps can be used as a guide for gender mainstreaming into most kinds of poverty reduction programming:

- *Carry out a detailed social and gender analysis* as policy recommendations or projects are being designed. The analysis must systematically identify potential impacts on women as well as men, and constraints to men and women participating in and benefiting from projects. The analysis must recommend how these constraints might be addressed.
- *Develop a gender action plan or gender strategy* for projects. The plan or strategy must include specific realistic targets to address gender concerns identified in the design phase's gender analysis. The targets should be linked to program objectives, through step-by-step progress. Adequate resources (financial and human) must be allocated for implementing the plan or 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 implementation, including the collection of sex-disaggregated baseline data.
- *Include gender capacity building* in the gender action plan or gender strategy to ensure that implementing agencies are familiar with the rationale for mainstreaming gender concerns and understand how they can contribute to and promote gender-related project targets.
- *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 to give impetus to people in governments and civil society who seek to increase the visibility of gender issues.

The following sections provide some examples of entry points in different types of programming for consideration during planning.



**A. Promotion of Private-Sector-Led Growth in Agriculture and Rural Development**

Women in rural areas face considerable obstacles to overcoming poverty. Women have borne many of the most detrimental impacts arising from agriculture sector reforms, including the dismantling of the supportive social infrastructure (e.g., childcare, kindergartens, schools, and hospitals) and collective farms and the jobs they provided. Women's employment levels and wages now lag significantly behind those of men and there are few female heads of farm households. Women face considerable obstacles in accessing rural assets (e.g., equipment), inputs (e.g., seeds and fertilizers), and other resources (e.g., training and credit) that would enable them to start their own SME. Systematic gender analysis in agricultural policy and programs and further detailed analyses and data on the socioeconomic status of women in the rural sector are required to better inform those policies and programs. Finally, further detailed analyses of the gender impacts of the current land reform processes are required and appropriate strategies developed to overcome current and potential gender impacts. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Identify the needs of women, including farmers, gardeners, and agro-processors and develop strategies for improving the delivery of extension and other support services to these groups.
- Include targets for women's participation in farmer (or similar) groups to assist in the design and delivery of extension services.
- Ensure that efforts are made to fully involve women in rural infrastructure management committees and other management mechanisms.
- Ensure that employment opportunities, with wage parity, are provided to women in agricultural works programs.
- Ensure gender balance in project training, exchanges, and workshops.
- Strengthen agricultural extension services for women, particularly through the provision of training, information, business advisory services, and access to agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.
- Examine opportunities to expand rural women's employment in light industries such as food processing and manufacturing.
- Consult with rural women on their credit needs and factors discouraging them from accessing lending institutions. Develop service delivery mechanisms and products that respond to these needs/constraints, using and strengthening wherever possible the participation of women's NGOs.
- Support and encourage the employment of more female agriculture and extension officers in agriculture and rural development projects.
- Closely monitor the gender impacts of the land reform process and mainstreaming of identified gender concerns into official policy dialogue about land reform issues. Regularly monitor women's actual versus statutory control over land resources, particularly the impact of customary law in allocation of land titles.
- Advocate the gender disaggregation of land titling databases.

## **B. Environmental and Water Supply and Sanitation Issues**

Women of child-bearing age and children are particularly susceptible to the effects of pesticides and other toxic substances. A high proportion of vulnerable women work in agriculture in the four CARs, and therefore are exposed to toxic substances. They often have little awareness of the impacts or how to mitigate them. Thus, consultation with women's groups and community members is vital if these serious threats to women's and children's health are to be minimized.

Therefore, it is vital to consult women as well as men and ensure they participate equitably in decision making concerning the design, implementation, and monitoring of environmental conservation programs. Monitoring must include sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive analysis to track trends regarding separate impacts on men and women. Women's participation in the design and implementation of longer term strategies is also necessary, especially in water and energy, and decisions should be made on a regional basis. For example, if consideration is only given to commercial use of these resources, women's capacity to manage natural resources for household use may be severely compromised and their vulnerabilities increased. Women also often lack access to adequate information regarding effects of environmental degradation and may resist changes imposed without their knowledge and needs being considered.

Strengthened interventions for environmental management could include the following:

- Strengthen legislation, regulation, and control over the use of harmful chemicals and adopt environmentally friendly and safe alternatives as the agriculture sector modernizes.
- Increase research on and understanding of the impacts of environmental degradation on men and women, in such areas 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 monitoring indicators for monitoring social impacts for environmental programming are disaggregated by sex and track differential impacts on men and women.

Strengthened interventions for improvements to water supply and sanitation could include the following:

- Set targets for women's participation in water user groups to assist in the design and delivery of water and sanitation service projects.
- Ensure (and, as appropriate, set targets for) women's employment in construction/rehabilitation work, particularly in repairs and maintenance, and ensure wage parity is enforced.
- Closely monitor the impacts of water supply and sanitation projects on men and women and ensure that projects are adjusted as required to improve gender impact.

- Ensure that women are equally represented in consultations involving resettlement issues and that their concerns are separately documented and addressed during project design and implementation.

### **C. Finance Sector Development and Corporate Governance**

Although levels of women's entrepreneurship in the formal sector are low in the four CARs, women are increasingly responding to unemployment by establishing informal businesses. Women have cited complex entry and tax regulations, restrictive access to credit, and corruption as key obstacles to establishing SMEs in the formal sector. Thus, policies and programs focused on promoting private sector development would benefit considerably from addressing the reasons for women's low levels of participation in the formal private sector. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Develop strategic interventions designed to increase the incentives for women to shift their businesses from the informal to the formal sector, including providing technical and advisory support and services to start businesses.
- Ensure that women have equal and unhindered access to credit facilities and services.
- Provide training, retraining, and special education programs to strengthen women's entrepreneurial skills; and
- Support and promote mechanisms to develop strong and supportive business networks.
- Analyze the reasons for women's low participation in the SME sector, with a focus on identifying constraints and strategies for overcoming them.
- Analyze and document the gender dimensions of the informal sector and develop strategies in projects to encourage greater participation by women in the formal SME sector.
- Analyze proposed financial sector and governance reforms from an SME and gender perspective. Identify actual and potential gender biases and ensure that these are effectively addressed.
- Ensure codes of conduct on labor conditions are gender sensitive and that they inform and reinforce proposed reforms.
- Ensure that reforms to regulations governing SME operations are available to the public in user-friendly formats. Develop and implement appropriate training materials and programs for women on these regulations.
- Seek niches with particular potential for SMEs led by women. Identify barriers and strategies to overcome these with female entrepreneurs.
- Consult with women traders, owners, vendors, and others engaged in enterprises to determine their credit needs and the factors discouraging them from accessing lending institutions. Develop service delivery mechanisms and products that respond to their needs.
- Conduct gender-awareness and sensitization training programs for staff of lending institutions in urban and rural areas.

## **D. Regional Transport Infrastructure Development**

Women use improved transportation systems, but are rarely consulted regarding their specific needs. A new road may be seen by men primarily as a means to transport goods, whereas women often first welcome easier access to emergency health care services. The priority needs of both genders must be reflected in the design of infrastructure, related services, and policies that affect pricing of transportation. Cost-benefit analysis should incorporate more than income measures to ensure that social development benefits are accruing in an equitable manner.

Road maintenance and construction projects contribute to poverty reduction, particularly in landlocked countries dominated by difficult mountainous terrain with sparsely populated areas. Improved roads enhance access to local and international markets and services; can provide additional income-earning opportunities for the communities through which they pass; and can improve access to key social infrastructure, including educational and health facilities.

However, such projects can have negative impacts with specific gender dimensions. Increased vulnerabilities to trafficking rings and labor exploitation are real risks that can be mitigated if appropriate gender analysis takes place at project design and effective measures for addressing the negative impacts are built into projects at implementation. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Regularly monitor positive and negative impacts of roads projects on men and women.
- Regularly monitor other impacts on men and women of road investments, including temporary and illegal migration flows, trafficking, and HIV/AIDS rates.
- Ensure that components addressing human trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS are incorporated into all roads projects. Ensure that such components address relevant gender issues effectively.
- Build the capacity of government agencies to effectively track migration flows and to intercept human traffickers and smugglers.
- Use infrastructure in road project areas (e.g., bus depots and markets) to provide information and advice to female travelers on the dangers of trafficking and temporary migration and advice to all on HIV/AIDS.
- Set targets for women's employment on roads projects as appropriate, particularly in repairs and maintenance.
- Build into projects awareness campaigns, for construction and transport workers, regarding sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and the harm caused by and risks involved in using the services of commercial sex workers.
- Build in regular rapid assessments by NGOs or community-based organizations familiar with the region and communities around the project area. Include gathering sex-disaggregated data to assess trafficking and migration flows and impacts over time.
- Ensure that wherever possible women are fully represented on road user panels and committees.

## **E. Education**

While primary enrolment rates remain high in the region, at 95–97%, female enrolments are decreasing at secondary levels in some of the CARs. Completion rates are declining for both boys and girls at primary and secondary levels, affecting the quality of educational outcomes. Monitoring these trends and the reasons for them should be a key priority, with particular focus on better understanding their gender dimensions. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Assure that the design and implementation of education projects is informed by gender-disaggregated data and that staff in implementing agencies and related government agencies are trained to ensure that they can track changes and develop effective gender-sensitive mechanisms for addressing them.
- Regularly track learning achievements of boys and girls at primary and secondary level. Develop appropriate interventions to ensure quality education for all.
- Programming should regularly track enrolment and attendance rates of boys and girls at all levels and use the findings to develop targeted policy and program responses that will enable boys and girls to achieve parity in educational attainment.
- Government efforts to reduce dropout rates for girls as well as boys must focus on family and community as well as improving school infrastructure and teaching quality.
- Ensure school infrastructure and facilities adequately take into account the special needs of girls.
- Include regular assessments of non-attendance rates of boys and girls as a core component of monitoring the effectiveness of project outcomes.
- Establish programs to extend educational opportunities to adolescent girls who have dropped out of school. An objective should be to bring out-of-school adolescent girls away from their homes to participate in acceptable activities that will broaden their life experience and skills.
- Examine the opportunities to encourage the formation of parent-teacher associations as mechanisms for increasing the active participation of parents as stakeholders and ensuring gender balance in such associations.
- Ensure women are fully represented on school and project management committees and other project institutional arrangements.
- Build in provisions to review curricula and textbooks for gender stereotypes. Change them to promote gender equity objectives and to encourage girls to take up nontraditional careers. Education should incorporate skills and knowledge that prepare graduates better for changing labor markets. This would include approaches that challenge gender stereotypes to enable more girls to move into skilled jobs that offer greater return on their labor.
- Seek ways to increase the number of women in senior teaching and administrative positions in higher education and professional institutions, both to encourage mainstreaming of gender dimensions into courses and to act as role models and encourage parents to permit their daughters to pursue higher education.

## **F. Health**

Health care across all four CARs has deteriorated during the transition from the Soviet economy. Nutrition has decreased. Anemia rates among women are high, and while MMRs fluctuate and decline slightly they are still very high. Access to, quality of, and affordability of health services have dropped as government spending on health care has gone down—in the Kyrgyz Republic it has dropped from 4% of GDP in 1995 to 1.9% in 2001, and in Tajikistan, from 4.8% in 1990 to only 0.9% in 2002. Women, the primary caregivers, are severely impacted by increased illness and by the burdens of caring for other family members who are ill. This is often compounded by their having less control than men over household resources. In some of the CARs, access to and knowledge of contraception is low and is implicated in high abortion and mortality rates. The Azerbaijan CGA notes high anemia rates, continued use of abortion as birth control, high MMRs, and high malnutrition incidences. Kazakhstan reports low life expectancies, high rates of anemia among women, poor nutrition, and the effects of environmental hazards on health. In the Kyrgyz Republic, MMRs have increased, pregnancies among unmarried girls 15–19 are high (55%) likely due to limited access to and knowledge of contraceptives, rates of anemia and iodine deficiency disorders are up, while the MMR has declined slightly. Health indicators are also down in Tajikistan, with nutrition problems up, MMRs down somewhat, access to and knowledge of contraceptives problematical, post traumatic stress issues, and lower use of health services due to cost. Data on health indicators are unreliable. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Develop a better understanding of the broad range of factors, beyond those directly associated with poverty and quality of health care service delivery, that influence the health of men and women, specifically gender relations and the unequal status of women.
- Regularly collect and report data disaggregated by sex to track health indicators for boys, girls, men, and women—sex-disaggregated tracking of nutritional deficiencies such as anemia, iodine deficiency disorders, stunting, wasting, and malnutrition is greatly needed within different age groups. Identify and remedy gender gaps as appropriate.
- Seek to work with and build the capacity of women’s NGOs and develop partnerships between them. Target communities and local governments to work collaboratively on health, nutrition, and education projects.
- Use existing projects to develop an improved understanding of whether access to sanitation and clean water differ by sex and, if so, what the implications are for men’s and women’s health.
- To reduce infant and maternal mortalities, increase the accessibility to primary health care, attended births, pre- and post-natal care, and family planning and contraception, and improve the quality of services provided.

## **G. Gender-Based Violence**

Violence against women has increased with poverty. In all four CARs, the cultures expect women to accept or avoid such treatment but within the confines of the family. The police and judiciary are not accustomed to dealing with such matters, generally believing that they are family matters not public ones. While national statutes exist to protect women, they are not put into practice. Women who seek official redress are likely to be ostracized. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Establish more crisis centers, toll-free crisis lines, shelters, and safe houses for women. These should offer a range of services so that women are not forced by economic dependence to return to dangerous situations. The services should include financial, legal, medical, and psychological counseling, and skills-building and income-generating opportunities.
- Establish more outside treatment professionals to deliver innovative grief and trauma counseling that is not clinical in nature and thereby does not carry social stigma. Such treatment could be delivered through NGOs and other community-based entry points, to address the continuing post-traumatic effects of civil war and abuse among men and women.
- Create residential alcohol and drug treatment programs for addicted men and/or violent perpetrators who have addiction issues, taking them outside their households and providing trauma counseling and skills building.
- Include in school curricula, from the primary level on, awareness of the criminality of violence against women and women's rights to protection under the law. Teach boys respect for girls at an early age.
- Provide adequate funding and technical support to develop culturally appropriate outreach, education, and media campaigns to challenge widespread social attitudes and claims that "culture" and "family" traditions endorse violence against women.
- Educate the public that no religion or culture endorses violence against women. Carry out the campaign through print, radio, and television media.
- Reform the law to provide an adequate definition of gender-based violence. Implement an extensive sensitization program for police and judiciary to help them acknowledge 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.
- Hold specialized sessions integrated in training programs for all health professionals, so they can identify and address the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence. Health professionals also need training to prepare and give evidence in court as new laws are enforced. Similar skills are also required for people who work with victims of sexual abuse.

## **H. Human Trafficking**

Poverty and lack of employment opportunities increase vulnerability to human trafficking, which can then be facilitated by improved transport corridors. Most victims of trafficking are female. Thus, for transport projects, a gender analysis of the impacts of increased vehicular traffic, economic opportunities, and greater mobility should be done, the risks taken into account, and appropriate services and awareness-raising regarding potential risks offered. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Increase governments' understanding of the current dynamics of human trafficking in the region. Put mechanisms in place to track migrants, follow up on experiences of trafficking survivors, and seek experiences from other countries.
- Target poverty reduction and social protection programming more effectively to the people who are most vulnerable to being trafficked.
- Integrate trafficking prevention activities into existing infrastructure and community development programming. For example, in the design of infrastructure projects, consider how the flow of goods and services across international borders will also influence the flow of migrants and intensify risks of trafficking.
- Learn from others in Asia and draw on experiences in developing programming. Mainstream counter-trafficking activities as an issue of concern in many areas of work.
- Improve implementation of anti-trafficking legislation at regional, national, and local levels.
- Create and empower national mechanisms to analyze and monitor the implementation of legislation, particularly from a gender perspective.
- Improve public awareness of trafficking modalities and sensitivity to returned victims through improved use of media (print, radio, and television, as appropriate to the target audiences).
- Ensure legislation is understandable to the public so that it can be effectively implemented.

## **I. Gender and Governance**

Women are sparsely represented in the governments of the four CARs, a situation that must be changed if the slide in women's status is going to be turned around. Strengthened interventions could include the following:

- Ensure effective implementation of directives regarding increasing the numbers and proportion of women in decision-making positions in government.
- Establish a coordination center and/or monitoring body to track and report on numbers and proportions of women in decision-making positions.
- Provide leadership training to women (through NGOs or local government for example) to encourage more women to move into senior decision-making positions.



- Consider applying quotas until representation of women is balanced at all levels.
- Implement programs to raise gender awareness, with men in senior positions as a key target group.
- Increase public awareness of gender-related laws (to support advocacy efforts).

The following recommendations pertain to increasing women's political participation:

- Increase public awareness of the importance of women's political participation. Civil society in particular has an important role to play in increasing awareness within political parties and among voters.
- Increase women's awareness, as voters, of their role in making elected officials accountable to them for gender equality and women's empowerment, and for ensuring that their specific needs are addressed in policies and programming.
- Increase the capacity of elected officials, particularly women, to address gender equality and women's empowerment issues.
- 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). The aim is to ensure that the needs of women as well as men are addressed.

Recommendations to enhance public sector reforms to benefit women are as follows:

- Several elements of the policy and budget management reforms, particularly those associated with shifts to performance-based budgeting have been proposed in the four CARs. These provide excellent entry points for gender budgeting. The entry points need to be formalized in the indicators selected to track progress in poverty reduction strategies and programs.
- Strengthened technical capacities for gender budgeting can also be mainstreamed into current public service training in all areas. The training should be supported by a range of programs to reform and strengthen the civil service and governance mechanisms at all levels.
- Measures need to be taken to ensure that employment equity and sexual harassment considerations are brought into the civil service reform process. Governments have an opportunity to take leadership in this area as employers that respect and protect women's rights.

Recommendations for the promotion of gender equality through civil society and NGOs are as follows:

- Promote gender-sensitive approaches to poverty reduction among all civil society organizations. Disseminate experiences of effective collaboration with government in gender-sensitive planning and implementation of programming that effectively target the needs and priorities of women.
- Continue to advocate and support a rights-based approach to poverty reduction work. Pressure the government to follow through on its commitment to protect women's rights.

- Provide gender sensitivity and gender analysis training for other civil society organizations and government staff at all levels, based on the experience of NGOs led by and/or focused on women, and civil-society organizations. The aim is to increase understanding of the ways in which gender mainstreaming and rectification of gender gaps can maximize poverty reduction efforts.

## Appendix 1. Selected Indicators in the Four Central Asian Republics

Indicators	Azerbaijan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic
<b>HDI vs. GDI<sup>1</sup></b>	0.729 vs. 0.725 <sup>2</sup>	0.652 vs. 0.534 <sup>3</sup>	0.774 vs. 0.759 <sup>4</sup>	0.698 vs. 0.696 <sup>5</sup>
<b>GDP per capita men vs. women</b>	\$3,800; not sex disaggregated	\$1,260, not sex disaggregated	Men \$9,008; women \$4,223	\$431 in 2004 (no sex disaggregated data available)
<b>Unemployment rates for men and women</b>	40.5% for women vs. 16.4% for men	No comparative data available	Women 10.8% (2003) Official unemployment level 8.8% (2003)	14.3 % for women and 11.2 % for men
<b>Wage gap</b>	Women earn 54.4% (health and social service sectors); i.e., a gap of 45.6% Women earn 77.7% in education sector, i.e., a 22.3% gap	Women earn average of 46% of average men's wages, i.e., a gap of 54%	Women earn average of 61.7% of men's wages, i.e., a 38.3% gap	Women earn 64.9 % of average men's wages (2002), i.e., a gap of 35.1%
<b>Enrolment ratios: (2000–2005)<sup>6</sup></b>	Overall primary school attendance rates of 88.4% (no sex-disaggregated data)  63.4% enrolment for males and 63.5% for females (2002)	Grades 1–4—48% of students are girls Grades 5–9—46% of students are girls Grades 10–11—40% of students are girls Higher education—25% of students are female (2004) <sup>7</sup>	Primary education—balanced rates <sup>8</sup> 49% girls in elementary and secondary institutions 57% girls in higher education institutions (2003)	Primary education on par Secondary education—52.4% girls Tertiary—54 % are female <sup>9</sup>
<b>Political participation—women's representation in national parliaments</b>	10.4%	13%	9.5%	1.3%
<b>Maternal mortality ratios (deaths/100,000 live births)</b>	37 (2000)	43.1 (2004)	36.9 (2004 UN MDG Report data)	49.3 (2003)
<b>Life expectancy</b>	Male 68.1 Female 75.1	Male 67.3 Female 72.9	Male 56 Female 67	Male 64.4 Female 72.1

<sup>1</sup> The GDI (gender-related development index) measures the average achievement of a population in the same dimensions as the HDI while adjusting for gender inequalities in the level of achievement in the three basic aspects of human development. It uses the same variables as the HDI, disaggregated by gender.

<sup>2</sup> [hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_AZE.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_AZE.html).

<sup>3</sup> [www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country\\_Briefing\\_Papers/Women\\_in\\_Tajikistan/chap\\_01.pdf](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Tajikistan/chap_01.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> [hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty\\_f\\_KAZ.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/cty/cty_f_KAZ.html).

<sup>5</sup> [www.undp.kg/english/publications/1999/nhdr/chapter\\_1.html](http://www.undp.kg/english/publications/1999/nhdr/chapter_1.html).

<sup>6</sup> [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org): basic indicators available by country.

<sup>7</sup> GRT 2004.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP and GRK 2005a.

<sup>9</sup> The rates obscure a highly gendered organization of fields of study: women dominate in education services and social and behavioral sciences and men in agriculture and fisheries, veterinary science and engineering (ADB 2005, 45).

**Appendix 2. Regional Meeting**  
**Crescent Beach Hotel, Baku, Azerbaijan**  
**21–23 April 2005**

**Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Reduction Strategies**  
**in Four Central Asian Republics (ADB TA 6177)**

**A. Findings from Working Group Sessions**

The following text summarizes the four working group reports: (i) rural development, (ii) gender and governance, (iii) labor market, and (iv) migration and trafficking—on ways in which these issues can/have been addressed (i.e., entry points) in poverty reduction programs.

**1. Rural Development**

A key issue noted was land reform. Recommended entry points are

- (i) gender analysis and review of legislation;
- (ii) establishment of information and consultation centers for women;
- (iii) development of social partnerships between nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and government, nationally, regionally, and locally;
- (iv) systematic analyses of gender impacts of land reform;
- (v) ensuring of collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated statistics and data on land reform and men's and women's access to land and agricultural inputs, etc.;
- (vi) establishment of coordination/monitoring bodies to monitor gender and other impacts of land reform process; and
- (vii) use and increasing of the capacity of local courts to resolve land issues between men and women.

**2. Gender and Governance**

Recommended entry points are as follows:

- (i) Ensure effective implementation of directives regarding increasing the numbers and proportions of women in decision-making positions in government.
- (ii) Establish a coordination center and monitoring body to track and report on numbers and proportions of women in decision-making positions.
- (iii) Provide leadership training to women (through NGOs or local government for example) to encourage more women to move into senior decision-making positions.
- (iv) Apply quotas to ensure balanced representation of women at all levels (debated).
- (v) Implement gender awareness-raising programs (with men in senior positions as a key target group).
- (vi) Increase public awareness of gender-related laws (helps to support advocacy efforts).

### **3. Labor Market**

Recommended entry points are as follows:

- (i) Increase women's access to entrepreneurship training and skills development.
- (ii) Improve the collection and quality of data relating to women's unemployment and employment.
- (iii) Increase salaries—particularly at lower pay scales—to encourage women to return to work.
- (iv) Put in place legislation to overcome horizontal and vertical labor segregation.
- (v) Develop and implement retraining programs for women with a focus on updating their skills base.
- (vi) Improve and facilitate labor mobility.
- (vii) Undertake studies of particularly vulnerable groups (e.g., widows and single mothers) to define more clearly the obstacles they face and therefore develop appropriate strategies to overcome them.
- (viii) Undertake attitudinal surveys of employers to identify gender biases.
- (ix) Improve the level of social protection provisions/payments to women—particularly those in vulnerable categories, e.g., the unemployed and single parents.
- (x) Ensure effective legislation is in place to protect women's jobs—particularly during maternity and related leave.

### **4. Migration and Trafficking**

Recommended entry points are as follows:

- (i) Improve implementation of anti-trafficking legislation at regional, national, and local levels.
- (ii) Create and empower national mechanisms to analyze and monitor the implementation of legislation, particularly from a gender perspective.
- (iii) Provide direct support to victims of human trafficking (e.g., shelter, food, and counseling).
- (iv) Improve the quality and implementation of return procedures.
- (v) Establish and provide state support (including counseling centers) for refugees.
- (vi) Improve the quality of migration and trafficking data and indicators to ensure gender dimensions are effectively captured.
- (vii) Improve public awareness of trafficking modalities and sensitivity to returned victims through improved use of media (print, radio, and television).
- (viii) Ensure legislation is understandable to the public so that it can be effectively implemented.

**B. Participants**

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