

Country Briefing Paper

**Women in the
Republic of Uzbekistan**

Prepared by

Wendy Mee

FEBRUARY 2001

Acknowledgments

This Country Briefing Paper on the status of Women in the Republic of Uzbekistan would not have been possible without the assistance and guidance of many people.

In particular, I must thank Mekhri Khudayberdiyeva from ADB's Resident Mission in Uzbekistan. Ms. Khudayberdiyeva proved a valuable research colleague, whose fluency in Russian, Uzbek and English, and organizational skills made the research possible. Furthermore, her good judgment and sense of humor made the research highly enjoyable. The report also benefited from her very helpful feedback on the draft report and her help in the preparation of the two appendices.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to all the people in Uzbekistan who gave so generously of their time and experience. In particular, I would like to thank those who allowed me to interview them, observe training days, or participate in other related activities. I would also like to thank the participants of the Gender and Development consultative meeting held at ADB's Resident Mission in Tashkent on 16 November 2000. I am deeply grateful to the following individuals:

Dilbar Gulyamova (Deputy Prime Minister, Republic of Uzbekistan)
Dilovar Kabulova (Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan)
Sayora Khodjaeva (Deputy Hokim, Tashkent Oblast)
Nariman Mannapbekov (Cabinet of Ministries)
Galina Saidova (Cabinet of Ministries)
Gasanov M. and Jurayeva Feruza Tulkunovna (Institute for Monitoring Acting
Legislation of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan)
Reyganat Makhmudova (State Department of Statistics, Ministry of Macroeconomics
and Statistics)
Djoria Alimkhodjaeva (Republican Trade Union)

Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva (Women's Resource Center)
Nataliya Muravyova (Women and Society Institute)
Flora Pirnazarova ("Mehri" Women's Society)
Alfia Akbarova (Former member of UN Program on Gender)
Dildora Alimbekova, Tadjikhan Saydikramova, Dildora Tadjibaeva and staff (Business
Women's Association (BWA), Republican Office)
Gulnara Makhmudova and Farzona Khashimova (BWA, Tashkent Oblast)
Volunteers and students at the Tadbikor Ayol Begabad City
Dilbar Akhmedova (BWA, Bukhara Oblast) and staff of the Bukhara Crisis Center
Shiriniva Mavluda, Mamatkulova Dilya, Daler Mahmudov and staff and volunteers of the
BWA Samarkand Oblast and Sabr Crisis Center

Alisher Ilkhamov and Igor Pogreboff ('Expert' Center for Social Research)
Azizkhan Khanhodjaev, Nishanby Sirajiddinov and Uktam Abdurakhmanov (Center on
Economic Research)
Eleonora Fayzullaeva (Soros Foundation)
Ned Kalb and Inobat Avezmuratova (Winrock International)

Dilnara Isamitdinova (World Bank, Social Sector)
Hugo Karlsson (United Nations Development Programme)
Jennifer Brick (United States Agency for International Development)

In addition, I drew heavily on the findings and insights of two unpublished reports:

Uzbekistan Gender Study in Transition, October 1998. Unpublished report prepared by the 'Expert' Center for Social Research for ADB; and

The draft report on the status of women in Uzbekistan prepared in 1999 by Dinara Alimdjanova, former Gender Specialist at ADB's Uzbekistan Resident Mission.

At La Trobe University, I would like to thank Professor John Miller, Dr. Shahram Akbarzadeh, Ms. Alfia Abazova and Mr. Rafis Abazov for generously sharing their experience and knowledge.

Finally, I would like to thank ADB, and in particular Shireen Lateef (Senior Social Development Specialist, Gender and Development) for her valuable guidance and Susanne Wendt (Social Development Specialist) for her insightful editorial comments on the draft report.

The views and interpretations in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of ADB or any of the individuals named above.

Abbreviations

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	–	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BWA	–	Businesswomen’s Association
CAR	–	Central Asian republic
CEDAW	–	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COS	–	country operational strategy
FBS	–	Family Budget Survey
GAD	–	gender and development
GDP	–	gross domestic product
GNP	–	gross national product
HIV	–	human immunodeficiency virus
IUD	–	intrauterine device
NGO	–	nongovernment organization
PIFs	–	Privatization Investment Funds
SCU	–	savings and credit union
STD	–	sexually transmitted disease
SME	–	small and medium enterprise
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Programme

Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Abbreviations	v
Executive Summary	ix
Chapter 1: Uzbekistan in Transition	1
Economic Reform, Poverty and Women	1
Economic Reform	1
Poverty	3
Women's Political Participation	6
Government Gender Initiatives	8
Women's Political Participation and NGOs	12
"Tradition," Islam and Gender	16
Chapter 2: Situational Analysis of Women in Uzbekistan	19
Demographic Trends	19
Social and Cultural Context	20
Economic Status of Female Labor	23
Women as less competitive	27
Feminization of poverty	27
Health and Nutrition	30
Education and Training	34
Chapter 3: Critical Issues for Women in Uzbekistan	37
Economic Costs of Transition	37
Employment and unemployment in SMEs	37
Vocational skills training	37
Business and entrepreneur skills	38
Microcredit programs	38
Financial sector reform and SME reform	40
Human Costs of Development	40
Health and hygiene	41
Child-care centers	41
Education	42
Women's leadership and political participation	43
Gender and Development Capacity Building	44
Building gender capacity in government	44
Supporting public education programs on gender and gender stereotypes	45
Building a database on the economic and social conditions of women and households	46
Chapter 4: Programming Opportunities Relevant to ADB	47
ADB Operational Strategy for Uzbekistan	47
General Recommendations	47
Building the gender capacity of the GID Unit	48

Retraining highly skilled women in business and management	48
Supporting small business development for promoting women's microenterprises	49
Designing microfinance programs for poor women	49
Promoting tertiary and vocational education for women	49
Strengthening the capacity of NGOs working on gender	50
Supporting agriculture-related projects	50
Institutionalizing gender-disaggregated data	51
Strengthening and building the institutional capacity of government GAD focal points and women's NGOs	51
Gender Concerns in ADB's Project Pipeline for Uzbekistan, 2000-2001	51
Approved Projects, 2000	51
Senior Secondary Education (Loan 1737)	52
Ak-Altin Agriculture Development (Project 30458-01)	52
Second Small and Medium Enterprise Development (Loan 1799)	52
Railway Modernization (Loan 1773)	53
Proposed 2001 Loans	54
Basic Education Staff Development	54
Rural Savings and Credit Union Development	55
Bibliography	57
Appendices	
1 Key Aspects of the National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan	59
2 Women's Organizations in Uzbekistan	63
Tables	
1 Real GDP Growth and Inflation Rate	3
2 The Share and Income of Extremely Poor and Poor Families	4
3 Distribution of Poor Families by Region and Province, 1998	5
4 Representation of Women in Parliament, 1980-1998	13
5 Representation of Women among Provincial and Regional Authorities, 1998	14
6 Share of Women in Labor Force	24
7 Distribution of Female Labor Force by Sector, 1998	25
8 Wages within Various Branches of the Economy	26
9 Breakdown of Average Time Costs on Housekeeping by Women and Men in Ak-Altyn Region of Syrdarya Oblast	33

Executive Summary

The post-Soviet economic transition in Uzbekistan has had a bitter impact on women. The economic hardship that accompanied this transition has resulted in less affordable education and reduced individual and family support services that provided the foundation for women to pursue education and professional opportunities in the Soviet era.

As a result, women in Uzbekistan are more at risk of poverty than men, particularly if women are divorced, widowed, unmarried mothers or have large families. The unemployment rate for women is higher than that of men (with women accounting for 63 percent of unemployed persons). Most of the unemployed women are unskilled women from rural areas trained for low-wage agricultural work. Other women, concentrated in the predominantly female sectors of the government service such as health and education, face economic hardships as the value of their wages has declined in real terms since independence in 1991. Women face additional barriers in many cases when they attempt to take advantage of new opportunities to improve their standard of living. For example, women not only lack many of the business skills required to develop small business but have also little access to credit. There is also a marked preference to employ men in private sector enterprises, partly because of the “expense” of female employees, who are guaranteed a number of rights such as maternity leave in the Labor Code.

As a result of the above changes, there are two worrisome trends regarding women’s economic and employment status in Uzbekistan. Firstly, the transition to a market economy has rendered women less competitive in the employment market, particularly in the private sector. Secondly, there is mounting concern that poverty is undergoing a process of feminization.

More generally, economic hardships pose particular problems for women in the areas of health. Since independence, the size of the health care budget has been gradually eroded to the point that people now pay for most health services—even in situations where nominally the service is free of charge. The increasing cost of health care has implications for women of childbearing age who typically have higher demands for health care and who generally have the day-to-day responsibility for their children’s health. One of the major health problems facing women in Uzbekistan is anemia, which nearly 60 percent of women suffer to some extent. Anemia is a condition closely linked to frequent births, inadequate nutrition and poor water quality. Poverty is of course a factor here, particularly in rural areas where there are greater problems of poor diet and restricted caloric intake.

Education has also been affected by the transition. Women’s participation in higher education has been falling due to a combination of factors (such as increasing cost of education and a reluctance to allow daughters to study in urban areas). Stereotyped ways of thinking about women and men’s areas of educational specialization and choice of profession remain strong. There is evidence that the current educational programs preferred by women are not well linked to the existing demand of the labor market, and thus disadvantage female professionals. There is also a shortage of vocational courses, which could provide women with skills in small business and vocational areas.

Women's participation in the formal political structure of Uzbekistan has also fallen during the transition period. Despite efforts by the Government, notably a presidential decree establishing the position of Deputy Prime Minister of Women's Affairs, women accounted for 8 percent of parliamentarians in the Oliy Majlis in 1998 (in contrast to 35 percent in the Supreme Soviet of Uzbek SSR before independence).

Independence and the growth of nationalism have also seen the reemergence of traditional gender ideologies in some quarters. Despite official decrees supporting women, the full participation of women in society is limited by gender ideologies that view men as the main economic provider. Not only do such beliefs restrict women's access to well paid jobs, but they also threaten the future investment of parents in their daughters' higher and vocational education. Unfortunately, such beliefs complement others that view a woman's status in society as lower than a man's, and thus justify men's authority over women.

Nevertheless, the impact of economic hardship on women over the past ten years has been mixed. There is a great deal of potential for the women of Uzbekistan given both the commitment of the Government to address the decline in women's status in society and also the initiative and resourcefulness of the women of Uzbekistan themselves. On a more positive note, a shift in the importance of women's economic activities, such as an increased reliance on the sale of produce grown on the family's private plot, has given some women greater authority in the home.

Also, a number of educated and professional women have resisted the threatened loss of status for women in Uzbekistan. Many of these women have turned their knowledge and experience to lead Uzbekistan's growing women's NGO movement. From this base, such women provide assistance in areas central to women's economic, social and political status (including business and vocational training, legal literacy, psychological counseling, health and domestic violence programs, assistance to women with disabilities, etc.).

This would not have been possible, however, without the support and goodwill of the Government. Uzbekistan has implemented a number of legislative reforms (for example, a new Family Code and Labor Code), and has signed a number of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), designed to enhance the status of women in Uzbekistan. To an extent, the Government realized the threat to women's status early on and took proactive steps to address this issue when it established by Presidential Decree the Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Women's Committee in turn has been a major force behind the number of reforms and programs directed at protecting the rights and status of women in Uzbekistan.

Despite these and other policies designed to improve women's status and to enhance their role in society, women still face inequality in all aspects of their life. A main challenge, therefore, is to mainstream gender-awareness approaches among policymakers and the general public as well. The absence of accurate and reliable gender disaggregated data and the lack of new research methodologies in Uzbekistan is a major constraint in developing effective gender projects. Priority research areas include household surveys on the extent of poverty; gender relations in women's participation in the labor market; barriers to the implementation of laws that protect women; and qualitative research into the influence of traditional and religious cultural practices on women.

Economic Reform, Poverty and Women

Economic Reform

Since independence in 1991, the Government of Uzbekistan has followed a path of gradual economic transition to a market-based economy. The rate and depth of Uzbekistan's economic and political liberalization have been modest and tightly controlled, as the Government sought to move cautiously to establish a market economy, while at the same time maintaining social expenditures. Privatization has been very slow and prices more strictly controlled than in other Central Asian republics (CARs). Nevertheless, while macroeconomic control was achieved more slowly than in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, with inflation only dropping below 50 percent in 1997, economic growth has been higher here than in these neighboring states where reform has been more comprehensive.¹

The transition to a market-based economy brings profound challenges for this former centrally planned Soviet economy. To a very high level, Uzbekistan's economy was integrated within the larger regional and Soviet economy during the Soviet era. This has implications for Uzbekistan's ability to operate as an autonomous economic and political unit in the post-independence era. The reform path followed has further consequences on the pace and success of this transition period. Both the transition itself and the particular mechanisms introduced to facilitate this transition have an impact on the socioeconomic status of women in Uzbekistan, which this report seeks to address.

During the Soviet-era, Uzbekistan's economy was only one part of a larger Soviet economy. Uzbekistan's role within the Soviet economy was that of primary producer. Primary products (particularly cotton) and natural resources (notably gold) dominated Uzbekistan's economy then and now. This division of labor resulted in underdeveloped and highly specialized industrialization (that is, highly concentrated in cotton-related industries but at a relatively low level of technological sophistication). Agriculture continues to play a pivotal role in the overall economy, accounting for about 25 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), 40 per cent of employment, and 60 per cent of exports. Other than cotton, Uzbekistan's main export commodities are mineral resources such as gold, silver, copper, other precious metals, uranium and natural gas. Uzbekistan thus depends economically upon a few export commodities, which makes the country vulnerable to world market prices of cotton and gold.

Since independence, the Government has tried to balance the transition to a market economy by retaining aspects of a command economy. Government policy has been based on two main principles: firstly, on the creation of a favorable economic environment for the development of individual and small business activities, and secondly, on the provision of support to vulnerable groups of the population. Government policies and the slow pace of reform have at times acted as barriers to the growth of industrialization and small and medium enterprises

¹ This has led to a vigorous debate on the relative advantages and disadvantages in Central Asia of more gradualist approaches to economic reform in contrast to more rapid economic liberalization. See Abazov (1997, 1999) and Pomfret and Anderson (2000).

(SMEs). Since the mid-1990s, there has been increasing concern that some of the early gains of economic liberalization and economic growth will be lost due to a constantly changing legislative environment, inadequate credit and banking systems, and a growing shadow economy.

For example, the growth and robustness of the private sector is one area with pronounced ramifications on women's economic status. Not only is the private sector important in terms of employment and fuelling economic growth,² its decline also often goes hand in hand with the growth of the informal sector where conditions and incomes are largely unprotected. The Government's gradualist approach to privatization has concentrated mainly on SMEs particularly in the services sector (food processing, small-scale retail, etc.).³ Promising legislative reform in the early 1990s resulted in the rapid growth of SMEs in Uzbekistan. However, since 1996 the growth rate of SMEs has declined largely due to a continuous decline in manufacturing, the lack of capital and undeveloped credit systems. In 1995, SMEs provided more than 12 percent of employment in Uzbekistan; by 1998, this share had dropped to 7 percent.⁴ The World Bank Private Sector Survey (1997) noted that eight out of the top 10 business obstacles faced by SMEs related to issues of registration; the complex system of licensing, controls and regulations; taxation; foreign exchange convertibility; and the lack of credit. SMEs are also targets of corrupt taxation and business registration officials.⁵ Lack of institutional support for development of SMEs is also a gendered affair, with women at a disadvantage because they have less property to put up as collateral and lack business confidence/skills.⁶

Uzbekistan's transition from a centrally planned to a market economy can be divided into three stages. The focus of the first stage (1991-1993) was to prevent further decline in production, attain macroeconomic stability, and create the conditions for sustainable growth. To achieve this, the Government abolished the state planning agencies of the previous centrally planned system and implemented a host of legal reforms to create the environment for the introduction of a market economy. The new system abolished legal constraints to private entrepreneurship and made progress in the areas of price liberalization, trade liberalization, taxation and small-scale privatization. At the same time, however, the Government retained its administrative monopoly and policy of centralized pricing in a number of industries such as mining, cotton and grain. It also maintained administrative control over trade.

The second stage (1994-1996) was characterized by a significant improvement in the macroeconomic situation and an acceleration of market-oriented reforms in several areas. Firstly, legislative reform of small-scale privatization was completed and new mechanisms established for large-scale privatization through the Privatization Investment Funds (PIFs). Secondly, state control of output for agricultural products except cotton and grain were reduced. Thirdly, the banking system was improved and strengthened by new monetary and credit policies.

The third stage (from 1997 to the present) has been characterized by some reversals in both the macroeconomic situation and the reform process. Economic growth slowed in 1998 by

² In developed market economies, SMEs comprise at least 50 percent of total employment and account for 60-80 percent of gross national product (GNP). In Uzbekistan, SMEs comprise about 6 percent of total employment and account for 10-15 percent of GNP (Khalmurzaev 2000, pp. 287-8).

³ Abazov 1997, p. 444.

⁴ "Poverty Impact Assessment," Supplementary Appendix of the *Report and Recommendation to the President on the Second Small and Medium Enterprise Project*, ADB, December 2000.

⁵ Khalmurzaev 2000.

⁶ *Report on the Status of Women in Uzbekistan* 1999, p. 14.

4.4 percent after having tripled from 1.6 percent in 1996 to 5.2 percent in 1997. Economic growth continued to be slow during 1999, as a result of reduced cotton yields and a fall in the price of cotton fiber and gold on the world market. Market-oriented reforms have also been partly reversed in key areas such as privatization, agricultural reform, taxation and banking. At the same time, the foreign exchange market worsened with an increasing difference between official and black market exchange rates. By the end of 1999, curb market exchange rates were over five times the official exchange rate (see Table 1).

Table 1: Real GDP Growth Rate and Inflation Rate

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Growth rate of real GDP	-11	-2.3	-4.2	-0.9	1.6	5.2	4.4	4.4
Inflation rate	645	534	746	315		28	30	32

Source: UNDP database, *Human Development Report* (Uzbekistan 1999).

Poverty

In general, the transition has resulted in a significant fall in living standards for most of the population. The transition period has been accompanied by (i) a decline in production, (ii) an increase in unemployment, (iii) high inflation, (iv) decreasing standards of living, and finally (v) increasing income differentiation and inequality. For example, the real average per capita income was halved from 1991 to 1996. High inflation is one critical factor here, where, according to the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, the annual inflation rate for 2000 was 26.5 percent. Unemployment is on the rise in Uzbekistan, with estimates of hidden unemployment as high as 30 percent (see Chapter 2). Aggravating this situation are the half a million young people who join the labor market each year.

Using the Family Budget Survey (FBS) and the official poverty line as 1.5 times the official minimum wage, about 14 percent of the population and 11 percent of households were considered poor in 1999. On the face of it, this represents a decline in poverty since the Soviet era, where poverty in Uzbekistan was estimated at 44 percent of the working population (57 percent in rural collective farm households and 39 percent in urban worker households).⁷

However, there is reason to be suspicious of such estimates. Firstly, during the Soviet era, the majority of the population considered poor did not suffer from absolute poverty. Most of them had jobs or other sources of income, had adequate housing and enjoyed free health care and education. The decline in the level of government services such as child care, health and education over the last 10 years has in fact made the experience of relative poverty far worse than during the Soviet period (see Chapter 2). Secondly, the official relationship between the minimum wage and poverty does not acknowledge the fact that minimum wage levels do not cover the actual cost of living.⁸ There are also concerns over the underestimation of the real level

⁷ See p. 2 of footnote 4.

⁸ Since 1992, the Ministry of Labor has calculated a subsistence minimum income, although not widely publicized outside of the Government. This minimum income level is used in setting the minimum

of poverty. In 1998, for example, 26 percent of the population received allowances. However, according to the Household Budget Survey done by the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics in the first half of 1999, 40 percent of the population of Uzbekistan should be identified as poor and hence receive allowances. (Calculations here were based on the income and real expenditure of the population.)

Finally, there are now more groups at risk of poverty than 10 years ago. According to one report, 10-15 years ago there were only three distinguishable social classes—the poor, the middle class and the rich—with the middle class comprising 80-85 percent of the population. Recent interviews reveal that people now differentiate up to six social classes—including the new categories of the very rich and the destitute.⁹ While those most at risk of poverty are still largely rural people and vulnerable groups (such as single mothers and single pensioners), new groups of people are confronted by the problems of high inflation, cost of living and unemployment. For example, poverty occurs most frequently in families with a large number of children (38.3 percent of families have four or more children, and 19.6 percent of families have three children). And membership to what has been called “the new poor” now extends to formerly middle class professionals such as doctors, teachers, scientists and employees of enterprises facing financial difficulties associated with structural adjustments (see Table 2).

Table 2: Share and Income of Extremely Poor and Poor Families

	1997		1998	
	Income (sum)	% of Families	Income (sum)	% of Families
Extremely poor	668.7	18.7	791.3	14.8
Poor	752.2	4.8	926.5	5.7
Minimum wage (sum)	675.0		925.0	

Source: UNDP database, *Human Development Report* (Uzbekistan 1999).

Funding agencies and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) estimate that the level of poverty is much higher than official estimates due to problems of unemployment, wage arrears, low salaries and high inflation.¹⁰ In 1994, it was estimated that 62 percent of the population fell below the poverty line.¹¹ The Human Development Report (UNDP 1998) estimated that 21.2 percent of families were “needy,” of which 15.6 percent were “very needy.” Subjective, self-ranked estimates of poverty put the figure at 40-80 percent, with estimates of 1-5 percent of the population as destitute.¹²

wage. The minimum wage is in turn used as a basis for calculating social benefits, such as family allowances, child benefits, and in the selection of low-income households that will receive social assistance through the *mahalla* neighborhood administration body. In order to prevent a decrease in the living standards of the population, the Government regularly raises the level of the minimum wage.

⁹ Expert Social Research Center, *Consultations with the Poor*, 1999 p. 6. This was a participatory poverty assessment study conducted as part of the *World Development Report 2000/01*.

¹⁰ At the time of writing, no reliable household surveys were available; however, the forthcoming household survey study conducted by the Expert Social Research Center may help fill this gap.

¹¹ Expert Social Research Center, *Uzbekistan Gender Study in Transition* (October 1998, unpublished).

¹² See footnote 11.

The wide range of estimates reflects different measures of poverty as well as regional distribution (see Table 3). Incidence of poverty is much higher in the predominantly rural Fergana valley and Karakalpakstan than in Tashkent city. According to one report, 47 percent of the rural population in the Fergana valley and 70 percent of rural Karakalpakstan, as compared to 10 percent of urban Tashkent, were poor.¹³ The higher incidence of rural poverty is compounded by rural-urban income differentials. For example, in 1996, the average monthly wage of an agricultural worker was only 54.2 percent of the average wage, and only 41 percent and 29.5 percent of the wage paid to workers in the industrial and construction/communication sectors, respectively. The average per capita income in Tashkent city is 4.2 times the level of rural Surkhandarya. Not surprisingly, the consumption of meat and dairy produce is also higher in Tashkent city than Surkhandarya (2.5 and 1.6 times higher, respectively).¹⁴

Table 3: Distribution of Poor Families by Region and Province, 1998
(%)

	Province	Extremely Poor	Poor
With low income	Karakalpakstan Djizzak Surkhandarya Namangan Khorezm	18.4	27.2
With comparative low income	Kashkadarya Tashkent Samarkand Bukhara Sirdarya	11.8	19.3
With high income	Andijan Fergana Navoi Tashkent city	7.1	10.9

Source: UNDP database, *Human Development Report* (Uzbekistan 1999).

The regional distribution of social assistance also indicates areas of greatest need. For example, the largest number of families receiving social assistance in 1997 were in Karakalpakstan and the Surkhandarya region where 49 percent of families received some assistance compared to 28 percent of families in Bukhara region and 31 percent in Tashkent.¹⁵

¹³ See footnote 11.

¹⁴ Asian Development Bank, *Country Economic Review* (August 1999).

¹⁵ Social assistance in Uzbekistan is largely administered through programs that target low-income families with children under 16. On the basis of monthly assessments made by local *mahallas*, approximately 700,000 families or 14.5 percent of all families were identified as having low income and allocated material aid in 1996 (*Human Development Report*, Uzbekistan, 1998). In order to target low-income families, the Government has involved *mahallas* in the process of identifying and distributing allowances to low-income families. *Mahalla* committees use the same criteria as other government agencies to identify low-income families, i.e., families that receives 1.5 times the minimum wage per capita per month.

Women's Political Participation

The deterioration of the economy during the transition period has negatively impacted on women's material well-being. Not only are women affected by the general economic situation, they are also relatively more disadvantaged by the reduction in social welfare that has accompanied transition.

For some women, unemployment is a symptom of women's relative economic vulnerability in Uzbekistan: women's domestic responsibilities, combined with a trend towards early marriage, make women less competitive in Uzbekistan's tight employment situation. Women are also disadvantaged by being in the less well-paid sectors of the economy. Their concentration in the so-called "non-productive" sectors of health, education and culture has seen a their wages fall further behind the national average over the past 10 years. For example, in 1998 wages in the health care sector (where 30 percent of employees are women) came to only 61 per cent of the national average wage. In education, where women constitute 48 per cent of employees, wages came to 68 per cent of average wage.¹⁶

However, the picture is more complex given that some women are now the primary providers in the household. The issue then is one of women's onerous workload, particularly if husbands and families are not prepared to shoulder some of the domestic and child care responsibilities usually performed by women (see Chapter 2).

Accompanying general economic problems associated with unemployment and low salaries are other related social problems such as inadequate and/or expensive provision of services and utilities. For example, since independence the size of the health care budget has been gradually eroded to the point that people now pay for most health services—even in situations where the service is nominally free of charge (see Chapter 2). Problems such as the irregular supply of gas, electricity and water, and the high cost of health services and education are widespread.¹⁷ The cost of basic services such as transport, energy and heating are still subsidized by the Government and the cost of wheat still controlled. However, the amount spent on subsidies overall has declined from more than 16 percent of government expenditure in 1994 to only 3 percent in 2000.¹⁸ This means that increasingly people have to bear the cost of utilities and services previously subsidized. In addition, the pervasiveness of bribe taking has added to the cost of living for the majority of people. In a situation where wages are in arrears and do not cover the cost of living, bribe taking has become endemic from obtaining a job and ensuring adequate health care to securing a place at university.

Such factors have both direct and indirect social costs on women. For example, the increasing cost of health care has implications for women of childbearing age who typically have higher demands for health care and who generally have the day-to-day responsibility of their children's health care. Enrollment levels at preschool classes have also fallen as the Government and other enterprises have been unable to subsidize the cost of such centers in the post-Soviet era. Consequently, preschools have either closed or now charge fees which many families cannot afford, and working mothers can no longer draw on a network of nurseries, kindergartens and

¹⁶ *Human Development Report 1999*. Tashkent.

¹⁷ See footnote 11.

¹⁸ See footnote 4.

child-minding services previously available. Furthermore, there is evidence that young women are being denied equal opportunity to pursue vocational and higher education due to increasing official and unofficial costs of education (see Chapter 2).

Employment is itself no guarantee against poverty, especially in the low wage seasonal agriculture sector and informal sector. Nevertheless, the most vulnerable parts of the population are individuals and families who cannot find regular employment. This group includes pensioners without family and households in areas where the major employer has closed, leading to widespread unemployment. It is for this reason that the State has been reluctant to downsize or rationalize government enterprises.

The State administers a number of social assistance programs, including benefits paid to large and low-income families; social insurance paid to workers experiencing hardship or retirement; and a social allowance benefit paid to the elderly and the disabled. *Mahalla* committees also provide assistance to poor families in the form of subsidized prices for medicines and utilities. The number of persons receiving some form of social security has remained steady at around 12 percent of the population.¹⁹ Social benefits however are far from adequate to cover the cost of living. In 1998, the average monthly old age pension given to women at 60 and men at 65 was around 1,250 sum or roughly equivalent to 2 kilograms of meat. Women accounted for 76 percent of the recipients of this allowance in 1998.²⁰ It is difficult to live on this amount without family support or another form of income or pension. This helps to explain one of the disturbing street scenes of contemporary Tashkent: elderly women forced to beg to supplement their meager pensions.

Despite these problems, Uzbekistan enjoyed modest economic growth in the second half of the 1990s, with official GDP growth rates of 1.7 percent (1996), 5.2 percent (1997), 4.4 percent (1998) and 4.4 percent (1999).²¹ In fact, over the past decade, Uzbekistan had the best economic performance of the CARs. Uzbekistan's relatively good performance was also helped by buoyant world prices for cotton and gold—Uzbekistan's two main export crops—from 1991 through to 1996. Furthermore, some of the protective measures that the Government has pursued to reduce the shock of economic transition have helped to cushion the effects of transition, particularly when compared to the experiences of neighboring Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic.²²

Consequently, Uzbekistan currently stands at an economic and policy crossroads. Despite moves towards developing a market economy, it remains unclear to what extent Uzbekistan is committed to economic liberalization. For example, in response to balance-of-payments problems following a fall in world cotton prices, the Government took what most analysts agree was a major step backwards when strict foreign exchange controls were re-introduced in 1996. Furthermore, despite positive comments from the Government with respect to the role of SMEs in privatization—particularly via family business traditions and the “bazaar” economy—the implementation of legislation to make credit more easily available has been slow.

¹⁹ Bureau of Gender and Development and the State Department of Statistics, *Women of Uzbekistan 1999: Statistical Collection* (1999).

²⁰ See footnote 6.

²¹ Pomfret and Anderson 2000.

²² See footnote 22.

Overall, there is a need to develop those sectors of the national economy that not only promise economic growth, but also provide opportunities for female employment. Government priority areas such as mining, power industry, oil and gas refinery and the car industry hold little prospect for female employment as these areas are considered male branches of industry. The development of processing industries situated in agriculture, in particular those connected with the processing of cotton, fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy products, provide more promising opportunities for women.²³ There is a great opportunity for rural women to establish their own small businesses in these areas too, if planned banking and credit sector reforms are implemented.

There is a case to be made that some of the Government's measures to control the rate of liberalization and reduce the shock of reform have become barriers to economic growth and poverty reduction. This seems to be particularly clear in the case of small business, where the legislative environment works against the needs of women looking for credit and microcredit facilities. Finally, while social protection measures have helped to offset some of the pain of market-economy reforms, the pensions and subsidies given fall far short of what is required.

Government Gender Initiatives

Uzbekistan has introduced a number of legislative changes and legal reforms designed to guarantee the interests and status of women. In general, women in Uzbekistan are accorded equal rights with men and enjoy a number of special provisions that acknowledge and protect the position of women as biological and social mothers and in the home and the workforce. However, in practice many women are not served well by these laws because of poor or patchy implementation and a lack of compliance.

According to the Constitution of Uzbekistan, all citizens enjoy equal rights and freedoms irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, personal or social status (Article 18). Article 46 guarantees equality of rights for men and women. There are however some special measures that pertain only to women in the various codes, such as the Labor Code and Family Code. These conditions set out privileges and protective measures proceeding from women's biological and reproductive functions. Uzbekistan is also a signatory to the CEDAW and the United Nations Declaration and Action Platform set forth in Beijing in 1995. The Government of Uzbekistan passed a new Family Code (1998) to bring the existing family law into compliance with these international conventions and declarations.

Family and labor codes are often the systems of law most directly bearing on women's status. In the case of Uzbekistan, both of these codes in general endorse the principle of men's and women's equality before the law and both also contain measures specific to the role of women.

The Labor Code of Uzbekistan (1995) does not permit discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, ethnic origin, language, social background, marital status, or number of children. Officially, employers cannot refuse to employ a woman on the grounds of pregnancy, marital status or number of children. Originally the Labor Code decreed that a number of protective privileges be given to pregnant women and nursing mothers, including transferal to less physically demanding work at the same average salary, prohibition against overtime, and

²³ See footnote 12.

pregnancy and maternity leave. Recent amendments to the Labor Code allow a woman to refuse such legal provisions. The reasoning here was that there was a contradiction between measures designed to protect women and the requirement to ensure equal treatment of all workers. These amendments were also made in the knowledge that such legal provisions were proving to be an obstacle to the employment of women in the nonstate sector.

The Family Code (1998) regulates marital and family relations, property rights and disputes. According to the Family Code, spouses enjoy equal rights. Polygamy is illegal in Uzbekistan and only civil registration of marriage is recognized as legal. (Religious ceremonies, such as *nikokh*, have no legal status in Uzbekistan). The minimum age for marriage is set at 17, and in some special cases, at 16. Both husband and wife can apply for divorce, and marriages can be legally concluded by mutual consent. On divorce, property is split jointly between the spouses and women who are pregnant or caring for common children have the right to receive alimony. Two issues not directly addressed in the Family Code are discrimination against women on the basis of their family status and the prohibition of violence against women. However, these issues are covered in either the Labor Code or the Criminal Code. The Family Code however does contradict with the provisions outlined in the CEDAW where the age of marriage is set at 18. Another area of concern is how the Family Code which allows young women to marry at 17—and even at 16—will interact with the system of 12 years compulsory education. It is feared by some women's NGOs that early marriages may lead to young women not completing their secondary education.

Women's formal high legal status is reflected in recent legislative reforms and also by a growing commitment to review existing and proposed legislation for any gender discrimination. The Institute of Monitoring Acting Legislation and the Women's Committee (through its Gender and Development Bureau) have been active in reviewing existing and proposed legislation in this regard.

Nevertheless women's formal high legal status does not reflect women's legal status on the ground. Women's legal rights are frequently infringed upon. There is gross underreporting of discrimination and violence against women, particularly when it occurs in the family. The Report on the Status of Women in Uzbekistan (1999) noted that women are the first to lose their jobs, especially women with many children. Forced early marriages and the refusal to allow women to work outside the home also violate the rights of women. Families prefer to deal with—or more likely—hush up domestic and sexual violence against women and children. This makes it more difficult for authorities to prosecute and emphasizes the role that culture and lack of legal literacy play in the continuing violation of the rights of women and children in Uzbekistan.

This report identified a number of examples of discrimination against women in Uzbekistan. According to this report, cases of discrimination included:

- (i) Tension within families, because of parents' intolerance of their daughters' views and aspirations. In one such family, a young girl committed suicide by jumping from the ninth storey of a building. In another case, a daughter died as a result of severe cuts following a fight over whether she should be allowed to cut her hair. Her parents were categorically against this before her marriage.
- (ii) Women also face discrimination in court. In one case, the court made a decision in favor of the husband in settling a divorce dispute. In this case, he was awarded

ownership of their jointly owned house, and asked to pay the wife financial compensation of 15,000 sum (about US\$30-40 at the time). In another case, a woman with two children was actually deprived of her right to her share of property. This court decision was appealed against and the case was sent for reconsideration by court.

- (iii) There have also been reports in the Tashkent region of disabled women, or women with many children, being refused employment. In other cases, women working in joint ventures were prohibited from having children.
- (iv) Cases are known of husbands who do not allow their wives to work outside the home, or when religious fanatics demand that young women cover their face in the presence of men in public places.
- (v) Young girls are sometimes forced into early marriages, thus posing a serious threat physically and psychologically, particularly in the event of early or unwanted pregnancies. Moreover, in such situations, women frequently have no opportunity to consult a doctor, or to ask for legal or other help. In such cases, women are not only discriminated against, but also subjected to violence.

To date, few cases of discrimination have been brought to court and thus few precedents exist on the interpretation and effectiveness of laws against discrimination. For example, no official has ever been accused of discrimination in hiring and promotion policies or wage discrimination, no cases of sexual harassment in the workplace have come to trial, and no cases of coercion within the family have been brought before the courts.

In addition, few women have a sound understanding of their legal rights. Issues here also include no tradition of independent activism by women in Uzbekistan and the fact that most Uzbek women are subject to social and familial structures of authority that hinder their struggle for legal rights. That is why many women from the most impoverished and disenfranchised sections of Uzbekistan society become passive or, in extreme cases, resort to suicide via self-immolation, an issue that has not yet been adequately addressed. According to a survey conducted by the Center of Sociological Research “Ijtimoiy Fikr” (or Social Opinion), only 26.4 percent of women said they had a good understanding of local laws; 60.1 percent said that they ‘know something’ of local laws; and 13.5 percent responded that they know nothing. In terms of their general knowledge on the laws of Uzbekistan, only 18.5 percent of the women said that they knew them sufficiently well, with 61.7 percent reporting that they knew something about these laws.²⁴

Outside of the legislative and legal areas, the Government has introduced a number of programs and initiatives designed to enhance women’s status in Uzbekistan. One of the most significant initiatives was the establishment of the Women’s Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Established in 1991 and proclaimed a government agency by presidential decree in 1992, the Women’s Committee has helped to direct and sustain the Government’s commitment to the status of women over the past decade. The Committee has branches in regions, towns, districts and villages throughout Uzbekistan. The main objective of these committees is to implement the Government’s policies on women.

²⁴ “Narodnoye Slovo,” 15 December 1999, Tashkent.

This was followed by another important presidential decree in March 1995: Enhancing Women's Role in the State and Social Development of Uzbekistan. This decree set in place a formal political structure designed to encourage women's participation in public life. This political structure established the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Women's Affairs, responsible for monitoring and enhancing women's participation in society (currently held by Ms. Dilbar Gulyamova who is also Chairperson of the Women's Committee).²⁵ Similar positions at the deputy *hokim* (deputy governor or deputy mayor) level were concurrently established for women at three administrative levels of government, that is, at the provincial (*oblast*), regional (*rayon*) and city levels. It was hoped that not only would this enable better targeting of issues affecting women's status but that this might also offset the decline in the number of women at political decision-making levels.

In 1997, the Women's Committee developed and adopted the *National Action Plan for the Improvement of the Status of Women of Uzbekistan*. The twin objectives of the National Action Plan are to improve women's status in Uzbekistan and enhance their role in society. It is hoped that the objectives and targets of the National Action Plan are achieved by the year 2005. Of the 12 areas of concern detailed in the Beijing Action Platform (1995), the following nine key priority areas were selected as the focus of the Uzbekistan National Action Plan (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed summary):

- (i) Women's health, including reproductive health and promotion of family planning services;
- (ii) Education and professional and functional literacy of women;
- (iii) Women's economic status, particularly of those living in rural areas through the promotion of women's income-generating activities;
- (iv) Environmental degradation and its impact on women, and women's role in environmental management;
- (v) Equal participation in decision making at political, legislative and executive levels;
- (vi) Special programs to support girls;
- (vii) Representations of a new "Uzbek woman" in the mass media, popular culture and art to overcome existing stereotypes;
- (viii) Discrimination and violence against women;
- (ix) Women's NGOs; and
- (x) Realization of broad gender-related research.

An annual progress report summarizing the level of implementation of the National Action Plan is prepared in consideration of the reporting provisions of the Declaration and the Action Platform approved by the Fourth World Conference of Women (Beijing, September 1995).

²⁵ The structure of the Women's Committee is closely tied to the Republic's formal political structure in that the Deputy Prime Minister on Women's Issues is also the Chairperson of the Women's Committee. The same arrangement applies at each administrative level, where for example deputy *hokims* on Women's Issues at the regional level also act as regional chairpersons of women's committees.

The Women's Committee actively involves representatives of NGOs in its operations. Due to a productive relationship between the Women's Committee, NGOs and funding agencies, there have been a number of achievements in the area of monitoring legislation and statistical collection. For example, a Bureau of Gender and Development was established in 1996 within the Women's Committee with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). One task undertaken by the Bureau was to assist the Department of Statistics in the collection, analysis and publication of gender disaggregated statistics.²⁶ As a direct consequence of this collaboration between government and funding organizations, Uzbekistan has begun to develop the necessary expertise not only to monitor and comment on legislation from a gender perspective, but also to continue the task of mainstreaming the collection of gender disaggregated statistics.

Further collaboration between the Women's Committee, the Bureau of Gender and Development and numerous women's NGOs resulted in the joint publication *Report on the Status of Women in Uzbekistan* (1999). Funded by UNDP, this report contains the findings and views of independent writers, including representatives of women's organizations, media analysts and journalists, lawyers, and economists, and is indicative itself of the level of awareness of, and commitment to resolving, gender inequality in Uzbekistan. Such collaboration has only been possible because of the groundswell in women's NGOs in the past five years in Uzbekistan.

Another initiative that indicates a commitment to women's status in Uzbekistan was the presidential decree that made 1999 the "Year of Women." This move was designed to draw attention to gender-related issues that adversely affect women's ability to participate in society.

It is gratifying to see a number of recent government initiatives designed to combat the loss of women's political and social status. However, despite the high level recognition of the importance of women's issues that the previous initiatives denote, considerable problems remain at the implementation level. In particular, women's related policies and programs are not evenly implemented—or even well understood—at all levels of government. Furthermore, women's issues are still marginalized in government and in policy making. For these reasons, there is a genuine and pressing need to further build gender capacity at all levels of government (see Chapter 3).

Women's Political Participation and NGOs

The growth of women's NGOs is the one of the most positive achievements in terms of women's political participation in Uzbekistan. In 1991 there was only one women's NGO—the Business Women's Association. Currently, there are 40-50 women's NGOs in Uzbekistan (see Appendix 2 for more details). Women's participation in the formal political structure of Uzbekistan is less promising. Women's level of representation in government has fallen, despite the presidential decree that introduced the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Women's Affairs and associated deputy *hokims* (see Table 4).

²⁶ See footnote 20.

Table 4: Representation of Women in Parliament, 1980–1998

Year	Members of Parliament	Share of Women	
		No.	%
1980	510	178	35
1985	510	183	36
1990	500	47	9
1994	250	15	6
1998	250	19	8

In Uzbekistan, the head of state controls the central Government in Tashkent as well as local government through the appointment of governors (*hokims*). *Hokims* head local councils or “parliaments” and thus extend the president’s power down to the local level. The head of state also controls the 250-member *Oliy Majlis* or Supreme Council and appoints the Supreme Court justices. The *Oliy Majlis* operates similarly to a Soviet-style “national parliament” where the members meet once every few months to debate laws prepared by the Government.

The abolition of a quota system for women in the 1980s produced a sharp decline in the number of women in Parliament and other decision-making positions. Women accounted for 35 percent of members in the Supreme Soviet of Uzbek SSR. By contrast they accounted for only 7 percent of parliamentarians in the *Oliy Majlis* in 2000 (that is, 17 out of 250 members). The same decline is observed at local government levels, where the proportion of women in the highest administrative and management positions such as deputy ministers and deputy directors of enterprises is 17.5.²⁷ This dramatic drop is said to be one reason for the establishment of the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Women’s Affairs in 1995.²⁸ In response to this drop, the reintroduction of a parliamentary quota has been set as an objective of the National Action Plan (see Appendix 1).

On average, there are 1.4 women per party faction. This implies that parties and organizations that have taken part in elections do not place their trust in women as politicians or acknowledge an acute shortage of female leaders. Given a decline in the share of women among highly qualified professionals and the leading elite, women’s chances of being elected to the Parliament are much less than that of men. This situation is somewhat mitigated by the fact that women currently hold the positions of Vice Spokesman, the head of a Parliamentary Committee, and of Ombudsman, the human rights and legal advocate. These are important positions because they are in contact with the executive branch of the Government and thus able to advise on women’s needs.

²⁷ See footnote 5.

²⁸ See footnote 12.

Table 5: Representation of Women among Provincial and Regional Authorities, 1998

Type of Council	Total of Female Members of Parliament	Number of MPs in Each Council	Female MPs Per Council	
			Number	%
Provincial Councils (total 14)	61	60	4.3	7.2
Regional Councils (total 163)	465	30	2.9	9.7

From the data presented in Table 5, we can conclude that the proportion of female parliamentarians is around 7-10 percent. The share of women in executive bodies is similarly small, and swelled by what amounts to a quota system (that is, the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister for Women’s Affairs and related positions). Only three women work for the Government as Deputy Minister with no female Minister. Women also occupy the position of district *hokims* in four out of 163 districts. There are no women among the provincial *hokims*.

There is however a much higher representation of women in the national courts, where there is one female judge to every five. Yet, courts often deal with cases where female interests are paramount—for example, divorce and violence against women—so there is a need for greater gender equity here too. The problem partly lies in a lack of qualified women, which is likely to get worse as fewer women are given access to higher education (see Chapter 2). Even in “feminized” spheres such as health care, social welfare and education, men dominate in executive positions. This situation may be observed at both the central and provincial executive branches of government. According to the Fergana Province Department of the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, despite the prevalence of women working in the areas of health, education, agriculture, information technology, culture and art, administrative positions at the provincial level of those sectors are occupied almost exclusively by men.

However, women are politically active in other ways, particularly in the growing nongovernment sector. Here the growth of women’s NGOs is very promising, given that many of these NGOs are committed to enhancing the political and legal status of women, and have extensive grassroots networks. Governmental concern over women’s status during the transition period is the main factor accounting for this growth. Another has been the number of funding agencies and international NGOs looking to establish partnerships with local NGOs.

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

Strong local women’s NGOs in Uzbekistan go beyond issues of political participation. These organizations have important grassroots knowledge and networks. They are in the front

line and can quickly discern the legislative, social and economic barriers to women's well-being. Given the high representation of urban professional and middle class women in NGOs, it would be an overstatement to characterize all NGOs as grassroots organizations. However, it would also be misleading to see NGOs as having only weakly developed links with their constituencies.²⁹ Women's NGOs in Uzbekistan tend to be responsive to the needs of women, and a good example here is the shift within some women's NGOs to provide greater training and support in the area of small business.³⁰ In addition, women's NGOs have the flexibility of small, independent organizations.

On the downside, there have been some concerns over the duplication of activities, lack of coordination and small-scale nature of the projects such NGOs undertake. Many NGOs are well aware of these problems and have taken measures to address them. One initiative here was the creation of the Union of Women's NGOs in Samarkand in 1999, which was established as an umbrella organization for women's NGOs in the region. Under this umbrella, several new women's NGOs have been created with the more experienced NGOs providing advice on how to attract financial support from international funding agencies and NGOs. NGOs within the Union also avail of the range of computing support that it provides. Many make regular use of the computer and Internet facilities that are found at the Union's headquarters inside the Alisher Navoi Library at the University of Samarkand.

There is also a general desire for better communication and coordination between government and nongovernment women's organizations. The Government must take some responsibility for this, however. A recent initiative to overcome some of these problems is the creation of an umbrella organization—called *Mekr*—to act as a forum for all government, non-government, professional and other organizations committed to improving the status of women in society. The Women's Committee is expected to play a major role in facilitating this network. Activists spoken to in late 2000 were hopeful that a stronger partnership between government and women's NGOs would lead to faster resolution of barriers faced by NGOs at the grassroots level. There were some reservations expressed that women's government organizations would come to regard women's NGOs as an arm of the Government. It was promising, however, to hear that most activists felt very positive about the *Mekr* initiative and openly welcomed government involvement.

While women's political participation and organizational capacity is strong in the area of NGOs, more attention needs to be given to increasing women's participation in formal political structures. Certainly the presidential decree introducing the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Women's Affairs and other related positions is important. However, the tendency to appoint women to positions related to women's affairs can also reinforce the marginalization of women and women's issues in politics. In particular, women need to be appointed to nonwomen-related Cabinet Ministries and elected as general members of Parliament. Further research is also needed to identify how gender stereotypes operate to discriminate against women in the selection of candidates prior to elections and in the appointment of nonwomen-oriented Cabinet Ministries. In particular, research is needed to assess the impact of more traditional gender ideologies that

²⁹ See Ula Ikramova and Kathryn McConnell (1999) for an overview of women's NGOs in Central Asia.

³⁰ For example, the Sabr Crisis Center in Samarkand plans to introduce a microcredit scheme with funding from a Netherlands NGO to facilitate small business loans for women. Such loans are already available from existing microcredit projects in Nukus and Karshi.

prescribe a rather narrow role for women in terms of political activities. Here it would be useful to analyze the extent to which women's greater political participation is blocked by traditional values (that were not so much abolished as forced underground during the Soviet era) or more practical considerations (such as lack of money, lack of time, lack of childcare, etc.).

“Tradition,” Islam and Gender

There is growing interest in both Islam and Uzbek cultural traditions in Uzbekistan, although it is impossible to separate Islam and “tradition” in this context as any exploration of Uzbek history, language and culture will necessarily include aspects of Islam. Popular discussions of the role of Uzbek traditions and Islam in an independent Uzbekistan can be found in the media and often emanate from government sources. One of the most visible signs of this renewal is the increasing number of women and girls wearing *hijab* (that is, ankle-length dresses and closely-fitted white scarves that surround the face and drape over the shoulder). Although the Government is concerned that traditional and Islamic influences may negatively impact on economic development, the Government has deployed Uzbek cultural symbols to mark the transition from Soviet control to independent nationhood. An example here is the reintroduction of Uzbek as the language of government, and over time, of education. Furthermore, the Cyrillic script is to be gradually replaced as a matter of government policy.

Uzbekistan is not alone here. An interest in cultural heritage and ethnic identity appears to have popular support in all the newly independent Central Asian republics (CARs). For various reasons, a renewed cultural heritage and heightened ethnic consciousness has been a feature of post-Soviet states, whether we are discussing the Baltic states, the Caucasus or other CARs.³¹

There are of course many currents of Islam in Uzbekistan, including a number of diverse philosophical and ideological positions. These incorporate the influential Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Mavarannakhr (the former spiritual Islamic Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan), the Sufi order, the Brotherhood Naqshbandiah, and the relative newcomer, the Islamic fundamentalist Vakhabits centered in the Fergana valley.³² In regard to this report, it is important to consider the reappraisal of cultural traditions in terms of the possible impact on the status of women and gender relations more broadly.³³

During the Soviet Union era, many earlier customs and religious observances were discouraged. Mosques were closed and religion brought tightly under the control of the State. Women were supported and encouraged to pursue public, political and professional lives. A number of initiatives were introduced such as a female quota in government and legislative reforms and labor regulations designed to ensure equal rights and employment for women. These led to the emergence of female intellectuals, professionals and state administrators and the

³¹ For a general discussion of this in relation to CARs and the Caucasus see *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*, edited by Mohiaddin Mesbahi, University Press of Florida, 1994.

³² *Ibid.*, in particular see Zahid I. Munavvarov, “Uzbekistan,” pp. 139-147 “Islam and Spiritual Revival.”

³³ In the case of Uzbekistan, some caution needs to be observed when linking women's subordination to Islam because of a general tendency to view Central Asian womanhood as downtrodden and oppressed by an Islamic patriarchy. This was certainly the line taken by the Soviet Union to legitimize its occupation of Central Asia. See Gregory Massell's *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton University Press, 1974).

achievement of a near 100 percent literacy rate for women and men. This was ideologically buttressed by a view of the equality between men and women aggressively propagated in the Soviet mass media.³⁴ While this remains central to the ideal male-female relationship in Uzbekistan, economic hardships and the renewed interest in tradition have “changed the contours of such equality.”

Increasingly, the discussion of gender relations and the representation of masculinity and femininity reflect a preoccupation with understanding gender relations in terms of tradition rather than in terms of a Soviet-style concept of equality.³⁵ There has also been greater public discussion of women’s personal behavior and deportment as part of the discussion of an “Uzbek model” of modernization and economic development. At a conference in November 2000, the Deputy Prime Minister for Women’s Affairs openly endorsed modesty of dress and behavior as aspects of true Uzbek womanhood.³⁶

The most celebrated heroic Uzbeks of recent years are all men (such as the conqueror Timur and poet Navoiy). An idealized Uzbek femininity is most visible in the form of young women dressed in *atlas* silk costumes dancing at public events or as the demure, modest daughter and good, respectful wife in historical dramas shown on state television. An example here is the popular Uzbek-language talk show “Bride and Groom” aired on Uzbek TV Channel 1, where these forms of the stereotypical “oriental” woman prevail.³⁷ The Expert Social Research Center has noted the emergence of a group of intellectuals promoting the idea that women should reject the opportunity to participate in public life and seek to fulfill a subordinate position within the family and society more generally. A typical statement here was published in *Markazzi Asiya Madaniyati* (The Culture of Central Asia):

In correspondence with the physical composition and natural ambitions of a man who provides for the family, he is the family’s spiritual leader, while a woman is the custodian of spiritual values which are subordinated to the man. This is where the essential difference between man and woman lies. It is for this reason that men dominate in the progress of their society, in its material production and its management. Women, due to their physical frailty and weakness, satisfy their needs with the help of men, they depend on and are subordinate to men. This is the essential foundation of the family. The Koran, the central text of Islam, states, “Men dominate over women”... The family will be stronger as long as it observes this order.³⁸

While there are other articles in the media and television programs (typically in Russian) that feature Uzbek women who have successful careers and support the modernization of society

³⁴ See footnote 12.

³⁵ I am not suggesting that the Soviet Union did not have its own particular brand of gender ideology operating to discriminate against women. The state is always a highly gendered affair. The Soviet endorsement of large families (by providing benefits for large families) and ideological praise of women as mothers of the nation *and* workers promoted not only a heavy workload for women but also the association between women and social and biological reproduction.

³⁶ This was not an endorsement of *hijab*, however, as the Government frowns on what it sees as the influence of a radical Islam. See footnote 12.

³⁷ See footnote 12.

³⁸ *Markazzi Asiya Madaniyati* (The Culture of Central Asia), No. 1, 1998, cited in report under footnote 12.

along Western lines, the revival and reaffirmation of traditional Uzbek values has led to a greater emphasis on gender dichotomy in Uzbek popular culture. In particular, Uzbek women's role in the family has been increasingly emphasized in certain quarters over their public and professional roles. As women's organizations and sections within the Government realize, it is important that Islamic resurgence is not used to justify and reassert patriarchal gender structures. The Government has a crucial role in legislating and acting to protect women's equal access to and participation in educational and employment opportunities. Women's NGOs also play an important role by providing a forum for women to play more public roles and to participate at decision-making levels. More needs to be done here particularly in terms of supporting the leadership and legal literacy programs of independent NGOs.

It is also important to consider the interrelationship between material hardship and the appeals of ethnic nationalism and religion. While many women's NGOs report a link between poverty—or at least declining economic well-being—and religious or traditional attitudes, there is a lack of qualitative/ethnographic research to explain this nexus. For example, women's withdrawal from the workplace may have had as much to do with the closure of state subsidized nurseries as Islamic ideologies. Furthermore, the effects of transition are not the same everywhere and views on the domestic division of labor and women's mobility are sometimes re-evaluated when women become the main economic providers in the family. For example, following recent ethnic and nationalist tensions between Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbek women from Andijan have become increasingly responsible for trading agricultural produce across the border in the regional market of Osh. Women have taken on this task as a way to circumvent the increased tension and bribe taking directed at Uzbek men at the border.³⁹

Nevertheless, it is clear that women's participation in economic activities and continued involvement in higher and vocational education are important strategies in working against gender stereotypes that restrict women to the home. Such strategies are in addition economically important, given women's crucial economic contribution to their households during the current economic difficulties.

³⁹ See footnote 12.

Chapter 2 Situational Analysis of Women in Uzbekistan

Demographic Trends

Uzbekistan has a population of 24.7 million. Sixty-two percent of the population lives in rural areas and 38 percent in urban areas. Forty-eight percent of the population is of working age (16-65 years for men and 16-60 years for women). The new system of 12 years compulsory education to be introduced in stages will raise the official working age to 18 for men and women. Seventy-one percent of the population are Uzbek, 8 percent Russian, 5 percent Tajik, 4 percent Kazak, 2.5 percent Tartars and 8.5 percent other ethnic groups.

Uzbekistan is a young population, with 45 percent of the population under the age of 16 and only 7 percent of retirement age. Such a young population has implications for the health and employment status of women of childbearing age. The high number of children under 16 and the high rate of marriage mean that most women of childbearing age are involved to some degree in parenting. Furthermore, there are more women of fertile age now than in 1991, the number having increased by 13 percent between 1991 and 1998.

Women make up more than half of the population (50.2 percent in 1999) and 50.3 percent of the female population is of childbearing age (15 and 49). Nearly 66 percent of women over the age of 16 are married and only 10 percent of women over 50 have never been married.⁴⁰ The average age for women to marry is around 20, with 75 percent of women marrying between the ages of 20 and 24.⁴¹ About 23-30 percent of babies are born to young women between the ages of 20 and 24.⁴²

Both the marriage and divorce rates have fallen since 1991. In 1991, there were around 13 marriages and 2 divorces per 1,000 persons. By 1998, there were around 7 marriages and 1 divorce per 1,000 persons.⁴³ The fall in the marriage rate is most likely due to economic conditions and people deferring marriage due to the high economic costs involved. However, in some very needy families, the reverse is also true. Early marriage of daughters is a survival strategy meant to optimize both the family's and the daughter's well-being in an environment of limited educational and employment opportunities. In 1996, nearly 46 percent of young women below the age of 20 were married. (The comparative figure for young men was 8 percent.)⁴⁴ In 1998, 45 percent of marriages were of women between the ages of 20 and 24 years and 6 percent of marriages were of women aged 17 years or below.

⁴⁰ See footnote 21.

⁴¹ "Women and Children," Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, Republic of Uzbekistan (Tashkent, 1996), cited in report under footnote 6.

⁴² See footnote 6.

⁴³ See footnote 21.

⁴⁴ See p. 40 of footnote 6.

Despite the fall in the divorce rate, there are some indications that the number of female-headed households may be increasing. This is related to increased out-migration of men looking for work. In addition, children born to officially unmarried women grew by 46 percent between 1994 and 1996. There is some speculation that this may reflect an increasing occurrence of polygamy.

In recent years the annual birth rate has slowed from 4.2 in 1991 to 2.8 in 1998. This trend is expected to continue, with World Bank projections of an annual birth rate of 1.3 percent by 2005.⁴⁵ Population growth is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (at 3.0 percent in rural areas and 2.3 in urban areas).⁴⁶ There are also ethnic differences. For example, in 1994 Russian women had on average two children. In part, this reflects the fact that more Russian women live in urban areas where the birth rate is lowest. It also suggests sociocultural factors such as preferred number of children and socioeconomic status. The size of families remains large, however, with 57 percent of all families having five or more children.⁴⁷ According to the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, the average family size in 1999 was 5.5 children (that is, 6.1 children in rural areas and 4.6 children in urban areas).

The Human Development Index fell slightly after independence but has since improved to a level higher than pre-independence level, standing at 0.706 in 1999.⁴⁸

Social and Legal Context

Women's participation in the economic and social life of society is directly shaped by the demands of family and community. While there are regional differences—particularly between rural and urban areas—as well as ethnic differences, there are some common characteristics shared by Uzbek and other Central Asian women.

In general, women are associated with the inner, family domain. Such attitudes have implications for young women's opportunities to pursue work and higher education, and also encourage the practice of early marriage for young women. Many Uzbek women believe that family concerns outweigh individual desires to pursue education or professional activity. One study conducted in Namangan and Tashkent provinces found that the majority of teenage girls believed they should put aside professional pursuits after marriage to concentrate on their roles of wife and mother.⁴⁹ Women's low economic and political status is directly related to their heavy domestic responsibilities. This is not helped by large family sizes and the fact that 57 percent of all families have five or more children. A desire to have large families and many sons is still prevalent particularly in rural areas. A survey carried out by the Women's Resource Centre in 1995 in Tashkent region found that 70 percent of women with four children still wish to have more, to have more sons. Women's workloads are also made more onerous by the lack or expensiveness of utilities, such as piped water and sewerage. Access to such services is generally lower in rural areas, but is by no means universal in even urban areas. For example, in 1998 only

⁴⁵ See footnote 6.

⁴⁶ See p. 38 of footnote 21.

⁴⁷ See footnote 6.

⁴⁸ The Human Development Index was 0.679 in 1995, 0.682 in 1996, 0.692 in 1997 and 0.697 in 1998.

⁴⁹ Monica Krengel, Sodeistvie Planirovaniyu Semiy (Assistance to Family Planning), Project GTZ, Tashkent, 1997, cited in Expert Social Research Center, *Uzbekistan Gender Study in Transition* (October 1998, p. 13).

76 percent and 53 percent of urban households had access to piped water and sewerage, respectively. Only 40 percent and 49 percent of urban houses had a hot water system and bathing facilities, respectively.⁵⁰

In general, the difficult economic situation and the resurgence of Uzbek nationalism following independence have tended to promote what may be called “traditional” gender relations within Uzbek families. The traditional Uzbek family is characterized by complex families (of more than one generation), patrilocal residence and patriarchal authority structures on the basis of seniority and gender. In such families, the father is the head of the family, followed by his wife, and then by their sons in order of seniority, and finally by the son’s wives in order of seniority. The bride of the youngest son in such a family has the lowest status. Patriarchy is maintained not only by men in these families but also by women and in particular by the hierarchical relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. For this reason many Uzbek women especially in urban areas seek to live separately from their husband’s extended family. Such possibilities however are severely curtailed by the current economic difficulties.

In this context, women’s low status in rural society is rooted in stereotypical attitudes about women’s inferiority and the need to control women. Girls are socialized to obey elders and males, and to submit to the authority of older family members. Women’s chastity is also highly valued, and wedding sheets are commonly checked as evidence of a woman’s virginity at marriage. For this reason, women’s freedom of movement can be heavily restricted particularly in rural areas. In strongly conservative families, young women are expected to live within the confines of the household or *ichkari* when not at school or in some activity that legitimately takes them outside the household.

Another party that constantly monitors women’s behavior, particularly in rural or older neighborhoods, is the *mahalla* or neighborhood community. While the *mahalla* has been more recently institutionalized as a local government administrative unit—the *mahalla* committee (*mahalla komiteti*)—the institution of *mahalla* has existed for centuries.⁵¹ *Mahalla* residents, particularly the elders, monitor the behavior of younger people. The *mahalla* elders play a lead role in formulating public opinion on the honor of families in the more traditional and rural *mahalla*. Families try to influence this by making donations to the *mahalla*’s activities as well as by controlling the behavior of their members, particularly the young women in the family, to garner more honor for the family. Issues of honor are paramount in more traditional *mahalla* when arranging marriages for children.⁵²

These processes may also be linked to Islamic revivalism in Uzbekistan. Reports from women’s NGOs working in the Fergana valley attest to the growing influence of Islam in setting limits and norms with respect to “acceptable” female behavior.⁵³ As expressed at a one-day gender meeting at ADB’s Resident Mission in Tashkent, a significant number of leaders of women’s NGOs are concerned about the influence of a conservative Islam. Concern was

⁵⁰ See footnote 6.

⁵¹ The *mahalla* committee is the basic organ of local self-governance in Uzbekistan. The local *hokimiyat* provides for two staff positions for the *mahalla* committee: an elected chairman and a secretary. Expert Social Research Center, *Consultations with the Poor* (May 1999, p. 7).

⁵² See p. 74 of footnote 13.

⁵³ Personal report from Ms. Dildora Tadjibaeva, Business Women’s Association Republican Office. See, also, footnote 11.

expressed for the future of the women's movement in Uzbekistan if young women's access to education and career opportunities were curtailed by a growing traditionalism.

In addition to the resurgence of early marriages for young women, there is anecdotal evidence of the emergence of other marriage traditions as a result of economic difficulties. Poor families with many children are particularly likely to look for ways of offsetting the costs of many children. Reports of polygamy—while strictly prohibited by the Family Code of Uzbekistan—seem to reflect both increasing poverty and economic polarization, as well as some restoration of Islamic norms that has accompanied a more assertive Uzbek nationalism. The emergence of a new class of rich men (known colloquially as the “new Uzbek”) has increased the number of “second families” sanctioned by an Islamic ceremony (*nikokh*). There have been reports of publications endorsing polygamy as a form of social protection of women in times of difficult economic circumstances.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, women contracted to polygamous marriages or married by means of religious ceremonies (*nikokh*) and their children have no legal grounds to alimony or a share of property. According to reports, the expense of weddings, and in particular, the recently inflated bride price (*qalym*) has also led to a revival of abducting brides in Karakalpakstan. While this is sometimes orchestrated with the consent of the young women, at times it occurs against their will. Under such circumstances the young women involved are forced out of shame to marry their abductor.⁵⁵

On a more positive note, a shift in the importance of women's economic activities, such as an increased reliance on the sale of produce grown on the family's private plot, can lead to changes in intra-family relations. When a woman has control over a certain type of income-creating activity within the sphere of home and plot production, her economic independence grows. This happens, for instance, when she is involved in the production and sale of garments, or in “shuttle” shopping. The situation is different if the woman is only involved in one stage of a specific aspect of home or private plot production. If she, for instance, tends the cattle, but her husband is in charge of selling it, then her separation from the trade and financial aspect gives greater authority to her husband who handled the sale. This latter version of woman's participation in home and plot production is more widespread than the former, and this is why overall women's situation has worsened with regard to economic rights and interests.

From the point of view of the family, the current economic situation places enormous strains on family relations. One consequence of this stress is an increase in domestic violence. It is however very difficult to measure this increase. Trying to gauge to what extent physical and psychological abuse of women is increasing or just becoming more spoken about is in this case difficult. However, some women's NGOs have reported a link between economic hardship and increasing violence.

According to the records of one crisis center in Samarkand, the greatest number of calls by women to the center's telephone advice service deal with family conflict. Issues of husbands working long hours and conflicts over financial issues are among the more common calls. In addition, increasing family conflict was seen to result from the number of women assuming the nontraditional role of main or even sole provider of the family. The work of anthropologist Kristina Vestbo suggests that when men are no longer able to provide sufficiently for their

⁵⁴ See p. 24 of footnote 6.

⁵⁵ See p. 9 of footnote 11.

families due to a sudden and significant decrease in salary or to unemployment, this may lead to male drinking, domestic violence and conflicts over household finances.⁵⁶ In the past few years, shelters for women and children who are victims of family violence have been established. Furthermore, the number of women suffering burns and death through burns has also increased.⁵⁷ For this reason, many women's NGOs include training on women's legal literacy as part of their educational programs. The hope here is that women who know their rights will be less tolerant of such abuse, and perhaps even break the family silence that usually surrounds this topic and report such cases to the local authorities.

Of course, the success of such reasoning depends on the willingness of state authorities to act in support of women's health and safety. While physical violence against women is a criminal offense as in many other countries, in Uzbekistan violence against women in the home is often sanctioned by society and families or at least seen as a private matter.⁵⁸ To this extent, state patriarchy and not merely patriarchy in the family needs to be addressed through training programs directed at civil servants as well as general public awareness and educational campaigns.

Economic Status of Female Labor

Women's economic status has been affected by the shrinking economy and financial squeeze faced by state and nonstate enterprises experienced during the post-Soviet period. Enterprises are no longer subsidized or integrated within the all-Soviet economy. The cut in state subsidies has placed great difficulty on enterprises in terms of maintaining output and covering production costs. In response, enterprises have either closed or carry a large number of "hidden unemployed" (i.e., employed workers on unpaid leave). Another common tactic has been the withholding of wages, sometimes for up to a year. Wage arrears encourage women to go on unpaid leave, rather than work for nothing. Where possible, working women look for other types of employment. However, here women find themselves up against employers' preference particularly in the private sector—for male workers who are more mobile and can dispose of their time more freely than women. The current labor legislation grants working women a number of benefits that make employers reluctant to employ them except for certain "female" type jobs. It is not surprising then that although women comprise 42 percent of the labor force, they account for 63 percent of the registered unemployed.⁵⁹

As a result of the above changes, there are two worrisome trends regarding women's economic and employment status in Uzbekistan. Firstly, the transition to a market economy has rendered women less competitive in the employment market, particularly in the private sector. Secondly, there is mounting concern that poverty is undergoing a process of feminization.

There has been little change in the number and percentage of men and women who are considered part of the economically active population in recent years. However, the labor force

⁵⁶ Kristina Vestbo, "At Home We Are Uzbek," Master's Thesis, University of Oslo, 1998, cited by Expert Social Research Center, *Consultations with the Poor* (1999, p. 21).

⁵⁷ See pp. 26-28 of footnote 13.

⁵⁸ "A widespread practice among Uzbeks, wherein parents advise their sons before their impending wedding that in order to 'keep the peace' in the household, they should beat their newly-wed wives when they get out of hand, suggests that domestic violence is not only tolerated within Uzbek society, but is also sanctioned." (p. 28 of footnote 13)

⁵⁹ See p. 51 of footnote 13.

participation rate has dropped since independence from 80 percent in 1993 to 73 percent in 1997. In addition, the share of women in the labor force declined during the mid-1990s but has improved slightly since then (see Table 6). Labor force participation is lowest in rural and other disadvantaged areas, indicating a direct link between low economic growth and rising unemployment.⁶⁰ Overall, the number of employed persons—men and women—testifies to the high level of economic activity of the population. In 1998, 73.5 percent of the working age population were engaged in economic activity. 72 percent of working-age women and 75.1 percent of working-age men. The majority of employment is still found in the rural areas with 39 percent of employment in agriculture in 1998 (with men accounting for 60.3 percent and women for 39.7 of the total agriculture and forestry workforce).⁶¹

Table 6: Share of Women in Labor Force

(%)

	1989	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Share of women	46.5	46.5	43.3	43.4	42.7	43.7	44.0	44.1

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report* (Uzbekistan 1999); Narodnoye Khozaystvo SSSR (National Economy of the USSR), Moscow 1989.

More than half of female workers are concentrated in the “feminized,” so-called non-productive sectors of education, health care, insurance and culture. Women account for 75 percent of workers in health care, 44 percent in insurance, 61.5 percent in education and 53 percent in culture and the arts.⁶² Men on the other hand are concentrated in “construction” (90 percent), “transport and communications” (84 percent) and “authorities” (76 percent). These are also industries most at risk from unhealthy and unsafe work environments.⁶³ Table 7 provides a breakdown of the distribution of the female labor force by sectors of the economy.

There are also a few trends in the sectoral distribution of women that need to be investigated to ensure that women are not being relegated to less competitive sectors. For example, whereas the share of women involved in construction and transport has remained stable between 1993 and 1998, women’s share in “industry,” “communications,” “trade and catering, material and technical supply and sales, procurements” has declined. In addition, economic growth areas are in the services sector and informal sector. Informal sector enterprises have less protection and assistance than the formal sector, and their workers are similarly unprotected and insecure.

The concentration of women in education and public health has implications for women’s level of salary and future employment prospects. On the whole, such jobs are found in the public sector, which has been most vulnerable to erosion of real wages (see Table 7).

⁶⁰ See p. 5 of footnote 11.

⁶¹ See p. 74 of footnote 21.

⁶² See footnote 18.

⁶³ See p. 75 of footnote 21.

Table 7: Distribution of Female Labor Force by Sector, 1998

Sector	%
Education	34
Public Health	19
Industry	14
Agriculture	11
Trade, catering, supply, sales, procurements	6
Transport and communication	3
Construction	3
Culture and arts	2
Others	8
Total	100

Source: Women of Uzbekistan 1999: Statistical Collection (1999, p. 80).

During the Soviet period, wages in the education and health sectors were maintained close to the national average wage. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the relative level of wages in these sectors began to fall. In 1997 the average national monthly wage was 3,681 sum. However, in the sectors with considerable female employment the average monthly wage was lower than the average national level (see Table 8). For example, in the health care and social security branch, the average monthly wage was 61 percent of the national average (in some cases even 58.4 percent). In education the average wage was 67 percent of the national average and 43.1 percent in preschool educational facilities. Monthly average wages in agriculture, where female employment is also high, was 52 percent of the national average and 41 percent for those involved in crop growing. Overall, at the present, women are paid on average 30 percent less than men.⁶⁴

To an extent this wage differential is a consequence of skill differentiation within sectors. For example, in mechanical engineering, metal-working and instrument-making industries, men are mainly engaged in the more highly-skilled labor related to the operation of machines and mechanisms (machine operators, adjusters, repairmen, etc.). Women employed in these industries are mainly qualified operators on assembly lines or nonqualified staff involved in cleaning, labeling, packaging, etc. The same situation applies in agriculture where men are employed as highly qualified machine operators, while women remain unqualified, seasonal laborers. However, this is not the full story. In particular, many highly skilled and professional women have to struggle on below average wages because they work in the public sector (see the discussion below on the “new poor”).

⁶⁴ See footnote 18.

Table 8. Wages within Various Branches of the Economy *

	1991	1992	1993		1994		1995		1996		1997		1998	
	Ruble	Ruble	Sum-coupon	US\$	Sum	US\$	Sum	US\$	Sum	US\$	Sum	US\$	Sum	US\$
Average wage	346	2,541	30,220	27.5	280	16.8	1,059	38.7	2,137	51.6	3,697	55.7	5,432	57.34

Wages in the branches of employment with a predominance of women

Public health & social security	305	1,827	10,578	9.6	147	8.8	684	25.0	1,430	34.5	2,244	33.8	3,283	34.66
Education	321	2,146	7,278	6.6	172	10.3	683	24.9	1,593	38.5	2,458	37.0	3,711	39.17

- Sources: (1) Annual reports, Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics. Table 2C, "Statistics and wage budgets for blue and white collar workers."
 (2) Expert Social Research Center, weekly monitoring of currency rates.
 (3) Calculations for 1997-1998 were based on Wages and Foreign Exchange Market, *Country Economic Review* No. 4, August 1999.

* Data concerning wages is not calculated by gender. All calculations are performed in US dollars according to the official average annual rate of the sum with regard to the US dollar. Data concerning hard currency rates are absent before 1993. Recalculation of wages at black market exchange rates will decrease in 1.5-1.8 ones.

** Data before 1992 is calculated in USSR rubles, for 1993 in sum-coupons, and from 1994 onwards in sum.

A number of factors need to be considered in relation to women's economic status in Uzbekistan, including access to employment, nondiscriminatory labor practices and the availability of child-care facilities. In general, there has been a weakening of the measures established during the Soviet era designed to provide women with greater access to these factors. Although poverty was high for many rural workers in the Soviet era, there were a number of features such as heavily subsidized child-care centers, and health and education services, which kept the cost of living low. This situation has changed over the past decade, with a decline in the level of government subsidized services (due to subsidies from the state budget and richer trade unions).

The well-developed system of preschool establishments during the Soviet era represented a considerable support to women who wanted to work or study. Inexpensive and accessible kindergartens and nurseries were a decisive factor enabling women to find time for work and study. In the transition period, subsidies from the state budget for preschool institutions have been cut back, resulting in a decline in this sector. In addition, few private sector businesses subsidized child-care and other services extended to workers in state-owned enterprises during the Soviet era. Consequently, the number of children attending nurseries dropped from 1,166,300 in 1993 to 758,100 in 1996 (or roughly by a quarter in three years). Over the same period the number of nurseries fell from 9,273 to 8,139.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "Women and Children," Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, 1996, cited in footnote 6.

Women as less competitive

Soviet style “protective” policies toward women—including generous maternity leave, subsidized nurseries and other provisions directed at female employees—allowed more women to work within the context of a Soviet-style command economy. However, such policies, still actively pursued by today’s trade unions in Uzbekistan, tend to have the opposite effect in a market economy as they increase the cost of female labor. While maternity leave in principle protects women, in practice it discourages the hiring of women because many of the costs have to be carried by the employer.

There are several justifications given to explain this stance. Firstly, employers give the “objective” reason that women are more expensive to the employer given the range of “privileges” such as maternity leave, shortened office day, paid vacation to attend to sick children, etc., guaranteed under the Labor Code. This calculation appears especially strong in the private sector. Public sector trade unions are on the whole still committed to a Soviet-style “protection” of female workers’ labor rights and “privileges.” Regardless of employers’ preferences, female workers will themselves withdraw from work if they cannot find adequate child care arrangements. Secondly, according to current legislation and prohibitions in the Labor Code, women are excluded from 460 categories of work on the basis of health and safety.

In addition, in the context of a tight job market and fierce competition for jobs, there has been a re-emergence of ideologies that defend men’s right to work over women’s right, on the basis of gender ideologies that see men as the main provider in the family. This situation is made worse by demographic trends and the excess of labor supply brought on by the young population structure. The working age rural population alone grows by an estimated 200,000 people each year.⁶⁶ Given the growing competition in the labor markets, women—particularly those pregnant or with small children—are the most vulnerable section of the working population.

Job redundancies also appear more likely in the future. One of the foreseeable consequences of further transition to a market economy will be the downsizing of enterprises across Uzbekistan. As the current trends suggest, women will be hardest hit by these redundancies. The Government has been slow in carrying out such reforms because of a concern over job loss. However, the consequence of this decision has been a decline in labor productivity and a fall in the living standards of the population.⁶⁷

Feminization of poverty

Employment is a critical factor in women’s economic status. Important measures here are women’s greater share of the total number of registered unemployed persons and women’s higher share of voluntary unemployed persons. In 1999, women accounted for a higher proportion of officially unemployed persons, that is, 63 percent. Seventy percent of unemployed women are unskilled and have restricted mobility because of children. This is also reflected in the age of the

⁶⁶ See p. 50 of footnote 13.

⁶⁷ See p. 51 of footnote 13.

majority of unemployed women, that is, between the ages of 20 and 30, when most women have a young family.⁶⁸

Official unemployment rates do not bear much relation to actual unemployment and underemployment. While the official rate unemployment for 1999 was 0.5 percent, estimates put the real level of unemployment at 5-15 percent and underemployment at 10-25 percent.⁶⁹ Women also make up the majority of hidden unemployment. Estimates of hidden unemployment or underemployment in agriculture are as high as 33 percent of all workers. As a rule, women on maternity leave account for the largest proportion of hidden unemployed. The Government is not unaware of the problem, however. The reluctance to downsize or rationalize employment levels at government enterprises can be seen as motivated by a sense of social protection and recognition of the problems of unemployment. Furthermore, to relieve pressure from the labor market the Government has extended maternity leave from two to three years and is introducing 12 years compulsory education. While the problem of unemployment needs to be tackled, extending maternity leave may further discourage the hiring of women and disadvantage women as a share of total unemployed vis-à-vis men.

Furthermore, in Uzbekistan, employment brings other benefits such as a social insurance scheme only available to employed people. This scheme covers eventualities such as sickness, old age, disability and loss of provider. Currently, there already exists a disparity in the average pension given to men and women because women in general have shorter working lives due to time taken off for childbirth and earlier retirement ages. This is compounded by the fact that women on average earn only 80 percent of the average male wage.⁷⁰ These factors are reflected in an average lower base pension for women (calculated as 55 percent of the average monthly wage in relation to length of working life). Women's falling labor force participation will have consequences down the track on the amount of benefits paid to women.⁷¹

The fact that housewives are not entitled to a decent pension also has a negative impact on women's position. Women who have never been officially employed at any enterprise or organization (or have only a very short work record) are entitled to only a very small old age pension when they reach retirement age. In this respect, many rural and urban women who have not been employed outside the home are in a similar position. Although pension levels for those who have been employed in the official economy are not high, they still represent one of the main reasons for people to seek employment: pensions are still popularly perceived as a source of stable income, however minimum, in old age.

An excess of labor is particularly pronounced in rural areas where the labor market is characterized by seasonal unemployment and underemployment. Seasonal unemployment was

⁶⁸ See p. 13 of footnote 21.

⁶⁹ See. p. 2 of footnote 4.

⁷⁰ *Human Development Report* (1999), cited in p. 5 of footnote 4.

⁷¹ Another issue that needs to be considered in the context of structural adjustment and market-economy reforms is the disadvantage for female workers if some protective measures for women included in this scheme were removed. Currently, there are limited measures in place to take into account women's withdrawal from the labor market for family reasons. For example, increments are added to women's basic pension on the basis of time spent caring for children under 3 years of age or to cover time out of the workforce due to husband's posting. A move towards an accumulative pension fund that removed such conditions would only sharpen existing disparities.

estimated at around 30 percent in 1995.⁷² An additional problem relates to the wage arrears for agricultural workers on cooperative farms (*shirkats*).⁷³ Participants in one study said that in the Soviet era the middle class encompassed the majority of the population, and covered the intelligentsia, *kolkhoz* or collective farmers and industrial workers. Nowadays, participants argued that while members of the intelligentsia remain middle class, collective farmers find themselves in the category of the poor. For this reason, the term *kolkhoz* worker has come to signify the poorest category of the population.⁷⁴ In this study, public servants and pensioners in rural areas who receive regular salaries are considered lucky by their rural neighbors. A great deal of focus and high hopes have been pinned on the creation of private farms (*dehqan*), family plots and other private income-generating activities in rural areas. Private farms have not provided the rural income and employment opportunities initially thought due to unresolved issues relating to privatization and land distribution.

Women, however, have been quick to take advantage of other opportunities such as food processing and sale of agricultural products from their family plots. Seasonal agricultural work is then combined with other economic activities such as dairy food production, sale of vegetables and fruit, breeding and sale of poultry, and handicraft production. Private plots in rural areas are for this reason increasingly important both as a source of income and to meet family consumption needs, and have become a major occupation for women. In 1998, sales of farm products accounted for 27.2 percent of aggregate family income in rural areas and private land plots provided 19.3 percent of family food consumption.⁷⁵ This is an increase on the 1990 estimate that the share of family income derived from such activities represented up to 21 percent of total household income.⁷⁶

This increase is due to three factors. Firstly, the amount of land officially available for use as private plots has more than doubled since 1990. Secondly, the liberalization of the regulations regarding small-scale trade means that agricultural workers are free to sell their products. Thirdly, the systematic failure of both government and collective rural enterprises to pay wages on a regular basis together with the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector have made private plots not only a source of income for the family, but also a mechanism for absorbing surplus female labor.

While women's activities are crucial here they—like housekeeping tasks—are unremunerated and unrecognized as work. This can affect the intra-family distribution of money and resources, and increases the risk of economic inequality between men and women. Women moreover often carry out a whole series of tasks at home, such as making clothes, baking bread,

⁷² See p. 19 of footnote 6.

⁷³ During the Soviet era, the dominant form of agricultural management were *kolkhozes* (collective farms) and *sovkhoses* (state-owned farms). Since that time, a number of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* have been transformed into *shirkats* (cooperative farms). In addition, a number of other forms of farm management have emerged including independent peasant or *dehqan* farms. Despite the growing diversity of agricultural producers, *kolkhozes* are still the dominant forms, accounting for 55 percent of all irrigated land in 1998. See Alisher Ilkhamov (1998) for a discussion of farm restructuring in Uzbekistan.

⁷⁴ See p. 13 of footnote 11.

⁷⁵ See. p. 19 of footnote 6.

⁷⁶ Deniz Candiyoti. "Women and Social Policy" in *Social Policy and Economic Transformation in Uzbekistan*. Edited by Keith Griffin. Tashkent, UNDP (1990, p. 133); cited in footnote 13.

herding cattle, etc., i.e., tasks that have a commodity or value equivalent, and represent concrete money savings on the purchase of clothes, bread and other food products. This also has implications for women's long-term security and access to social insurance available to employed persons only. The other concern of note is the expanding scope of unremunerated work performed by women and children.

The search for work or better-paid work by men is also leading to more female-headed households. Related to this, more men are migrating from rural to urban areas in search of work. Such migration is often illegal in that these men are not registered to live in the urban areas and there are reports of considerable harassment by police. Women also look for work in urban areas; however, these women tend to be drawn from surrounding areas, enabling them to commute on a day-to-day basis. Uzbekistan has recently signed a labor agreement with the Republic of Korea and other countries. Already Uzbekistan men, predominantly from rural areas, are working in the Republic of Korea, thus signaling Uzbekistan's increasing participation in international labor flows. Currently, men make up the majority of migrant workers. This leaves increasing numbers of women forced to cope as heads of households.

Any discussion of the feminization of poverty in Uzbekistan must take into account the fact that in Uzbekistan's increasingly stratified society new categories of poor (and rich) are emerging. One of the newer categories of poor covers professionals and members of the intelligentsia, who were formerly middle class by virtue of education and professional work history. The real decline in the value of wages paid to professional and skilled women, particularly in the public sector where women are over-represented, has led to the growth of what could be termed the "new poor". There are numerous stories of highly trained professionals seeking badly paid and nonprestigious work to improve their families' material well-being. Stories of professional women seeking employment as domestic workers are common. Similar stories are told of professional men, who now seek work as drivers or day laborers for the same reason. For women, however, such work often carries additional personal safety risks and is not accompanied by any reduction in their duties at home.

Some of these women have retrained to improve their level of income, often becoming very entrepreneurial and successful. Nevertheless retraining is not always the best solution. In particular, there are implications not only on gender relations but also on the skills base of Uzbekistan's labor force if the skills of professional women are inefficiently used either by women withdrawing from the workforce or seeking unskilled but better paid work.

Health and Nutrition

Transition to a market economy and the economic hardships suffered in Uzbekistan over the last 10 years have had a number of negative consequences on women's health and well-being. This is despite the fact that there are some positive developments in this area. For example, the crude death level continues to fall and life expectancy is fairly stable at around 68 years for men and 73 years for women (although higher in urban areas than in rural areas). Infant and maternal mortality and morbidity rates have also fallen. Between 1993 and 1998, the infant mortality rate fell from 70.8 to 43.4 per thousand, with boys accounting for a higher proportion of deaths. There has also been a decrease in the uneven distribution of infant mortality rates. For example, in 1993, the infant mortality rate in Karakalpakstan was 44.8 per thousand compared with the Republic of Uzbekistan average of 32 per thousand. By 1998 the respective figures were 24.9 and 21.9.

Indicators of maternal mortality also decreased over the same period with the mortality rate falling from 24.1 per thousand in 1993 to 9.6 in 1998.⁷⁷

Despite these positive developments, there remain serious health problems related to women's poor nutrition, unhealthy environment and frequent births. Poverty and the decline in health services accompanying the transition to a market economy exacerbate all of these problems. The health system in Uzbekistan is currently under heavy financial strain. While the Government has tried to retain the share of government expenditure on health since independence, health's share of government expenditure has declined. Health spending as a share of national income fell by about one fifth between 1992 and 1996, that is, from 4.6 percent of GDP to 3.7 percent. The effect of this decrease together with inflation means that the level of per capita real health expenditure has fallen to 55 percent of the 1990 level. Increasingly, people have to pay for health services with mothers often in a position of having to choose whether to prioritize their own health or other needs when making decisions about family expenditure. For example, payment is now required for dentistry, dental prosthetics, and preventive medicine; and clinic treatments and diagnostics have become fully or partially use pay. Furthermore, the real cost of health care has risen due to the increase in informal fees charged by medical practitioners, nurses and for medication, all of which are ostensibly free. According to one study in Ak-Altyn region, each household that sought medical assistance in 1997 spent 12,000 sum—or one fifth of their annual income on health costs.⁷⁸

For these reasons, there has been an increase in what could be called diseases of the poor. For example, in some disease categories affecting women, there has been little difference over the period 1995-1998. The 1998 figures for the diagnosis of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer have changed little from those of 1995. However, this is not the case with social diseases such as active tuberculosis and syphilis.⁷⁹ Infectious disease is the primary cause of infant mortality, with 80 percent of infants dying from acute respiratory infections.⁸⁰ Infectious morbidity remains one of the major epidemiological concerns of Uzbekistan. Infectious diseases accounted for 4.7 percent of the death rate in 1995, with viral hepatitis affecting 8-12 percent of the population. Recently, there has been a growth in such diseases as hepatitis and diphtheria.

In addition, one of the major health problems facing women in Uzbekistan is anemia, which nearly 60 percent of women suffer to some extent.⁸¹ In some areas, such as Karakalpakstan, 98 percent of women suffered from anemia in 1998.⁸² Anemia is a condition closely linked to frequent births, inadequate nutrition and poor water quality. Although anemia was present during the Soviet era, the incidence of anemia has become worse. Poverty is of course a factor here, particularly in rural areas where ironically there are greater problems of poor diet and restricted caloric intake. For example, consumption of meat is 2.5 times higher in

⁷⁷ See pp. 34-35 of footnote 21.

⁷⁸ An ADB project, cited in footnote 13.

⁷⁹ See p. 46 of footnote 21.

⁸⁰ Tharald Hetland and Jane Haycock, "Investment for Health," in *The Social Policy and Economic Transformation in Uzbekistan*, edited by Keith Griffin, Tashkent, UNDP, 1995; cited in p. 3 of footnote 13.

⁸¹ See footnote 13.

⁸² Materials from an international seminar on "Understanding Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Demographic Behaviour and Implications for Formulation and Execution of Population Policies and Programs," Tashkent, October 1999.

Tashkent city than in rural Surkhandarya. The consumption of dairy products is similarly higher in urban areas, and in this case 1.6 times higher in Tashkent city than in Surkhandarya.⁸³ In addition, the avoidance of costly medical services has led to greater neglect of illness by women, particularly in the poorer classes.⁸⁴

Frequency of childbirth is another factor in the incidence of anemia. On average, women in Uzbekistan have their first child at 21 years of age and continue to have a child—on average—every 2.5 years. Despite some reduction in family size, the average family size was 5.5 children in 1999 (that is, 6.1 children in rural areas and 4.6 children in urban areas). Women also prefer to breast feed, with the average length of breastfeeding at 17 months. Such factors alone would not necessarily negatively effect women’s health. However, in a situation of poverty, inadequate health resources, poor nutrition and water quality, even a low birth rate will have implications on women’s health.

In this context, women’s sexual and reproductive health is also at risk. Of concern here is the use of abortion as a form of contraception. While women’s use of contraception has increased, there is much room to expand this use. Use of contraception per 100 women of fertile age was 38.2 in 1995 and 59.5 in 1998, with IUDs being the most widely used form of contraception. Unfortunately, too, there is little use of condoms. Women associate these with adultery and hence are vulnerable to the transmission of STDs and HIV/AIDS. The area of sexual and reproductive health is also shrouded in ignorance and shame. Most adults think that sex education should be conducted in the home, but then feel acute embarrassment discussing such issues with their children. This, and the lack of formal sex education at school or public health clinics, lead to a lack of knowledge of such issues.

Unhealthy environments and unsafe water supplies have also contributed to women’s poor health (particularly anemia), reproductive complications, and infant and child mortality. Infectious diseases cause major epidemics in Uzbekistan with the most common—intestinal diseases and viral hepatitis—caused by the poor condition of water supply, lack of hot water and sewerage facilities. About 40 percent of the rural population is equipped with centralized water supply amenities, and only 2 percent have access to centralized sewerage facilities. Thus over half of the population draw water from open and unsanitary water reservoirs, which can be affected by chemical pollutants and cholera agents.

Furthermore, parts of Uzbekistan face serious environmental pollution, which most often affect women and children first. Such pollution poses special risks for pregnant women. For example, areas such as the Aral Sea region, Fergana valley, Bukhara province and Tashkent province’s industrial zone have unsafe levels of air and water pollution. Drinking water and food contain unsafe levels of chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.⁸⁵ The Nukus-based NGO, Perzant (meaning “infant” in Karakalpak) reports that the mortality rate of women and children in the Karakalpakstan region is one of the highest in the CARs.⁸⁶ A 1995 analysis of drinking water in Karakalpakstan found high salinity and chemical levels (the residues of mineral fertilizers, pesticides, phenols and oil products). Furthermore, toxic elements were found in

⁸³ See footnote 16.

⁸⁴ See p. 31 of footnote 13. The following paragraphs draw heavily from pp. 29-42 of footnote 13.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 3 of footnote 13.

⁸⁶ See p. 198 of footnote 32.

potable water throughout Karakalpakstan and in 64 percent of food samples taken from the region. This helps to explain the increased cancer rates in the region (which increased from 163 to 183 cases per thousand between 1985 and 1992).⁸⁷

There is another issue that needs to be considered here, and that is the amount of time women can spend in leisure and free time. Estimates of the time spent on work in the home by men and women from a survey of households in the Ak-Altyn region of Syrdarya conducted in Spring 1998 are given in Table 9.⁸⁸ It is worth pointing out that the total time expenditure indicated may be much less in reality, as some of the tasks are carried out simultaneously (such as child care and cooking). Yet the data indicate that the total time spent by women on work at home exceeds any time spent in productive activities (estimated at eight hours), and hardly gives them time for rest and personal hygiene.

Table 9: Breakdown of Average Time Costs on Housekeeping by Women and Men in Ak-Altyn Region of Syrdarya Oblast

Type of Activity	Hours per Day	
	Men	Women
Repair and making of household equipment	1.0	
Care of livestock	3.5	
Storage of fodder for livestock	1.0	
Storage of fuel	1.0	
Maintenance and repair of house and additional premises	2.0	
Purchase of food and goods	1.5	
Care of children		6.0
Storage of domestic stock		3.0
Potable water delivery		1.0
Cooking and washing up		3.0
Cleaning in the house and yard		2.0
Washing and ironing clothes		1.5
Sewing and repair of clothes		1.0
Total	10.0	17.5

* Seasonal arrangement.

** Water is taken from the outside water pump, for which people usually queue.

Unfortunately there is a lack of data in this area, particularly in relation to the health, psychological and physical affects of women's increased workloads. It would also be useful to see how increased workloads reduce women's potential to pursue education. This may in fact be a significant issue for daughters if they are being asked to assume more responsibility for housework. While we have some statistics on how women spend their free time when they have it, we need more time research into how women spend their time and how much of this (if any) is spent on free time.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Oral Ataniyazova, "Economic Factors and Reproductive Function in the Extreme Situation of Southern Aral," *Compendium of Research Program Reports of the International Maternity and Childhood Health Care Foundation*, Moscow, 1995, pp. 225-231. Cited in p. 41 of footnote 13.

⁸⁸ A 1998 ADB project that surveyed 600 households using random sampling methods.

⁸⁹ See pp. 82 and 84 of footnote 21.

Education and Training

Due to a system of compulsory education, there is no significant difference between girls and boy's educational attendance and attainment at primary and secondary education levels. Furthermore, the incidence of poverty does not appear to affect attendance at these levels either. There is near universal literacy in Uzbekistan and no major differences between the sexes. Where poverty and gender do result in unequal opportunity for men and women is in higher education. Women's participation rate is falling here, particularly at the more prestigious institutions. For example, women's enrollment at the Tashkent Institute of Finance declined from 65 percent in 1991 to 25 percent in 1997. In 1993, 18 percent fewer girls graduated from vocational schools than did boys, and 22 percent fewer from undergraduate and graduate programs in institutes of higher learning.⁹⁰

Such a decline is directly related to the costs of economic transition. As with health, the transition to a market economy has been accompanied by cuts to education. While there have been some positive educational reforms during this period such as the universal 12-year education system, the general decrease in government funding and the gradual increase in the number of students who must pay private fees for education have made higher education unaffordable to many. This has resulted in an overall decline in the number of students enrolled in institutes of higher learning: in 1991, there were 337,400 registered students, but by 1998, there were only 158,206. In a context where education is increasingly expensive (including usually some sort of bribe to even secure a placement at university), and where the association between education and employment is weakening (due to the poor salaries and conditions offered in many professions), there seems to be a shift away from investing in young women's higher education.

Apart from the increasing educational costs, other factors restricting young women's access to higher education include the resurgence of traditional attitudes about women and a lower age limit for marriage within the Family Code (where there is potential conflict between 12-year compulsory education and a lowered age of marriage at 17, and in some cases, 16).

Another concern in the area of education is the high degree of specialization of female students in higher education and specialized state education. Women continue to account for 90 percent of students in public health despite the deteriorating employment and salary conditions. Furthermore, the unavailability of institutes of higher learning in rural areas has implications for young women. For example, the only institution of higher learning in Kokand is the Pedagogical Institute. This means that if young women are to continue their education closer to home, they can only study to become teachers. This is of even greater concern given the rather bleak employment situation of teachers currently in Uzbekistan.

There is also evidence that women's enrollment in some subjects that are better matched with existing employment demand is declining as increasing numbers of men pursue these subjects. One report suggests that women's enrollment in economics, management and planning was down to 35 percent in 1999, although these subjects were considered women's subjects at the beginning of this decade. Despite the fact that accounting and economics were earlier considered

⁹⁰ See p. 62 of footnote 13.

female subjects, in 1997 only 40 percent of the economics students at Tashkent University were women.⁹¹

Training and education are critical if women are to maintain and regain lost employment status. However, women need to be encouraged out of their “traditional” subject areas in order to remain competitive in the workforce. Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on women’s continuing education. As a first step, further research is required in the following areas to determine what are the critical factors behind the decision to support/prevent daughters from higher education. In addition, as part of the current implementation of a new national education program, efforts must be directed at

- (i) Combating stereotyped ways of thinking about women’s and men’s education, professions and specialization;
- (ii) Developing education programs that are strongly linked with existing demand of the labor market, and then encouraging women into these new professional areas; and
- (iii) Developing a system of flexible, affordable vocational education programs for rural and poor women incorporating business, technical, and other functional training.

⁹¹ See p. 62 of footnote 13.

Chapter 3 Critical Issues for Women in Uzbekistan

Three critical issues need to be considered for their impact on women's status and ability to fully participate in Uzbekistan society:

- (i) Economic cost of transition,
- (ii) Human cost of development, and
- (iii) Gender and development capacity building.

Economic Costs of Transition

Women suffer both economic and social deprivation as a result of unemployment and insufficient income-generating opportunities. Furthermore, there is little sign that this trend is declining as poverty, economic polarization and the share of the population considered poor and destitute increase. Critical factors here include unemployment, wage arrears, inflation and high costs of living.

Employment and unemployment in SMEs

SMEs are important for job creation and employment for people with the right skills. Furthermore, there is evidence that women's participation in small trade and business—particularly through their involvement in “shuttle” trade, cultivation of private plots and other economic activities—can improve the economic and physical welfare of their families.

There are however risks and barriers to participating in small business activities. The major barriers for women in particular are women's lack of knowledge about market activities and their lack of capital. The reluctance of banks in Uzbekistan to finance very small loans—the type that women predominately need for such activities as marketing home produce and handicrafts—increases the difficulties facing women in accessing credit.

Four areas need to be developed and expanded in relation to women's participation in SMEs and income-generating activities in Uzbekistan:

- (i) Training on vocational skills,
- (ii) Training on business and entrepreneurial skills,
- (iii) Microcredit programs, and
- (iv) Financial sector reform and SME reform.

Vocational skills training

There are two important issues related to vocational skills training. Firstly, there is an urgent need for labor market studies that can identify vocational training skills required to meet the demands of the market. Women's NGOs in particular would benefit from access to this research. It would help them target their small business activities and vocational training for women in areas suffering skills shortages. Secondly, there is a need to ensure that such training opportunities are spread across Uzbekistan. Given the cost involved and reluctance of some

parents to allow daughters to go to urban areas to study, it is important that skills training can be delivered locally in rural areas.

For this reason, the vocational courses that NGOs such as the Business Women's Association (BWA) provide fill a genuine need. Here courses ranging from accounting and computer literacy, to the more practical courses such as sewing, food processing and hairdressing, provide women with either few nonmarketable skills or new options in the employment market. Furthermore, given the geographical spread of the BWA, this NGO has the potential to deliver training to a great number of women in all regions of Uzbekistan.⁹²

Another important area to be developed is the processing and sale of agricultural products. This processing could take place in small to medium factories, which could then offer women employment, or else be undertaken on an individual level. Either way the development of such industries would help to absorb surplus female labor in rural areas as well as provide rural women with income-generating activities.

Business and entrepreneur skills

One of the primary risks associated with the transition to a small business in a market economy is the lack of knowledge of markets and small business management. One example here is a report of a woman in Almalyk who bought onions and carrots in one village to sell in the next. Her lack of understanding of market prices and the concept of demand meant that she suffered losses right from the start.⁹³

To an extent, women's NGOs have recognized this problem and offer training courses in a range of areas such as legal literacy, taxation and business registration, accountancy and business plan development. There is however a huge unmet demand that requires further investment by government and funding organizations, and greater coordination across NGO activities to ensure

- (i) a standard of instruction that is of high quality,
- (ii) minimal duplication,
- (iii) geographical spread and equality of opportunity, and
- (iv) a process of certification that would enable women to proceed to higher levels of relevant training.

Microcredit programs

Starting capital and lack of credit are barriers to women's as well as men's participation in small business. Banks in Uzbekistan are currently not providing credit services to small enterprises in general. Even where people have been fortunate to secure a bank loan the interest

⁹² Formed in 1991 as the first NGO in Uzbekistan, the BWA unites more than 3,000 women-entrepreneurs. It has regional and district branches all over the republic.

⁹³ See p. 16 of footnote 11.

rate is often a further encumbrance to economic growth,⁹⁴ and it is difficult for women in particular to secure a bank loan because they often lack the collateral required to secure a loan.⁹⁵ The BWA has played an important role here by facilitating women's access to bank loans. This function is an extension of the BWA's small business consultative services, and is particularly important for poor women who lack collateral.

For lesser amounts, microfinance schemes are an important mechanism for enabling poor women to access capital necessary for small business activities. Leaders from women's NGOs are particularly keen to see further expansion of microfinance projects in Uzbekistan. The widespread dissemination of such programs remains constrained by the lack of appropriate enabling legislation. Nevertheless, there have been a few microfinance programs implemented on a trial basis at regional levels with the cooperation of the BWA.⁹⁶ In part the success of such schemes comes from the integration of business education and entrepreneurial skills development, with credit lines. Furthermore, new "trials" are proceeding with support from regional governments (for example, the microfinance program to be initiated by the Samarkand NGO, *Sabr* Crisis Center).

Because of these trials, there exist a number of facilitators and trainers with experience in and enthusiasm for microfinance schemes in Uzbekistan. However, the capacity of women's NGOs who wish to work in the field of microfinance remains limited. Further investment is required in the areas of women's leadership programs, business development and financial management. In conclusion, several factors are important for the implementation of microfinance schemes:

- (i) Willingness of funding organizations to invest in this field;
- (ii) Favorable government legislative environment; and
- (iii) Capacity building within NGOs working in the microfinance field, particularly in the areas of business development and financial management.

⁹⁴ One farmer in Karakalpakstan quoted in one report said that he was teaching his children how to work as a farmer. He said that trade was too risky for those without connections, particularly given interest rates of 20-30 percent. See p. 24 of footnote 11.

⁹⁵ See p. 14 of footnote 6.

⁹⁶ One successful example here is the UNDP-funded "Microcredit Program in Karakalpakstan" established in January 1998. The project is also supported financially by the Government of Karakalpakstan (a semi-autonomous region within Uzbekistan). The national counterpart of the project is the Karakalpakstan Branch of the BWA, "Tadbirkor Ael". As of November 2000, the project had 820 clients engaged in four economic sectors—trade, small production, animal husbandry and services. It has been implemented in three rural areas of Karakalpakstan and has achieved almost all of its objectives. This microcredit program in Karakalpakstan could be used as a model for the implementation of such projects in other parts of Uzbekistan. To assist with this, the project team is developing a manual on implementing microcredit programs in Karakalpakstan that will include information on project implementation, methodology, forms and formats, database program reports

Financial sector reform and SME reform

Although a number of reforms to the financial sector are on the table, full implementation is necessary to develop confidence in the stability of the legislative environment and to provide the mechanisms necessary for women's participation in small business and microfinance schemes. The following factors are lacking to various degrees in Uzbekistan—combined they hold back SME growth and prevent the legal introduction of microfinance schemes:

- (i) Supportive legal framework for microfinance schemes;
- (ii) Transparent decision making within agencies responsible for the registration and licensing of small enterprises;
- (iii) Simplified taxation and registration and SME-friendly taxation and legislation;
- (iv) Banks operating as banks, i.e., giving loans to prospective borrowers; and
- (v) Action against corruption and extortion.

None of these barriers can be removed without the cooperation of the Government and its agencies. The influence of international funding organizations is crucial here in two ways:

- (i) To provide technical assistance necessary to the reform process; and
- (ii) To provide advice and appropriate encouragement.

Human Costs of Development

It is important to consider other issues around the experience of poverty and disadvantage, particularly those relating to the human and social costs of transition. Key issues here are:

- (i) Women's and girls' health and nutritional status, including the provision of adequate and affordable health services and the range of relevant information programs;
- (ii) Availability of affordable child-care centers;
- (iii) Women's and girls' access to affordable education, particularly at the higher education levels; and
- (iv) Women's leadership and political participation.

Addressing these issues is crucial to counteract a growing gender, class and geographic division. A major concern with all these issues is the real and potential uneven distribution of access in rural areas as distinct from urban centers. This has implications not only for women's health but also for the extent of equality of opportunity for all women to achieve social and economic mobility.

With the possible exception of women's access to higher education, most of these areas of concern are best conducted as a cooperative venture between the Government, women's NGOs, local women's organizations and *mahallas*. Government agencies are central in the provision of health and education services; furthermore, the Government and government

and other information. The project staff has also developed programs for training the national counterpart staff and clients.

women's organizations can ensure that programs developed have a breadth and depth across Uzbekistan. One isolated program on legal literacy will achieve little. With cooperation between government and nongovernment agencies, programs addressing nutrition and anemia are likely to have greater success.

Health and hygiene

The *National Action Plan for Improving the Status of Women in Uzbekistan* provides a good discussion of the areas of most concern here. There are already a number of established government and nongovernment organizations working in this area. Those wanting to participate in this area should seek partnership with these organizations, including the Ministries of Health and Education and the following organizations: Umid, Kamalot, Ecosan Aral Sea and "Soglom avlod uchun." Steps outlined by the National Action Plan here include:⁹⁷

- (i) Implementation of the National Program "For a Healthy Generation;"
- (ii) Reproductive health, including the prevention of unwanted pregnancy, longer breaks between births, and prevention of pregnancy in younger and older age groups;
- (iii) Detection and prevention of babies born with deficiencies and disability, including genetic illnesses and identification of specific environmental risk factors;
- (iv) Sexual health and education, including the development and implementation of social programs for HIV/AIDS, extra-genital and infectious diseases;
- (v) Development and implementation of projects for training people in first aid skills;
- (vi) Implementation of state-guaranteed free medical service program for pregnant and breast-feeding women to improve reproductive health and counteract the incidence of anemia;
- (vii) Development and implementation of international projects aimed at improving health and nutrition of women and children, including providing advice on how to grow varied and nutritional food for children, and monitoring the quality of imported and domestic food, medicines and household chemicals;
- (viii) Awareness-raising campaigns related to sanitation and hygiene, a healthy lifestyle and its values, reasonable family planning (work with men and teenagers), and on "The Role of the Family in Independent Uzbekistan;" and
- (ix) Development and implementation of informative and educational programs designed for women and girls about the harmful effects of alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

Child-care centers

This is one of the most pressing issues facing many women. Women with children face obstacles to participating in the workforce, in education and training, and in community programs. Data from a sample survey of households in three areas—Tashkent city, Fergana oblast

⁹⁷ *The National Platform for Action on the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan and on Advancement of Women in the Society*, a joint publication of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, Gender and Development Bureau and UNDP (September 1999).

and Karakalpakstan—revealed that 72.9 percent of children under 7 did not attend nurseries or kindergartens, and only 24 percent did so regularly. The largest rate of nonattendance was found in Karakalpakstan, where 81.7 percent of children under 7 did not attend. In rural areas, 83.5 percent of children did not attend kindergarten, and only 14.7 percent did so regularly. In those kindergartens that have remained open, the quality of care has worsened for the usual reasons—inadequate funding, and the low salaries paid to teachers and service staff.⁹⁸

Unfortunately, there are limited funds available to revive and develop preschool facilities. One suggestion is to use local funds, mainly through community initiatives and by mobilizing efforts at the local authority and *mahalla* levels.

Education

Education of girls increasingly has a geographical and class component. Many families cannot afford higher education for their daughters. For rural families, the expense of board and lodging is added to the cost of tuition and books. It is too early to say with any certainty the influence of traditional and Islamic factors here, but a number of women's NGOs have raised concern over what they see as a link between traditional and/or Islamic attitudes and young women's declining participation in higher education. Research is needed to discover the range of factors that may be operating here including economic difficulties, the rising costs of education, the failure of education to guarantee secure employment, and cultural stereotypes—particularly strong in rural areas—that women's responsibilities after marriage are primarily located in the domestic sphere.

There is also a need to reorient girls away from the range of subjects traditionally favored by girls. Girls need to be encouraged to maintain their strength in economics and management, as well as to look to new areas such as information technology. Furthermore, education at the *mahalla* level is required to undermine cultural practices that work against girls attaining higher education (such as early marriage).

The National Action Plan recognizes the importance of education for girls, and endorses the following steps designed to raise the educational and professional skills base of women:

- (i) Encourage the active participation of women in the national program of educational reform;
- (ii) Organize regional training centers for retraining and reorienting women to the new economic conditions;
- (iii) Formulate legislative reforms to promote a system of private school education;
- (iv) Introduce sex education for boys and girls in school and higher education; and
- (v) Overcome the traditional division of male and female professions.

Retraining is also an issue, particularly for skilled and professional women who find that their current skills base do not provide secure or well-paid employment. There are worrying stories of female doctors retraining as hairdressers and other professional women looking for work as cleaners. While such women are to be commended for their initiative, the wasting of

⁹⁸ This survey was carried out by the Expert Social Research Center as part of a 1995 Project. See p. 57 of footnote 13.

highly trained women is of grave concern. There are implications here not only for gender relations but also for the skills base of Uzbekistan's labor force if the skills of professional women are inefficiently used either by women withdrawing from the workforce or seeking unskilled but better paid work. Currently, there is only a limited range of affordable retraining schemes available, and most of these are provided by women's NGOs. What is needed—and to date, lacking—are retraining programs targeted at professional and highly skilled women to enable them to find employment that better utilizes their existing skills.

Women's leadership and political participation

Leadership programs and legal literacy programs are important in terms of women's political participation and legal status.

Women's falling participation in formal political structures is of particular concern. If, however, highly skilled and experienced women are prepared to act as role models for younger women, this may help to offset the lack of highly visible women in formal politics. There is also a need to give such women a higher profile to counteract conservative trends in society promoting patriarchal gender structures that define women primarily as wife and mother. In particular, women—particularly those in positions of influence—need to be made more aware of how they can encourage younger women to seek recognition and position in public, political and economic spheres.

In terms of increasing women's political participation, the National Action Plan sets an agenda that seeks to ensure equal access to government positions at all levels in accordance with international standards. The National Action Plan proposes the following steps:

- (i) Make relevant amendments in the Law on State Service and internal regulations of ministries stipulating procedures for the promotion of women in accordance with the criteria set by international standards;
- (ii) Design a state program to support and create opportunities for women in positions of higher decision-making levels;
- (iii) Cooperate with political parties to promote the preselection of female candidates and other issues relating to the appointment of women; and
- (iv) Organize seminars, training, conferences, round tables, etc. to discuss the relevant issues.

Another aspect of women's leadership and political participation is the development of women's NGOs. The National Action Plan recognizes their importance, and supports the following steps:

- (i) Provide support to women leaders in initiating new women's NGOs; and
- (ii) Design and arrange training seminars for women leaders.

Gender and Development Capacity Building

Finally, it is important to combat prevailing gender stereotypes and ideologies that subordinate women in Uzbekistan. Gender stereotypes and gender relations determine a range of nonformal barriers in women's lives in Uzbekistan. They also block women's full enjoyment of their legislative rights, particularly in the workplace.

Gender awareness may be growing; however, the active implementation of gender policies and programs is still limited by ignorance and hostility both within government and in society more broadly. Despite a number of positive initiatives by the Government, much work needs to be done to prevent these positive moves from becoming merely token gestures. This issue is particularly pressing given the resurgence in traditional cultural values and Islamic beliefs that have accompanied the rise in Uzbek nationalism. While the Government does not endorse such views, government policy is sometimes changed on the way down by people who subscribe to a more conservative set of gender ideologies. The mass media is not very helpful here at times, with the majority of journalists lacking gender sensitivity and awareness.

Fortunately, the National Action Plan supports a number of measures in the area of media, equal rights and opportunities, and research. There is further scope, however, for funding agencies and other interested parties to provide technical assistance and funding in these areas. The range of critical topics to be covered include

- (i) Awareness of gender as a social relation and the prevalence of gender stereotypes in society;
- (ii) Definition of the concept gender and other related terminology; and
- (iii) Discussion of gender in relation to civics and legal literacy.

Building gender capacity in government

The transitional environment provides a new impetus for building the gender capacity in government. There is an urgent need to forge a new relationship between state and market and gender. Earlier protective policies emerging from Soviet-style trade unions and government apparatus are either no longer viable or else no longer affordable. However, in a liberal market economy neither the state nor the market guarantees women's equal participation in society. Therefore, mainstreaming gender within the state—that is, strengthening the institutional capacity of the Government to initiate and implement projects that further gender equality—is a critical component in guaranteeing equality of opportunity for women in Uzbekistan.

The National Action Plan sets an agenda that seeks to ensure equal access to government positions at all levels in accordance with international standards. To achieve this objective, the Government requires technical assistance to educate policymakers and government officers on ways to integrate and mainstream gender in government agencies. Such assistance would also identify the most appropriate government levels to target.

Supporting public education programs on gender and gender stereotypes

However, for efforts to mainstream gender in the Government to be successful there is a need to educate a broader audience on the importance of gender equality. After all, members of state and government agencies are firstly members of society and therefore reflect the values and gender ideologies of society in general.

In particular there is a need to reach a broader audience to counteract institutional barriers in the family and the workplace to enable women's full participation in all aspects of society. Public educational programs directed at schools and distributed via the mass media will ideally reinforce legislative changes and gender mainstreaming programs occurring in government and elsewhere.

Schools and the mass media are particularly important as they directly engage boys and men in issues affecting women and family welfare. Critical issues to be targeted in such campaigns include:

- (i) Physical and psychological domestic violence, including child abuse;
- (ii) Women's "double burden" and gender relations that subordinate them in the family;
- (iii) Discrimination against women in the workplace; and
- (iv) Negative stereotypes that reinforce women's inferiority in society.

The National Action Plan sees the need for a more favorable depiction of women and their status in society. Two of the goals of the National Action Plan are to protect the dignity and worth of women as represented in the media, and be involved in the creation of a more contemporary representation of the Uzbek woman. The National Action Plan sees the mass media as an important site for explaining women's equal rights and opportunities, together with other pressing gender issues. It also provides a public forum for debating gender issues. However, it implicitly recognized the inadequacy of the content of mainstream programs and written media. For this reason, it recommended an increase in the number of specialized women's newspaper and magazines, and TV and radio programs.⁹⁹

Another area that requires further investment is curriculum development. Given that Uzbekistan is currently implementing a national educational reform program, it would make sense to take this opportunity to appoint a gender specialist to oversee curriculum development. For this reason, the Ministry of Education would also be an appropriate site to introduce an *internal* program of gender capacity building as well. International funding organizations could work productively with ministry officials to provide the technical assistance for both these aspects.

⁹⁹ See footnote 119.

Building a database on the economic and social conditions of women and households

Mainstreaming gender presupposes an existing knowledge base on the status and position of women in society. Such a knowledge base is incomplete in Uzbekistan at the moment. There have been contributions to the quantitative and qualitative analysis of women and gender in the past few years but further investment in research is required. Without such research it is difficult to describe the current baseline in relation to women's status and thus measure gains or losses. In general terms, the National Action Plan supports such initiatives calling for

- (i) In-depth research in the area of gender; and
- (ii) An annual publication reporting on the status of women in Uzbekistan, as well as the preparation of leaflets on gender analyses in Uzbek.¹⁰⁰

There is a need for more grounded quantitative and qualitative research into the economic and social conditions of women and households. Household budget studies, women's time allocation surveys and qualitative studies into the changing nature of gender relations in the family are badly needed.

¹⁰⁰

See footnote 119.

Chapter 4 Programming Opportunities Relevant to ADB

ADB's Operational Strategy for Uzbekistan

The central goal of ADB's assistance program in Uzbekistan is the management of the transition to an economy that relies upon market-based institutions providing for a sustainable reduction in poverty and increases in the standard of living. This strategy recognizes the Government's program of reform as the essential element to the longer-term ability to address the problems of poverty reduction and development.

ADB's Country Operational Strategy (COS) for Uzbekistan (February 2000) proposes that its assistance should focus on the following:

- (i) **Basic reforms.** This involves strengthening of the institutional capacity for governance through a program of structural reforms and institutional capacity building. Within this program, a comprehensive, phased program of reform is important in the financial sector. The functioning of this sector is of particular importance for other sectors, including agriculture, and in removing the barriers to the development of the private sector.
- (ii) **Minimizing social costs of transition and increasing human development.** This includes increasing the efficiency of resource utilization in the social sectors and in social protection and developing market-sensitive institutions and policies. Two focus areas include education and related sectors such as early childhood development, and urban development and infrastructure.
- (iii) **Regional cooperation.** ADB will encourage regional cooperation, particularly in transport and energy. Projects and programs to encourage improved regional transport systems and energy markets—both infrastructure and with respect to the policy environment—can strongly assist Uzbekistan's ability to grow.
- (iv) **Support for the rural sector.** ADB will provide assistance to the rural sector, especially the rural poor, through (a) the development of pilot projects in agriculture to demonstrate the utility of specific reforms and investments, (b) support for rural finance institutions, and (c) direct support to agriculture-related private sector activities.
- (v) **Support for the private sector.** Special consideration will be given to equity investments in projects that have relevance to ADB's public sector programs, especially in agriculture, education and finance.

General Recommendations

Mainstreaming gender issues into policies and development programs should be the key planning strategy in ADB's efforts to promote gender equity in Uzbekistan. This will not only improve women's status but will also contribute to the national, social, and economic development of the country. ADB can make mainstreaming of gender issues operational at two levels (i) by ensuring that gender considerations are fully taken into account in each of its own loans; and (ii) by supporting and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Government for

mainstreaming gender concerns. To further promote gender equity, continued investment in the following areas are recommended:

Building the gender capacity of the GID Unit

The GID Unit was formed as part of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, which is responsible for strengthening gender capacity in government. The GID Unit functions as a coordination and information unit of gender activities in Uzbekistan. There is a critical need to develop the capacity of the GID Unit to facilitate its central role in coordinating gender activities in the country, including the promotion of integrating gender concerns in sectoral programs. At the organizational level, there is an urgent need for the GID Unit to define its mandate, roles and functions to improve the coordination of gender activities in Uzbekistan.

Supporting capacity building of the GID Unit will not only enhance the capacity of the Unit to undertake its immediate tasks, but it will also improve the capacity of the Women's Committee to oversee and strengthen gender capacity building in government. This is in accordance with ADB's COS for Uzbekistan, which has identified basic reforms as one of the priority areas of assistance. Basic reforms include strengthening the institutional capacity for governance through a program of structural reforms and institutional capacity building.

It is recommended that ADB provide technical assistance to the GID Unit in the following key areas:

- (i) Institutional strengthening of the GID Unit;
- (ii) Coordination of the Government's initiatives on gender and development;
- (iii) Gender capacity building in the Government and government agencies;
- (iv) Research and publication in the area of gender; and
- (v) Advocacy.

Retraining highly skilled women in business and management

Reports of professional women looking for unskilled work are of grave concern. There are implications here not only for gender relations but also in terms of loss of qualified women, and wastage of valuable human resources. There is a huge need to develop retraining programs targeted at professional and highly skilled women as a method of their adaptation to the labor market. A higher functional level of women's education implies a higher level of their economic and legal knowledge and an ability to use new information technology.

The COS for Uzbekistan recognizes the well-developed human skills base in the country as a major asset for its future development. To maintain the human skills base, it is recommended that retraining programs be designed and implemented to ensure that valuable human resources will not be lost. Within this framework it is recommended to first, conduct labor market studies to identify specific training necessary to meet market demands, and second, provide retraining programs for women to redirect their skills base in accordance with labor market needs.

Supporting small business development for promoting women's microenterprises

SMEs are important sites of employment creation and income generation for women. Women's participation in small trade and business not only improves their own welfare but also the welfare of their family. There are women with considerable skills in handicrafts, ceramics and food preparation, who could operate successful small businesses with appropriate training, a good business plan and access to credit.

Investing in women's microenterprises in Uzbekistan will generate employment opportunities for women; however, it will be necessary at the same time to provide enhanced business development and financial management skills focused on the needs of women. Additionally, support to establishment of small businesses will assist the emerging private sector, a priority area in ADB's COS for Uzbekistan.

It is recommended that ADB's support to the emerging private sector include training in (i) business and financial management skills for women and men, and development of educational materials designed for women's needs and experiences; and (ii) women's leadership skills and vocational skills development. Finally, it is recommended that support to microenterprises and SMEs be developed in tandem with credit programs and microfinance projects.

Designing microfinance programs for poor women

Women's lack of capital is one of the greatest barriers they face in establishing small and microenterprises. It is therefore recommended that private sector support to Uzbekistan, which is identified by ADB as one of the priority areas in the COS, encourage the Government to provide an appropriately supportive environment for microfinance programs, particularly in the areas of legislation and taxation.

To ensure that women will participate and benefit from microfinance programs, these programs must be seen as part of a broader program that includes training in business and financial management skills, women's leadership skills, and vocational skills development. In addition, microfinance programs should be designed with the specific needs of poor women in mind, including vocational training that best suits the resources of poor women, educational material tailored to the needs and experiences of poor women, and women-only microfinance schemes.

Promoting tertiary and vocational education for women

There is a growing trend particularly in rural areas of young women not pursuing tertiary and vocational education. Factors here include financial difficulties, the increasing cost of education, geographical disparities that limit the choice of tertiary and vocational institutions available in rural areas, and traditional and/or Islamic attitudes about the appropriateness of further education for young women.

There is also a need to reorient girls away from the range of traditionally favored subjects. Girls need to be encouraged to maintain their strength in economics and management, as well as to look to new areas such as information technology. The current educational programs

preferred by women—such as health, medicine and education—are not well linked to the existing demand of the labor market, and thus disadvantage female professionals.

To maintain a well-developed human skills base that is a major asset for the future development of the country, a link between women's higher education preferences and labor market demands needs to be established. To support this the following interventions are recommended: (i) conduct research focusing on the critical factors behind the decision to support/prevent daughters from higher education; (ii) educational materials should eliminate stereotyped ways of thinking about women's and men's education, professions and specialization; (iii) educational programs that are strongly linked with existing demand of the labor market should be developed and then women should be encouraged to go into these new professional areas; and finally, (iv) a system of flexible, affordable vocational education programs (including business, technical and other functional training) should be developed for rural and poor women.

Strengthening the capacity of NGOs working on gender

As discussed in Chapter 1 the number of NGOs has been growing significantly. The growth of women's NGOs is promising, and many of these NGOs are committed to enhancing the political and legal status of women, and have extensive grassroots networks. There have been concerns, however, over the lack of coordination and small-scale nature of projects undertaken by NGOs. There is also a general need for better communication and coordination between government and nongovernment women's organizations.

Strengthening the capacity of NGOs is crucial as a weak civil society and poor governance reinforce each other. In addition, development of women's NGOs is important in terms of enhancing women's leadership and political participation. Support to women's NGOs is also in line with the National Action Plan, which includes support to women leaders in initiating new women's NGOs.

Supporting agriculture-related projects

The privatization process in the agriculture sector has not provided rural income and employment opportunities due to unresolved issues relating to privatization and land distribution. Women, however, have taken advantage of other opportunities such as food processing and sale of agriculture products from their home gardening. Private plots in rural areas are for this reason becoming increasingly important both as a source of income as well as in meeting family consumption needs.

ADB's COS for Uzbekistan includes support for the rural sector. To increase women's income opportunities in rural areas and improve the nutrition of rural households, it is recommended that ADB prepare pilot projects related to the agriculture sector, focusing on support to the development of home gardening.

Institutionalizing gender-disaggregated data

One area where there have been important developments is in the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated statistics. The Department of Statistics within the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics has made considerable headway in institutionalizing the collection of disaggregated statistics. With funding from UNDP, this department co-authored a report on gender statistics with the GID Unit of the Women's Committee. However, with the funding period over, many of these gains have been stalled.

Technical assistance to further institutionalize the collection and collation of gender-disaggregated statistics across all areas of government statistics could fill information gaps in planning and developing programs that address critical areas of need.

Strengthening and building the institutional capacity of government GAD focal points and women's NGOs

As indicated above mainstreaming gender issues into policies and development programs should be the key planning strategy in ADB's efforts to promote gender equity in Uzbekistan. CARs share commonalities in terms of economic, political and social transformation into market economies. Earlier protective policies are either no longer viable or affordable. And in a liberal market economy neither the state nor the market guarantees women's equal participation in society. Therefore, strengthening the institutional capacity of government as well as of NGOs to implement projects that contribute to gender equality is a critical component in guaranteeing equality of opportunity for women in the CARs.

Regional technical assistance (RETA) will support the individual countries in capacity building within the area of gender and development (GAD), and at the same time strengthen regional cooperation. Implementation of the RETA, as described above, will strengthen regional cooperation, which is one of the operational objectives of the COS for Uzbekistan.

Gender Concerns in ADB's Project Pipeline for Uzbekistan, 2000-2001

This section undertakes an indicative gender analysis of selected projects for 2000-2001. ADB's program evolves on a yearly basis to best address the needs of the Government. The list of gender issues and proposed interventions for integration of gender concerns is by no means exhaustive. It is indicative and emphasizes that there is always scope for gender integration in all projects, even in those that appear to be gender "neutral". The analysis below indicates gender issues that need to be taken into account.

Approved Projects 2000

For the approved projects (2000), the identified gender issues may be addressed during the annual review of the projects.

1. Senior Secondary Education (Loan 1737)

The main goal of this Project is to support the aims of the National Program for Personnel Training, that is, the establishment of an Uzbek education system capable of imparting skills and knowledge required in a market-oriented economy.

Gender issues

This Project is of direct relevance to gender. Benefit monitoring and evaluation (BME) should include enrollment, retention, and the general GAD concerns already discussed above. Through the action research at the project schools, enrollment, retention, graduation and employment/further education patterns of boys and girls should be monitored and analyzed. In addition other issues with gender implications to be monitored include

- (i) Institutionalization of stereotypical ways of thinking about women's and men's education, professions and specialization;
- (ii) Relationship of current educational programs to labor market demands, and the participation of women in new professional areas; and
- (iii) Development of a range of nonformal vocational, technical, business and further educational facilities to support training needs of women.

2. Ak-Altin Agriculture Development (Project 30458-01)

This Project aims to promote agricultural development on a sustainable basis. The Project will (i) support market transition by implementing policy reforms in the State procurement system of cotton and wheat, and reduce State intervention in farm operations; (ii) rehabilitate rural infrastructure to unlock the potential for an increase in crop productivity; and (iii) strengthen rural institutions to support private farming, improve water management, and sustain operations and management of the irrigation and drainage system after the rehabilitation.

Gender issues

Strengthening rural institutions like rural business advisory center and water users associations (WUAs) will support private farming and proper water management on a long-term basis. Women-farmers should be fully involved in training and WUA membership. It is proposed that women account for 50 percent of project beneficiaries.

3. Second Small and Medium Enterprise Development (Loan 1799)

The objectives of this Project are to (i) foster balanced economic growth with poverty reduction through revitalization and diversification of Uzbekistan's private sector SMEs; (ii) improve legal, regulatory, and policy framework for SMEs; (iii) create increased value-adding through backward and forward linkages with Uzbekistan's primary and tertiary sectors, respectively; (iv) generate and sustain additional employment opportunities; (v) increase foreign exchange earnings through export promotion and savings through import substitution; and (vi) improve the financial intermediation of the Uzbekistan banking system.

The Project provides credit lines to three participating banks. Priority will be given to export-oriented subprojects. The Project will support the opening of new SMEs and the modernization and rehabilitation of existing ones. This will facilitate demand for agriculture and mineral inputs, absorb surplus labor, and improve efficiency and product quality by introducing new technologies and management to SMEs.

Gender issues

Uzbek women in general have weak access to credit, because of lack information on credit facilities, lack of collateral, and unfamiliarity with bank regulations. These internal and external constraints make women uncomfortable with banks and in particular in applying for credit. In such a situation it is necessary to make banking more gender-inclusive. The following suggestions apply:

- (i) Orient executing agencies on creating gender equality in their support of SMEs;
- (ii) Provide support, guidance and advisory services specifically designed for female clients;
- (iii) Consider establishing separate credit lines or funds for women to simplify banking procedures and make them more supportive of female entrepreneurs;
- (iv) Support the creation of gender-sensitive business education and investment training facilities (such as training manuals, personnel training, and equipment); and
- (v) Given women's participation and interest in small-scale production, processing and sale of agricultural products and handicrafts, ADB may consider including as part of this project an exhibition of small technical equipment appropriate for microenterprises, for example, for home food production (for processing agriculture products) and home goods production (for processing raw materials, such as silk, wool, vegetable dyes).

4. Railway Modernization (Loan 1773)

The goal of this Project is to support pro-poor economic growth by rehabilitating a key railway track section and improving operational efficiency of the railway system. The Project will (i) increase railway transport capacity and provide more efficient movement of freight and passengers; (ii) facilitate international trade through improved access to bordering countries and seaports; (iii) reduce transport costs; and (iv) enhance institutional capacity through implementation of effective financial accounting systems.

Gender issues

Current transportation systems prioritize the car. However, low-income families are less likely to have a car and in rural areas a functioning railway system is critical to women's livelihood as sellers of agricultural and craft goods. Frequently women cover secondary market networks between villages and in more remote areas. Women, as the primary rural-urban petty traders, will benefit from this key infrastructure improvement. When road rehabilitation is coupled with other socioeconomic improvements, women in poverty areas may begin to diversify their cash income production.

For this reason, ADB may want to take into special consideration women's potential as traders and provide them privileged access to the small business fund that will be established under this Project. In addition, ADB may wish to recommend that this Project work in cooperation with the Second SME Development Project to design some joint programs.

However, the implementation of two of the goals of the Project, the computerization of the financial accounting system and the implementation of a program of staff reduction, will result in the retrenchment of a number of women currently employed by Uzbekistan Temir Yullary (Uzbekistan Railway System). Presently, most of the accountants are women. It is therefore urgent that ADB take some preventive steps to directly address the employment situation of the women in this sector, including retraining and provision of employment elsewhere. A first priority here is to conduct a study on the impact of this modernization project on female employees.

Proposed 2001 Loans

1. Basic Education Staff Development

The main objective of the Project is to support key issues in the following areas: (i) education staff deployment and utilization, (ii) teacher education, (iii) employment and service conditions, and (iv) education staff management. The envisaged Project will support the Government's effort to improve the relevance, quality, and cost-effectiveness of basic education through enhanced performance of teaching and nonteaching staff.

Project components include following: (i) improving efficiency in the use of human resources; (ii) expanding access to in-service training through distance education; (iii) disseminating new teaching methods; (iv) strengthening community involvement with schools; and (v) improving service conditions.

Gender issues

This Project aims to make basic education responsive to the needs of a modern market-oriented economy and democratic society. Although education is closely tied to achievement of national economic development goals, prioritization of education for females and gender equality in this area has only recently begun to be recognized as critical.

To increase such understanding it was proposed to create the Republican Board for Education Staff Development to involve key stakeholders in thinking about how gender could be integrated in the achievement of human development goals. In addition to the Ministry of Public Education, some of the major stakeholders at the macro and intermediate levels include the Women's Committee, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, and the Ministry of Labor. Local NGOs, especially national women's organizations, should also be included in the process of examining the linkages between their sectors and education and in mainstreaming gender. Key gender issues to be addressed are

- (i) Gender balance in basic education staff;
- (ii) Gender balance in administrative and managerial jobs;
- (iii) Analysis of educational materials for gender biases and stereotypes that socialize against a prioritization of education for girls; and
- (iv) Establishment of programs to prevent sexual harassment in the educational system and include teaching programs on sex education.

2. Rural Savings and Credit Union Development

The objectives of the Project are to (i) support the development of appropriate legal and regulatory framework for the establishment of savings and credit unions (SCUs); (ii) review and assess the specific requirements of the rural population vis-a-vis the provision of nonbank financial services; and (iii) subsequently to help the Government prepare a project to be financed with ADB support.

The Project is expected to establish sustainable nonbank financial institutions. This will be accomplished by (i) establishing a system of SCUs that practice strict financial discipline to ensure the safety and soundness of members' savings; (ii) developing SCU management and staff capacity; (iii) expanding outreach of the formal financial sector by supplying remunerative financial products and services that meet the demand from the community and microentrepreneurs; and (iv) providing technical assistance training to support the development of an SCU supervision unit within the Central Bank of Uzbekistan.

Gender issues

This Project has a direct impact on women's economic activities. Women's involvement in business and the creation of favorable conditions for family business should be a priority direction when considering ways to improve women's role in society. The main objectives of these priority directions include creating opportunities for women to gain broader access to finance. To date, the introduction of microcredit and microfinance has faced a number of legal, legislative and taxation constraints. The absence of clear regulations regarding conditions of interest rates, privileged lending, third party guarantees and property mortgage, high rates of insurance, and unpredictability of the economic situation are the main barriers to development of female business.

Priority should be given to the design and development of legislation and regulations that provide women with legal access to microcredits/microloans, especially in rural areas. The ADB's Rural Savings and Credit Union Development Project should harness women's NGOs already involved in creating credit units and credit communities. These NGOs should be treated as key stakeholders in project design activities. They will provide a strong link between grassroots and intermediate and macro levels.

The design of the Project may include observation of gender balance while giving credits in banks as well as in the privatization process to prevent discrimination of women in giving credits and in privatization; asking tax authorities to consider tax privileges for enterprises that open job places for young girls as well as for training centers dealing with education, especially in rural areas; and involving local self-administrative bodies (*mahallas*) and representatives of grassroots level women's committees in implementing these recommendations.

ADB should take into consideration that the amount of microcredits/microloans requested by women entrepreneurs is in the range of US\$500 to US\$1,500, which is ideal under the existing economic conditions of Uzbekistan.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Recommendations of the International Conference “Women’s Issues, Family and Health Care—2000.” 29 March–1 April 2000, Bukhara City, Uzbekistan.

Bibliography

Reports

Asian Development Bank. 1999. Country Economic Review, August 1999. Manila: ADB.

———. 2000. Poverty Impact Assessment, Supplementary Appendix, *Report and Recommendation of the President on Second Small and Medium Enterprise Development*. December 2000. Manila: ADB.

Bureau of Gender and Development and the State Department of Statistics. 1999. Women of Uzbekistan: Statistical Collection. Tashkent.

Expert Social Research Center. 1999. Consultations with the Poor. Participatory Poverty Assessment in Uzbekistan for the *World Development Report 2000/1*.

———. 1998. Uzbekistan Gender Study in Transition. Unpublished report. Tashkent, October 1998.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 1998. *Human Development Report 1998*. Tashkent: UNDP.

———. 1999. Human Development Report 1999. *Tashkent: UNDP*

Understanding Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Demographic Behaviour and Implications for Formulation and Execution of Population Policies and Programs, International Seminar, Tashkent, October 1999.

Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, Gender and Development Bureau and UNDP. 1999. National Platform for Action on the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan and on Advancement of Women in the Society. Tashkent, September 1999.

Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, Gender and Development Bureau, Center for Economic Research and UNDP. 1999. Report on the Status of Women in Uzbekistan. Tashkent.

The World Bank. 1997. Private Sector Survey.

Other References

- Abazov, Rafis. 1997. Formation of the non-state sector and privatization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in *Communist Economies and Economic Transformation*, 9(4): 431-448.
- . 1999. Policy of economic transition in Kyrgyzstan, in *Central Asian Survey*. Oxford: Oxford, 18 (2): 197-223.
- Ilkhamov, Alisher. 1998. Shirkats, Dekhqon farmers and others: Farm restructuring in Uzbekistan, in *Central Asian Survey*, Microform Publications 17 (4): 539-560.
- Ikramova, Ula and Kathryn McConnell. 1999. Women's NGOs in Central Asia's Evolving Societies, in M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel C. Waugh (eds), *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Washington D.C.: University of Washington Press.
- Khalmurzaev, Nurollo. 2000. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the Transition Economy of Uzbekistan, in *Central Asian Survey*. Oxford: Oxford Microform Publication 19 (2): 281-296.
- Massell, Gregory. 1974. *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Mesbahi, Mohiaddin (ed). 1994. *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Munavvarov, Zahid I. 1994. Uzbekistan. *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*, edited by Mohiaddin Mesbahi. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Pomfret, Richard. 1995. *The Economies of Central Asia*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Pomfret, Richard and Kathryn Anderson. 2000. Economic Development Strategies in Central Asia Since 1991, prepared for *Asian Studies Review, Special Issue on Central and West Asia*, Guest Editor Shahram Akbarzadeh.
- Rashid, Ahmed. 1994. *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, London and New Jersey: Oxford University Press/U.S.: Zed Books.
- Reuel, Hanks. 1999. Civil society and identity in Uzbekistan: The emergent role of Islam, in M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel C. Waugh (eds), *Civil Society in Central Asia*. Washington, D.C.: University of Washington Press.
- Tadjibaeva, Dildora. Personal Report. Tashkent.

Appendix 1

Key Aspects of the National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan*

The implementation of the *National Action Platform for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan* is designed to provide the support needed by women in Uzbekistan to ensure their advancement. The nine key priority areas targeted by the National Action Plan were briefly outlined in Chapter 1. The following explanations provide more detail on these priority areas.

Women's Health

- (i) Give particular consideration to the health of women of all age groups;
- (ii) Design special programs to fight widely spread diseases, such as breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease and infectious diseases (including hepatitis);
- (iii) Raise the quality of basic medical knowledge among the population and students at institutions of higher learning with the cooperation of the Government, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher and Specialized Education;
- (iv) Continue the implementation of measures aimed at reducing maternity and infant mortality undertaken by the Ministry of Health jointly with other agencies concerned;
- (v) Provide pregnant women and nursing mothers with free medical services guaranteed by the State;
- (vi) Organize the production of various foodstuffs for children by relevant ministries and agencies with the purpose of improving the health and nutrition of women and children; and
- (vii) Design awareness-raising programs to educate women and girls on the negative consequences of alcohol, drug and tobacco addiction.

Women's Education

- (i) The Ministries of Education and of Higher and Specialized Education will collect data on women and girls' educational level in cities and rural areas; and
- (ii) Relevant government agencies and NGOs will monitor gender equity in access to education; for example, survey the number of overseas training provided to highly qualified women professionals, assess women's access to information technologies, etc.

Women and Ecology

The Government should pursue a preventive approach to ecological disaster. Steps also need to be taken to ease related social tensions. It will be necessary to

* This list was prepared with the assistance of Ms. Mehkri Khudayberdiyeva, Gender Specialist, ADB Uzbekistan Resident Mission.

- (i) Elaborate and implement a series of measures aimed at further upgrading government guarantees and indemnity of the Aral Sea residents. A special program designed for women from the Aral Sea is also required;
- (ii) Set up specialized environmental focal points in affected zones and coordinate their performance;
- (iii) Formulate basic regulations to achieve reasonable nutrition for specific professional and age categories of the population, in particular for women. Such measures need to take into account adverse environmental impacts that cause poor nutrition and growing disease rates; and
- (iv) Continue organizing ecological conferences, meetings and training programs dedicated to women and environmental issues.

Women's Economic Status and Employment

The Government must continue its commitment to improving women's working conditions, job creation opportunities, and strict observance of Labor Code provisions. With a view to expanding women's employment, it is necessary to

- (i) Upgrade mechanisms for continued professional advancement of women to support their competitiveness in the labor market; and
- (ii) Improve social and legal basis for the promotion of gender awareness initiatives and approaches directed at women.

In addition, the Government has to stipulate the following measures:

- (i) Expand support to the needy groups of population;
- (ii) Set up retraining centers for women; and
- (iii) Create more workplaces for women in state-run enterprises.

Women's Rights and Opportunity to Participate in Decision Making

The international gender standard is that women should comprise not less than 30 percent of the staff in any entity. For this reason, surveys are required to measure and monitor women's level of participation in elected bodies, political parties, the Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries and agencies, law enforcement bodies, local authorities, diplomatic institutions and international organizations. In order to create conditions for promoting women to leadership positions and preparing women to perform as government officials it is necessary to

- (i) Amend the Government Service Act and regulations within ministries and agencies so that they encourage greater gender equity;
- (ii) Amend legislative acts to protect women's rights and interests in line with international conventions and agreements;
- (iii) Compile and implement a program on women's preparation for assuming responsibilities within government management structures and ensure equal access to decision-making positions at all levels of administration;
- (iv) With the help of government institutions, NGOs and the mass media, enhance legal awareness among women; and

- (v) Legislate equal opportunities and introduce a quota system to enable women to be elected to the Parliament of Uzbekistan and other government bodies.

Girls' Rights

The Government should implement a state program aimed at supporting the education and upbringing of girls to imbue them with national and cultural values.

Discrimination and Violence Against Women

In order to prevent violence against women, which is regarded as a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, etc., steps should be taken to

- (i) Upgrade administrative and criminal codes with the aim of strengthening punishment for violence against women, whether in the home or workplace, including prostitution and compelling women through drug addiction; and
- (ii) Strengthen women's rights in marriage and divorce, including the division of property, and moral and material indemnity in case of divorce on the husband's initiative, in the Marriage and Family Code to raise women's status within the family and in decisions regarding the education of children.

Women in the Mass Media

The creation of a new "Uzbek woman" in the mass media, culture and arts should overcome existing stereotypes. For this purpose it will be necessary to

- (i) Increase the number of specialized newspapers for women as well as TV and radio programs dedicated to women's issues;
- (ii) Design a comprehensive program aimed at expanding social debate on gender issues in all forms of media;
- (iii) Explain through mass media women's rights and obligations to disseminate legal knowledge in the area of equal rights and opportunities and other issues of gender concern in the society;
- (iv) Raise awareness in society and create conditions for widespread discussions on the role of women in society, including the historical development of roles assigned to men and women, as well as acute social problems arising from gender inequality; and
- (v) Publish scientific and other types of publications that contribute to the creation of a new image of Uzbek womanhood.

Women's NGOs

To promote and strengthen the role of women's NGOs it will be necessary to

- (i) Collect data and distribute information on women's status in Uzbekistan;

- (ii) In cooperation with the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, undertake gender statistical surveys and disaggregated analyses based upon new methodological approaches;
- (iii) Promote the activities of the NGO “Women and Society” Institute to ascertain women’s status in the economic, political, cultural, social, educational and scientific spheres of the country, to give practical recommendations and design mechanisms to enhance the role of women in the ongoing democratic transformation of Uzbekistan;
- (iv) Publish an annual report highlighting women’s status in Uzbekistan, as well as brochures and leaflets on gender analysis; and
- (v) Encourage the establishment of NGOs and their integration into the international women’s movement.

Appendix 2

Women's Organizations in Uzbekistan*

Crisis-Adaptive Centre "Isenim"

St.Karakalpakstan-4, Nukus
Director: Djigaul Hikmatova Office: 2222813 Home: 2179400
Psychological and medical aid to women

Girl's Studio

Istiklol St., Bldg. 69a, Kokand
Director: Khabiba Abdukhakimova Office: (37355) 3-30-13
Assistance to women and girls in preserving and mastering ancient traditions and crafts

Women Scientists of Karakalpakstan, Republican Association

Gorkogo St., Bldg. 179a, Nukus, 742000
President: Sarygul Bakhadyrova Office: (361) 217-82-51 Fax: 7-72-29
To unite all women-scientists in developing the socioeconomic conditions of the Karakalpakstan Republic

Business Women's Association, Andijan

Navoi Av., Bldg. 122, Andijan
Chairman: Saidakhon Mukhitdinova Office: (37422) 5-29-08
Attainment of businesswoman status; provision of business information and training to women

Business Women's Association, Besharyk

Sobir Rakhimov St., Besharyk
Chairwoman: Ozoda Kattakhodjaeva Office: (37361) 2-22-00 Home: 2-25-26
Protection of women's rights; development of women entrepreneurship

Business Women's Association, Bukhara

I. Muminov St., Bldg. 2, Bukhara, 705018
Chairman: Dilbar Akhmedova Office: (365) 223-60-21
Unification of business women; provision of business information and training to women

Business Women's Association, Fergana

Navoy St., Bldg. 26, Fergana
Executive Director: Dilbar Saidibragimova Fax: 24-56-47
Chairwoman: Manzura Salmanova Office: (3732) 24-56-47 Home: 24-53-11
Informational, consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and youth during the transition period; training on business secrets, exchange of experience, establishment of business relations abroad

* This list was prepared with the assistance of Ms. Mekhri Khudayberdiyeva, Gender Specialist, ADB Uzbekistan Resident Mission.

Business Women's Association, Karakalpakstan

A. Shamuratova Str., 86, Cabinet 30, 31., Nukus, 742000

E-mail: nazira@kkael.silk.org. Fax: 222 94 55

Support to business women; comprehensive assistance in business development

Business Women's Association, Karshi

Karshy

Director: Santalat Niyazmetova Office: (37522) 4-44-67 Home: 3-95-39

Informational, consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and the youth during the transition period; ensure protection of Association members' rights

Business Women's Association, Khorezm

Khorezm

Chairwoman: Klara Djumamuratova Office: (362) 226-44-43 Home: 226-59-12

Consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and the youth during the transition period; ensure protection of Association members' rights

Business Women's Association, Kokand

Bldg.73, Khodjaeva Str., Kokand, 713000

E-mail: root@bwa.kokand.silk.org

Chairwoman: Sakhibakhon Irgasheva Office: (37355) 3-25-82

Home: 3-25-82 Fax: 3-25-82

Consolidation of women and youth efforts during transition to market economy; rendering assistance to women and to the youth during their formative years

Business Women's Association, Namangan

Hurriyat St., Bldg. 5, Namangan

Deputy Director: Khurriyatbony Juraeva Office: 4-17-33; 6-40-94

Director: Mavlyuda Abdukhalimova Office: (36922) 4-16-42 Home: 4-16-47

Training of women entrepreneurs and improvement of women's lives

Business Women's Association, Navoi

Khalklar Dustligi St. ("Yoshlik" Hotel), Bldg. 134, 1st floor, Apt. 105, Navoi

Chairman: Larisa Yurikova Office: (43622) 4-41-76

Home: 4-92-95 Fax: (3712) 56-81-58

Attainment of Businesswoman status, provision of business information and training to women of Navoi region

Business Women's Association, Nukus

A. Shamuratova St., Bldg. 86, Nukus

E-mail: kkael@nukus.silk.org

Chairwoman: Ariukhan Saekееva Office: (361) 222-94-54 Fax: 222-94-55

Assistance to women-entrepreneurs in organization of business, drawing up of documentation, training on basics of successful business

Business Women's Association, Samarkand

Kuk Saray St., Bldg. 2, Samarkand

Director: Khadicha Japkharova Office: (3662) 37-06-19

Home: 38-49-44 Fax: (3662) 33-58-51

Informational, consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and youth during the transition period; ensure protection of Association members' rights

Business Women's Association, Tashkent

Afrosiab St., Bldg. 41, Tashkent, 700015

Chairman: Dildora Alimbekova Office: 56-65-78 Home: 56-24-51

Informational, consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and youth during the transition period; ensure protection of Association members' rights

Business Women's Association, Tashkent Region

Zangiatskiy District, A. Timur St., Bldg. 14, Tashkent, 700069

E-mail: bwa_obl@bcc.com.uz

Chairman: Gulnara Mahmudova Office: 144-33-41

Home: 58-68-90 Fax: 144-33-41

Informational, consultative and juridical help to develop women entrepreneurs and youth during the transition period; ensure protection of Association members' rights

East and a Woman, Association

I. Muminova St., Bldg. 9, Tashkent

Director: Manzurat Kholmatova Office: 62-38-87 Home: 66-48-64 Fax: 66-48-64

Deputy Director: Shakhlo Makhmudova

Improvement and development of socioeconomic and cultural status of women in Uzbekistan

Fergana Regional Social Center of Law Support of Women and Teenagers "Isonch"

St., M. Kasimova, Fergana

Office: (8-373-2) 247656 Home: 249044 Fax: (8-373-2) 247656

Assistance in social, legal, economic and psychological support to women and teenagers

Mother and Child Centre

Besharik Region, Besharyk

Director: Rano Abdurakhmanova Office: 2-20-03

Health improvement, family planning and sexual education among youth

Oilam (My Family) Club

Universitetskiy Boulevard 15, Samarkand State University

Information Advising Center, Samarkand, 703004

E-mail: sabirov@ksi.ikc.uz

Director: Tamila M.Utarova Office: (3662) 351498, 356780

Comprehensive assistance to families

SABR Crisis Center

Akhunbabayev St., Bldg. 68, Samarkand, 703005

Director: Mavluda R. Shirinova Office: (3662) 33-66-66; 33-76-90 Fax: 33-76-90

Emotional and psychological support of women and teenagers in Samarkand region

Soglom Avlod Uchun, Chilanzar District of Tashkent

Chilanzar District, Almazar Str., h 9 f 12, Tashkent, 7000003

Director: Mashkura Zahidova Office: (3712) 45-56-31

Treatment of women and children; helping poor families and the disabled

Charitable Centre "Mehr-Sahovat"

St. A.T. Hukakdiy, House 7, Apt 28, Kokand, 713007

Chairman: Venera Eredzhenova Office: 35745 Home: 35745 Fax: 26924

Legal, material and psychological support of needy pensioners

Aral Kislari Magazine

Shamuratov St., Bldg. 86, Nukus

Chief Editor: Gulaisha Esemuratova Office: (36122) 30-991

Accountant: Sanemgul Mamberiyarova

Protection of the rights of Karakalpakstan women; prevention of ecological disaster;
provision of psychological advice

Nargiz, women's organization

Microdistrict 1, Bldg. 12a, Apt.33, Seidi

Chairwoman: Gulbanu Charneva Office: 2-12-12 Home: 2-12-32

Co-chairwoman: Valentina Marochkina

Assistance to lonely and aged people, support of needy families

Information Center of Association of Business-Women of Fergana Region

Novoi St., Bldg. 26, Fergana,

Deputy Director: Dilorom Kholmatova Fax: 24-56-47

Director: Rano Akramova Office: (3732) 24-56-47

Consolidation of women-entrepreneurs by creating information database and providing information intercommunication between regional structures of the Association of Business-Women; working with mass media, training

Nozigim, women's club in Makhalla

1, Uzumzor Str., Kokand

Director: Makhbuba Yuldasheva Office: (37355) 3-49-43

Infrastructure creation of makhalla committees

Women's Club in Makhallya "Nozligim"

Khodjaev Str., 84 "a", Kokand

Comprehensive assistance to the women of Makhallya

Women's Committee, Fergana Region

Navoi St., Bldg.15, Fergana

Chairwoman: Gulnora Marupova Office: (3732) 24-82-90

Deputy Chairwoman: Shakakhon Mirzababaeva Office: (3732) 24-34-40

Protection of women's rights; consolidation of family; protection of pregnant women and children; assistance to businesswomen.

Social Organization of Creative Women, "Golden Inheritance of Aral"

St.A.Samuratovoi 86, Nukus, 742000

E-mail: gulnara@miyras.nukus.silk.org

Chairmen: Gulnara Embergenova

Office: (361) 2174566 Home: (361) 2290638 Fax: (361) 2229515

Improvement of women and children's condition in Aral area; provision of economical and cultural support

Women-Scientists

St., Amir Timur 179 a, Nukus, 742000

Office: 2178251 Home: 2234277

Assistance to women-scientists of Republic Karakalpakstan

Association of Scientific Women, Namangan

Main Post Office Box, "post restante," Namangan

Director: Karimakhon Inamova Office: (36922) 26-488

Union of Women-Entrepreneurs

Ibrat St., Bldg. 5, Namangan

Director: Dilbar Zokhidova Office: (36922) 70-498

Bibikhonim, Women's Society

Kuksaray St., Bldg. 1, Samarkand, 703000

Chairman: Barno Samieva Office: (3662) 35-21-02, 31-12-62

Financial help to unemployed women in crisis

“Ayol” (Woman’s) Center

66, Akhunbabaeva Str., Samarkand, 703000

E-mail: rcentre@sammuni.silk.org

Director: Victoria Ashirova Office: (3662) 33 43 33, 33 09 89

To bring about social innovation; to carry out informational, enlightening and educational activities for women and the youth to form their self-awareness and encourage their active participation in the democratic transformation of society

Iktisodchi Ayol, Association in Samarkand

A. Timur Str., Bldg. 1, Samarkand, 703047

E-mail: qqanieva@.samuni.silk.org

Chairman: Gulsara Ganieva Office: (3662) 37-49-32 Fax: 31-11-49

Propaganda, explanation and consultation on economic know-how to women in business

Women's Information Center

Kuk Saray Square, Bldg. 1, Samarkand

Director: Victoria Alekseyevskaya Office: (3662) 35-97-40 Home: 21-51-56

Providing information to women

Women and Health

74-31, A.Temur Str., Tashkent

E-mail: alex@kalegyn.freenet.uz

To increase knowledge in the field of human rights, health, etc.

Anonymous psycho-social counselling of victims (women and children) of sexual violence

Block Ts-2, Bldg. 8, Apt. 41, Tashkent, 700000

Director: Oybek K. Nadjimov Office: 55-63-84 Home: 136-38-92

“Sulh” Association of Afghani Women

Unusabat Area, Block-14 H. 35 Apt. 91, Tashkent, 700006

E-mail: mehri@silk.org

Assistance to women-refugees during unstable period of the economy of Uzbekistan

“Our Home” Center

Tashkent

Director: Natalia S. Sevumyan Home: 162-15-66

Assistance in strengthening economic and social security of mothers and children

Center of Women-Leaders

Yusupov Str., Bldg. 1, Room 222, Tashkent, 700118

E-mail: mahbuba@freenet.uz

President: Makhbuba Ergasheva Office: 41-55-07 Home: 186-17-98

Executive Director: Rakhima Nazarova Office: 33-68-74

To improve the legal status and well-being of women of Uzbekistan

Ecofemini, Organization of Young Women

Shark Str., Bldg. 55a, School-17, Chirchik

Chairman: Zarifa Tacculova Office: (271) 3-15-48 Home: 3-31-38

Education of senior school girls in human rights and ecology

Kamila, Consulting and Researching Center

Babura Str., H. 21, Apt. 30, Tashkent

E-mail: ferusa@uwed.freenet.us

Director: Ferusa Abdullaeva Office: (3712) 45-05-50, 67-06-17 Home: 53-39-00

Galina Paramonova

Mekhri, Women's Society

Tc-14, Bldg. 19, Apt. 25, Tashkent, 700000

E-mail: mehri@saturn.silk.org flora@saturn.silk.org

Chairwoman: Nailya Kholmukhamedova Office: 34-05-53, 34-44-36 Fax: 34-44-36

Executive Director: Flora Pirnazarova Office: 137-65-84

Inspire women to join public movement efforts; assistance in the steady development and perfection of spiritual values

National Center for Women's Health

Faroby Str., Bldg. 2, Tashkent, 700093

Director: Dimurod Usupov Office: 46-47-43 Home: 79-31-51

Manager: Farida Gataulina Office: 121-68-48, 24-04-11

Treatment of women of all ages

“Sabo,” Tashkent Women and Children's City Center

Office 20, 122, Pushkin Str., Tashkent

Director: Natalya I. Kurganovskaya Office: 67-21-88 Fax: 67-21-88

Woman and Environment

Tashkent, 700015

Director: Natalia Muraveva Office: 152-69-71 Home: 60-06-47 Fax: 152-69-71

Deputy: Manzurat Holmatova

Gender role research in economical, social, educational sphere

Woman and Health

Tashkent

E-mail: alex@kolegyn.breenet.uz

Chairman's Office: 340940

Women's Committee of Uzbekistan

Furkat Str., Bldg. 1, Apt. 408, Tashkent, 700078

E-mail: dilkab@online.ru

Director: Dilbar Gulamova Office: 139-40-42 Fax: 139-40-12

Deputy Director: Dilovar K. Kabulova Office: 139-40-12 Home: 41-85-51

Women's Resource Center

Kadiri Str., Bldg. 16, Apt. 26, Tashkent, 700011

E-mail: marfua@freenet.uz

Chairman: Marfua Tokhtakhodzhaeva Office: 41-89-31

Home: 35-48-78 Fax: 41-89-31

Deputy Director: Nailya Kochkarova

Information work investigating women's problems