

# **Uzbekistan**

## **Country Gender Profile**

**FINAL REPORT**

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**SERVAER**  
**CONSULTING**

*QUALITY-TIME-RESULTS*

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## 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 DAW
DAW	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	Non government organization
PIFs	Privatization Investment Funds
SCU	Savings and credit union
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
SME	Small and medium enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WID	Women in Development

## 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). 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 all 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 area 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.

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.

## I. Basic Profile

### A. Socio – Economic Profile

#### Growth and Production Structure of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
GDP (produced) (million USD)	103.8	104.2	104.0	104.4	107.7
Output of basic branches of economy (industry, agriculture, construction, transport, and communications) (million USD)	102.9	103.3	104.7	104.0	107.7
Industrial production (million USD)	105.9	107.6	108.3	106.2	109.4
Investments into capital assets (million USD)	109.9	104.0	103.8	104.5	105.2
Inflation (December to the December of the previous year in %)	128.2	126.6	121.6	103.8	103.7
Rate of unemployment (end of period, in %)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

#### Proportion of women and men in urban and rural areas as of beginning 2004

	for 1000 women		
	whole population	urban	rural
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>1003</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>994</b>
Karakaplakstan	1001	1024	980
Andijan	1001	1021	993
Bukhara	1010	1004	1013
Djizzakh	1002	1038	987
Kashkadarya	997	998	997
Navoiy	988	958	1007
Namangan	993	994	993
Samarkand	1002	1020	996
Surkhandarya	987	1006	982
Syrdarya	993	942	1018
Tashkent	1007	1027	994
Ferghana	1002	1038	988
Khorezm	1010	1036	1003
Tashkent City	1040	1040	-

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### Percentage of women out of total employed people

	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Employed in economy - total</b>	<b>43,8</b>	<b>43,7</b>	<b>44,1</b>	<b>44,1</b>
including in the industry:				
Industry	30,6	30,1	29,3	28,8
Agriculture and forestry	44,2	43,3	42,7	41,8
Construction	12,7	12,8	12,8	12,8
Transportation and communication	18,2	19,4	18,1	18,1
Trade and catering	29,9	30,7	30,5	30,8
Housing and communal services	29,1	30,5	28,4	28,5
Health, physical training and social security	71,1	71	72,5	72,5
Education	63,6	62	63,5	63,6
Culture and arts	52,4	50,2	51,8	52,1
Science and science maintenance	46,8	50,6	50,7	50,8
Finance, credits, insurance	48,5	49,8	49,2	49,2
Others	28,1	28	30,8	30,8

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### Representation of Women in Parliament, 1985-2002

Year	Members of Parliament	Share of Women	
		No.	%
1985	510	183	36
1990	500	47	9
1998	250	19	8
2002	250	24	9,9

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### Average age of population

	All population	Urban population	Rural population
	Both genders		
1998	23,9	26,5	22,3
1999	24,1	26,7	22,6
2000	24,4	26,9	22,9
2001	24,6	27,2	23,2
2002	24,9	27,4	23,5
2003	25,2	27,6	23,8
2004	25,5	27,9	24,1
	Female		
1998	24,6	27,6	22,7
1999	24,8	27,8	23
2000	25	28	23,3
2001	25,3	28,2	23,6
2002	25,6	28,4	23,9
2003	25,8	28,7	24,2
2004	26,1	28,9	24,5
	Male		
1998	23,2	25,3	21,9
1999	23,4	25,6	22,2
2000	23,7	25,8	22,5
2001	24	26,1	22,8

2002	24,3	26,4	23,1
2003	24,6	26,6	23,4
2004	24,9	26,9	23,7

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### Number of Marriages and divorces

Year	Thousands	
	Marriage	Divorce
1991	270,3	33,3
1992	235,9	32,8
1993	225,4	27
1994	176,3	24,3
1995	170,8	21,2
1996	171,7	20,2
1997	181,1	21,5
1998	170,5	21,9
1999	175,9	22,3
2000	168,9	19,9
2001	170,1	15,7
2002	165,6	18,3
2003	161,7	17,6

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE

	2001			2002			2003		
	Total	urban	rural	Total	urban	rural	Total	urban	rural
<b>Rep. of Uzbekistan</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Rep. of Karakalpakstan	6.1	5.9	6.3	5.9	5.6	6.2	5.8	5.6	6.1
Andijan region	5.7	5.4	5.8	5.6	5.1	5.8	5.3	4.5	5.7
Bukhara region	5.0	4.5	5.3	4.7	3.9	5.2	5.0	4.5	5.3
Djizzak region	6.0	5.4	6.3	6.0	5.1	6.5	5.9	5.3	6.2
Kashkadarya	5.5	4.8	5.9	5.6	5.1	5.9	5.4	5.0	5.5
Navoi region	4.4	4.0	4.9	4.5	4.1	5.0	4.5	3.7	5.1
Namangan region	5.9	6.1	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.5
Samarkand region	5.3	4.5	5.9	4.9	3.5	5.8	4.9	4.0	5.4
Surkhandarya	6.2	5.9	6.3	5.9	5.7	6.0	5.8	5.0	6.0
Syrdarya region	5.4	4.5	6.0	5.5	4.9	5.8	5.3	4.3	5.9
Tashkent region	4.8	3.8	5.9	4.7	3.7	5.7	5.0	4.0	6.0
Ferghana region	5.4	4.5	5.9	5.2	4.5	5.5	5.3	4.2	5.8
Khorezm region	6.0	5.0	6.3	5.6	4.5	5.9	5.3	4.7	5.5
<b>Tashkent city</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.1</b>	—	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	—	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	—

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.



**B. Health Profile**

## MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Death from circulatory diseases (as % of all cases)</b>									
Total	46.5	46.7	47.2	50.0	50.6	52.6	53.4	54.8	54.7
urban	50.3	50.0	51.0	52.7	53.4	54.8	54.9	56.1	55.8
rural	43.5	44.0	44.2	47.8	48.4	50.8	52.1	53.8	53.8
<b>Death from malignant tumor (as % of all cases)</b>									
Total	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	7.3	7.1	7.1	6.9	7.0
urban	9.5	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.4	8.8	8.7	8.6	8.6
Rural	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.6	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.7
Registered alcohol consumption (liters per	0.7	0.8	0.6	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.2
Population per doctor	298	302	328	296	302	305	309	314	318
Number of hospital beds per 10,000 people	79.0	72.5	65.9	58.2	56.4	55.9	55.8	57.8	57.4
Number of hospital beds for pregnant women per 10,000 women	43.2	47.7	47.0	45.3	42.6	40.5	39.6	38.1	35.7
State expenditures on health (as of total state expenditures)	11.2	9.7	9.5	8.9	9.1	8.7	9.6	9.4	9.6
State expenditures on health (as % of GDP)	3.6	3.5	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4
Total expenditures on health (as % of GDP)	4.1	4.4	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.3

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics

**Community health services**

Parameters	1991	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of hospitals	1388	1162	1159	1174	1173	1165
Number of hospital beds in them	258.8	138.6	140.1	147.0	146.7	142.9
Number of beds per 10,000 people	123.0	55.9	55.8	57.8	57.4	54.9
Capacity of out-patient and polyclinic facilities per 10,000 people	133.7	157.7	160.4	163.1	159.2	155.2
Total number of doctors of all specializations (in thousands)	75.0	81.5	81.4	81.0	80.4	77.9
Number of doctors per 10,000 inhabitants	35.5	32.8	32.4	31.9	31.4	29.9
Number of mid-level medical personnel (in thousands)	246.9	259.7	263.1	265.9	265.3	266.0
Number of mid-level medical personnel per 10,000 people	115.2	104.7	104.7	104.6	103.8	102.2

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

Death coefficient  
On main classes of death cases  
(on 100 000 of population)

		Death coefficients on main cases					
	All cases	infectious and parasitic disease	Milignant neoplasms	Disease of circulation of the blood system	Disease of respiratory system	Disease of alimentary system	Accidence, poisoning and injuries
Both genders							
1997	1200,5	30,3	87,7	731,8	103,3	70,4	56,8
1998	1236,1	28,6	86,7	782,5	110,7	64,4	53,4
1999	1137,1	26,4	85,2	724,8	91,9	62,1	51,4
2000	1189,5	28,0	84,7	772,3	93,8	62,2	52,9
2001	1144,5	27,5	80,5	748,8	79,8	62,7	52,5
2002	1177,0	27,2	79,4	772,6	82,8	63,2	52,4
2003	1155,4	24,9	78,7	743,9	77,8	60,5	47,3
Female							
1997	1024,4	21,4	75,0	653,4	86,6	56,8	28,7
1998	1070,9	20,8	75,0	702,5	96,8	52,7	27,3
1999	976,3	18,4	73,4	647,1	78,4	51,3	25,7
2000	1023,8	18,5	74,7	690,3	79,6	52,0	25,9
2001	985,3	18,2	70,4	669,5	66,1	53,3	26,3
2002	1015,3	18,5	69,6	690,0	69,3	53,8	25,3
2003	996,0	16,5	70,3	658,7	63,8	50,4	23,8
Male							
1997	1419,4	40,1	104,5	834,3	126,0	85,7	86,7
1998	1442,7	36,9	102,4	889,6	128,7	77,4	81,2
1999	1334,0	35,0	101,1	824,8	109,2	74,4	78,8
2000	1387,1	38,2	98,0	873,4	112,2	73,6	81,4
2001	1328,1	37,4	93,5	841,7	96,7	73,2	80,4
2002	1361,0	36,7	92,1	866,3	99,9	73,7	81,0
2003	1336,6	34,0	89,2	840,6	95,7	72,0	72,0

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

**Total coefficient of birth  
(on 1000 women)**

Years	All population	Urban population	Rural population
1998	2,815	2,259	3,175
1999	2,72	2,189	3,061
2000	2,585	2,095	2,894
2001	2,469	2,021	2,748
2002	2,518	2,049	2,807
2003	2,357	1,934	2,614

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics

**LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEARS)**

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total				
both sexes	70.8	71.3	71.2	71.6
women	73.2	73.6	73.5	73.8
men	68.4	68.9	68.9	69.4
Urban population				
both sexes	70.2	70.7	70.5	71.1
women	73.5	74.0	73.6	74.3
men	66.8	67.3	67.3	67.9
Rural population				
both sexes	71.2	71.7	71.7	71.9
women	72.9	73.3	73.3	73.4
men	69.6	70.1	70.2	70.5

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

**Number of registered HIV positive (November, 2003)**

	Total number	Including			Death from HIV/AIDS
		men	women	Children under 15 years	
Tashkent City	1729	1387	342	6	33
Andijan	126	110	16	1	2
Bukhara	87	71	16	-	1
Djizzakh	19	17	2	-	1
Kashkadarya	45	33	12	-	-
Navoiy	13	12	1	-	2
Namangan	29	20	9	1	3
Samarkand	202	182	20	-	5
Surkhandarya	118	108	10	-	6
Syrdarya	58	47	11	-	3
Tashkent	727	594	133	2	39
Ferghana	105	88	17	-	5
Khorezm	33	27	6	1	1
Karakalpakstan	2	2	-	-	-
	238	218	20	-	-
Total	3531	2916	615	11	101

Source: <http://www.aids.uz>

**Health of mother and child**

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Amount of pregnant women suffer from anemia	64,7	68,2	64,8	62,4
Mother death on 100000 birth	33,5	26,9	29,9	29,4
Number of abortion on 100 birth	11,7	11,1	10,5	9,7
Born with low weight (less than 2500 grams):				
<i>Total number of children, people</i>	23,6	24,6	24,3	25,9
<i>On 100 birth, people</i>	4,6	4,8	4,8	4,9
Child death (till 5 years) on 1000 birth	26,6	24,3	23,2	22,1

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

### C. Education Profile

#### PRE-SCHOOL ENROLMENT (AS % OF ALL PRE-SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN)

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total	18.2	19.4	19.9	19.2
Urban	35.3	36.0	35.5	35.3
Rural	10.6	12.0	12.9	12.1

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics

#### ENROLMENT IN SPECIALIZED SECONDARY AND HIGHER SCHOOLS

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Specialized secondary students (thousand)	324.1	446.1	545.9	684.0
of which women (%)	49.0	47.1	46.1	46.3
Number of students in higher schools (thousand)	183.6	207.2	232.3	254.4
of which women (%)	37.8	38.7	38.9	38.8

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics

#### EDUCATION PROFILE

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Enrolment of 6-23 years old	76.0	76.0	76.0	76.0	76.0	76.0	76.7	77.3	77.3
Average years of schooling:	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.5	11.6	11.6
Women	11.0	11.0	11.0	11.0	11.0	11.1	11.2	11.3	11.3
Men	11.9	12.0	12.1	12.2	12.2	11.6	11.7	11.8	11.8
Secondary school graduates (Enrollment/Graduates %)	111.9	111.3	110.4	108.4	107.9	114.8	113.9	121.0	107.9
Secondary schools graduates (% of total school age)	105.8	107.8	104.6	107.8	116.7	93.7	102.5	—	71.1
Secondary specialized school graduates (as % of school graduates, vocational and specialized school students)	44.0	43.6	43.9	41.5	41.9	41.4	42.9	—	43.3
19-years still in full-time education (%)	24.9	20.8	17.6	17.3	18.7	23.4	19.0	18.2	18.5
University equivalent full-time enrolment (% of all types of education)	85.8	86.4	85.1	84.2	84.8	91.2	89.4	84.0	78.5
University equivalent full-time graduates (as % of graduate age (22 years) population)	13.0	12.2	10.5	8.7	8.2	7.0	7.7	8.4	9.2
State expenditures on education (as % of GDP)	7.4	7.7	7.3	7.4	7.5	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.4
State expenditures on education (as of total state)	22.8	21.1	22.6	22.3	24.2	23.2	25.5	26.0	26.2
State expenditures on tertiary education (as % of expenditures on education)	8.6	8.3	5.4	7.0	6.6	7.0	6.8	6.7	6.5

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics

## II. General Situation of Women and Government Policy on WID/Gender

### A. General situation of women in Uzbekistan

- 1) The unemployment rate for women is higher than that of men (with women accounting for 63 percent of unemployed persons)
- 2) Women's participation in the formal political structure of Uzbekistan has also fallen during the past period
- 3) The sex ratio was 0.98 male per female
- 4) In 2004 the birthrate was estimated at 26.1 births per 1,000 population

As in all of the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union, Uzbekistan is also undergoing a difficult period of economic and social readjustment which is having a major impact on women. Existing trends point in the direction of increasing female unemployment as a result of the contraction of the state sector, a decrease in women's political representation as a result of the elimination of the quota system, substantial loss of benefits in the areas of maternity and child care and an increase in women's burden as a result of the deterioration of some public services, especially in the health sector.

In 2004 Uzbekistan's population was estimated at 26.4 million. The annual growth rate was 1.65 percent, and overall population density was 62 people per square kilometer. In 1999 some 62 percent of the population lived in rural areas, mostly in densely populated river valleys. Since that time, the greatest population growth has occurred in rural areas, and emigration has occurred mainly from urban areas. Between 1990 and 1999, Uzbekistan had a net emigration of 845,000 people, mostly Russians. In 2004 the net migration rate was -1.72 people per 1,000 population.

In 2004 some 34 percent of the population was 14 years of age or younger, and 4.8 percent of the population was 65 years of age or older. The sex ratio was 0.98 male per female. In 2004 the birthrate was estimated at 26.1 births per 1,000 population, and the death rate was 7.95 per 1,000 population. Infant mortality was 73.1 deaths per 1,000 live births. Overall life expectancy was 64.1 years: 60.7 years for males and 67.4 years for females. The fertility rate was 2.97 children per woman.

Uzbekistan suffered less economic shock from the dissolution of the Soviet Union than did most other former Soviet republics because it produces large amounts of cotton and gold, commodities of value on world markets, and because the government has stressed development of import-replacement industries in the post-Soviet era. In the 1990s, oil and gas production increased significantly, providing limited exports of natural gas and eliminating the Soviet-era need to import oil. In the same period, the expansion of grain cultivation reduced food imports. Although cotton remains the most valuable agricultural product, cotton output has declined since the mid-1990s. Uzbekistan's economy has retained many elements of Soviet economic planning. Economic policy remains under state control; the government has strictly limited foreign direct investment, and little privatization has occurred aside from small enterprises.

In 2004 Uzbekistan's GDP was estimated at US\$12,189.5 billion, Real GDP growth (from 4.4% to 7.7%, which is 1.8 times higher than in 2003) was achieved because of the dynamic development in primary branches of the economy (from 4.0% to 7.2%), the increase of investments into capital assets (from 4.5% to 5.2%), the growth of exports (from 24.6 to 30.3%) and to some extent, because of the maintenance of domestic social stability and the improvement of foreign economic conjuncture.

Thanks to implemented measures on stimulating the production of goods and services (tax rates on income of legal entities decreased from 20% in 2003 down to 18% in 2004), on increasing investments into capital assets (from 4.5% to 5.2%) and because of the early harvest of cotton and high rates of picking cotton in 2004, the growth of real value added in the manufacturing sector, in comparison to 2003, amounted to 5.4%, agriculture - 10.1%, construction - 3.6%, and services - 4.4% (including transports and

communications - 9.3%, trade and public catering - 13.3%, other sectors, including the branch of non-production services - 3.8%).

Uzbekistan has deposits of natural gas and oil sufficient to maintain self-sufficiency in the near term. Gold is the most plentiful mineral having export value. Significant amounts of copper, lead, silver, tungsten, uranium, and zinc also are present. Nearly all of Uzbekistan's arable land requires intensive irrigation. Water, Uzbekistan's most crucial resource, comes mainly from rivers whose sources are in other countries, requiring bilateral agreements with source countries as well as with other user countries downstream. Uzbekistan's chronically poor water and irrigation management has resulted in severe environmental crises and regional tensions.

Eleven years of primary and secondary education are obligatory, starting at age seven. The rate of attendance in those grades is high, although the figure is significantly lower in rural areas than in urban centers. The official literacy rate is 99 percent. However, in the post-Soviet era educational standards have fallen. Funding and training have not been sufficient to effectively educate the rapidly expanding younger cohorts of the population. Between 1992 and 2001, government spending on education dropped from 12 percent to 7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). The decrease is more noticeable at the primary and secondary levels, as the government continues to subsidize university students. However, between 1992 and 1999 university attendance dropped from 19 percent of the population to 12 percent. The three largest universities are in Nukus, Samarqand, and Tashkent. All are state-funded. Private schools have been forbidden since the establishment of Islamic fundamentalist (Wahhabi) schools in the early 1990s brought a government crackdown. However, in 1999 the government-supported Tashkent Islamic University was founded for the teaching of Islam.

Women are clearly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable population. In 2004 and, most likely, over the next 2 or 3 years, the increasing birth rate will be result from the fact that generations of women born during that period of time have begun reaching their active fertility age. Of those born, cities accounted for 31.1%, and rural areas for 68.9%. In 2004, the overall birth coefficient was 20.5 per thousand, as opposed to 19.8 per thousand in 2003. An important change in the transition period is an annual increase in the number of single mothers, and the number of divorces which is increasing at twice the rate of family growth rate, according to the National Report. This factor will lead to increase poverty among women.

The population of Uzbekistan is growing on the basis of natural migration. In contrast to previous years, in 2004 an increase in the birth rate was marked. Over the year, 533.2 thousand children were born, which is 24.8 thousand more than in 2003. This is, in a sense, a demographic echo from the high birth rates of the mid-80s.

In the post-Soviet era, the quality of Uzbekistan's health care has fallen. Between 1992 and 2001, spending on health care and the ratio of hospital beds to population both decreased by nearly 50 percent, and Russian emigration in that decade deprived the health system of many practitioners. In 2002 Uzbekistan had 58 hospital beds per 10,000 population. Basic medical supplies such as disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics are in very short supply. Although all citizens nominally are entitled to free health care, in the post-Soviet era bribery has become a common way to overcome the slow and limited service of the state system. In the early 2000s, policy has focused on improving primary health care facilities and cutting the cost of inpatient facilities.

Among the most common diseases are those associated with polluted drinking water: typhoid, hepatitis, dysentery, cholera, and various types of cancer. The chief causes of death are, in order of frequency, disorders of the cardiovascular, respiratory, and digestive systems and infectious and parasitic diseases. The reported incidence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) increased sharply in 2002 and 2003, partly because of a new government reporting policy and partly because of increased drug abuse. In 2003 about 2,000 cases of HIV were known, at least two-thirds of which were linked with drug abuse. The geographic centers of the HIV cases are Tashkent and Surkhandarya Province on the Afghanistan border. Expanding drug trafficking through Uzbekistan has led to increased drug addiction in urban areas. In 2000 Uzbekistan reformed its state-funded pension system, which had suffered from ineffective funds collection and an uneven funding burden that motivated enterprises to avoid support payments. The new system reallocated payment responsibility and collection authority, but it failed to stipulate funding amounts or to stimulate public participation. The system covers all employed persons; the government subsidizes shortfalls and pays substantial amounts in pensions to special categories. Pension eligibility

begins at age 60 for men and age 55 for women, provided they have worked 25 and 20 years, respectively. The pension program also funds payments for work injury, maternity, and disability. Pension rates increased by 20 percent in 2003. Unemployment benefits are payable for 26 weeks at 50 percent of the recipient's average earnings. Social support payments often are late, and high inflation decreases their value.

#### BOX 1. Population Growth: the Mid-term Forecast

By the end of 2005, the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan will have increased to 26.3 million people, which is 6.1% more than in 2000; the urban population will increase to 9.5 million people and the rural population will reach 16.8 million people. During the 2003-2005 period, the population will have increased by 921,000 people or 3.6%. Average annual rates of population growth during the period until 2006 will equal 1.19%. The share of rural population will remain constant at 64% and the share of men and women in the structure of the population will remain roughly equal. The mid-term perspective suggests that the highest population growth rates will be observed in the Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya and Khorezm regions, and the lowest in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Navoi region, Tashkent region and the city of Tashkent. By the end of 2010, the population will increase to 27.9 million, or by 12.5% in comparison with 2000. This includes an increase of 1.6 million people in 2006-2010, or an annual average increase of 1.18%. The urban population in 2006-2010 will increase by 303,000 persons or 3.2%, while the rural population will rise by 1.282 million or 7.6%. In an even longer perspective (from 2025 to 2050), the steady long-term slowdown of population growth will intensify.

According to the forecasts of the UN, the average annual population growth rate of Uzbekistan will decrease to 0.9% in 2025 and 0.5% in 2050. The population will equal 34.2 million people in 2025, and 40.5 million people in 2050. The share of the population in the 0-14 year age group will be 24.4% in 2025 and 19.9% in 2050 as against 36.3% in 2000. At the same time, the share of the working age population (15-59 years old) will increase to 63.9% by 2025 but will decrease to 57.8% by 2050. The number of elderly people (above 60 years of age) will increase and will constitute 11.7% of the overall population in 2025 and 22.3% in 2050, i.e. more than doubling in relation to the present time.

*Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Protection Population of the Republic of Uzbekistan.  
Source: World Population Ageing 1950-2050. United Nations, New York, 2002, p.466-467*

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). 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 all 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 area 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.

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.

## B. Government Policy on in the field of WID/Gender

- 1) The Republic of Uzbekistan has recognized around 70 international agreements on human rights
- 2) Since 1997 Government of Uzbekistan undertakes programs in the country every year directed at gender perspectives

From the moment independence was declared, Uzbekistan has been focused on creating and improving the legislative foundation for the protection of human rights and freedoms in the country in accordance with international norms. In entering the global community, the Republic of Uzbekistan, in accordance with the Constitution, has reiterated its recognition of the priority of generally recognized norms and international law.

As a full member of the U.N., Uzbekistan is a party to international agreements regarding human rights and interests, thereby obligating itself to observe and apply them in its governmental and legal practice. During the years of independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan has recognized around 70 international agreements on human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation, the Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Intolerance and Discrimination on the basis of Religion or Belief, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children, the Convention concerning Maternity Protection, the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, etc.

For the purpose of carrying out governmental policy with regard to women in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, legislative, administrative, and other types of measures are being carried out in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the purpose of fully realizing it.

The legislative system of Uzbekistan regulating the rights of women is made up of the Constitution, the Family Code, the Code on Administrative Responsibility, the Civil, Criminal, and Labor Codes, the Citizenship Act, the Youth Act, the Education Act, the Health of Citizens Act, the Welfare for Disabled Persons Act of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Residential Policy Principles Act, the Employment Act, as well as a series of other legislative acts.

A bill has been prepared on governmental state guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, which is being considered in the relevant ministries and departments. Beginning in 1997, every year governmental programs have been undertaken in the country, which have been directed at gender perspectives and at concern for women. These programs are long-term in nature and are provided with supplemental budgetary financing, and for implementing the programs funding is also provided by social-based foundations and international organizations. Appropriations for programs promoting the development of gender equality increase every year. For example, expenditures on only one governmental program, confirmed by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on 5 July 2002, No. 242, "On measures for realizing priority directions in improving the medical culture within families, strengthening the health of women, and giving birth to and raising a healthy generation," for the period 2002- 2007, including all sources of financing, amount to 95 billion som and 122 million U.S. dollars.

## C. National Machinery

### 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. There are nine key priority areas targeted by the National Action Plan. The following explanations provide more detail on these priority areas.

#### Women's Health

- Give particular consideration to the health of women of all age groups;
- Design special programs to fight widely spread diseases, such as breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease and infectious diseases (including hepatitis);
- 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;
- Continue the implementation of measures aimed at reducing maternity and infant mortality undertaken by the Ministry of Health jointly with other agencies concerned;
- Provide pregnant women and nursing mothers with free medical services guaranteed by the State;
- 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
- Design awareness-raising programs to educate women and girls on the negative consequences of alcohol, drug and tobacco addiction.

#### Women's Education

- 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
- 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:

- 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;
- Set up specialized environmental focal points in affected zones and coordinate their performance;
- 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
- 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

- Upgrade mechanisms for continued professional advancement of women to support their competitiveness in the labor market; and

- 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:

- Expand support to the needy groups of population;
- Set up retraining centers for women; and
- 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

- Amend the Government Service Act and regulations within ministries and agencies so that they encourage greater gender equity;
- Amend legislative acts to protect women's rights and interests in line with international conventions and agreements;
- 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;
- With the help of government institutions, NGOs and the mass media, enhance legal awareness among women; and
- 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

- 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
- 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

- Increase the number of specialized newspapers for women as well as TV and radio programs dedicated to women's issues;
- Design a comprehensive program aimed at expanding social debate on gender issues in all forms of media;

- 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;
- 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
- 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:

- Collect data and distribute information on women's status in Uzbekistan;
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, undertake gender statistical surveys and disaggregated analyses based upon new methodological approaches;
- 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;
- Publish an annual report highlighting women's status in Uzbekistan, as well as brochures and leaflets on gender analysis; and
- Encourage the establishment of NGOs and their integration into the international women's movement.

### III. Current Situation of Women by Sector

#### A. Education

- 1) State expenditures on education has declined 6,7 % (as of GDP) in 2002 to 6,4 % (as of GDP) in 2003.
- 2) The system of secondary special and vocational training involves more than 841 educational institutions which provide training to 688,400 people
- 3) Women in total secondary school enrollment comprises 48,3% (as of all people) in 2000 and has decreased in 2003 by 47,1%
- 4) Number of women students in higher schools has increased 37,8% (as of all students) in 2000 to 38,8 % in 2003

The system of education in the country is financed mainly by the state and it treats men and women equally. Equality of genders in education is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Article 41).

The main principles of state policies in the area of education currently are:

- humanitarian and democratic type of education and upbringing;
- uninterrupted and consecutive character of education;
- a compulsory general secondary education and an opportunity to get a secondary special, professional and higher education;
- access to education in compliance with the state educational standards;
- promotion of educational standards and talented students.

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" and the National Program of Personnel Training, a transition to a system of free and obligatory 12-year education (including 9 years of general secondary education and 3 years of vocational training), is being implemented. Until the age of 6 or 7, children receive preschool education in different types of establishments. General secondary school education consists of 2 stages: primary school education (Grades 1-4) and secondary education (Grades 5-9). Secondary special, vocational education is provided in academic lyceums and professional colleges and creates the basis for acquiring specific professional skills or for continuing study in institutions of higher education (see Box 2)

The pre-school system comprises of 153 "kindergarten/school" type complexes, 57 specialized pre-schools, 186 pre-school sanatorium-type institutions and 61 private pre-school establishments. Pre-school enrollment of children decreased by almost half from 1990 to 2000, but over the last three years has increased from 18.2% in 2000 to 19.2% in 2003. In 2003 the overall enrollment of children in pre-school education constituted 31.6%.

There are over 6 million students studying in 9,800 secondary schools, which provide education in seven languages. They are taught by 454,000 teachers, an average ratio of one teacher per 15 pupils, which is good according to international standards.

During the last 3 years, a major program of renovations has been initiated, with 236 new school buildings for 64,200 students. The number of schools connected to the piped-water system increased by 20%; the number with telephone connections by 8%; those with cafeterias and catering facilities by 12%; and 632 schools (6.6%) were connected to the gas pipeline system.

The system of secondary special and vocational training involves more than 841 educational institutions which provide training to 688,400 people. During 1998-2002, 551 secondary vocational institutions were deployed, providing training for 383,000 students (including 54 academic lyceums with 33,300 students and 497 professional colleges with 349,600 students). 101 academic lyceums and 910 professional

colleges, with 730,600 students, will enable the transition to 12-year secondary education. According to the program, these will be built in 2003-2009.

### Box 2. The National System of Public Education

Age	Name of Scholastic institution	Level of Education
31	Doctoral Study (at least 3 years)	Post-graduate education
30		
29		
28	Post-graduate study (at least 3 years)	Higher Education
27		
26		
25	Professional Higher Education program (medicine up to 12 years)	Masters Degree (at least 2 years)
24		
23		General Higher Education Program (at least 4 years)
22		
21		
20	Academic Lyceum (3 years)	Professional College (3 years)
19		
18		
17	General Secondary School (5 years)	Secondary Special Vocational Education
16		
15		
14		
13		
12		
11	Primary school (4 years)	General Secondary Education
10		
9		
8		
7	II-stage	Pre-school education
6		
5		
4		
3	I-stage	
2		

	Compulsory education
	Non-compulsory education

Source: "The Education System of Uzbekistan (reforms in figures and facts)" ADB/UNESCO TA#2947-UZB "Monitoring of Implementation of Educational Reforms" project

Finally, 63 institutions attended by 254,400 students are currently operating in the system of higher education, while the number of students is increasing. In comparison with the beginning of the 1990s, the number of courses offered by higher education institutions has almost doubled. Multi-level programs of education have been introduced, including B.A. and M.A. degrees. Conditions for real competition among institutions of higher education have been created, and contacts with foreign institutions are being expanded. In recent years, more than ten institutions from other countries have opened affiliated institutions in Uzbekistan.

Teacher retraining and improvement of staff qualifications is being implemented in 2 specialized institutes, 15 centers and 22 faculties of qualification improvement. A long-term plan has been developed to improve the qualifications of teachers, heads of higher education institutions, deans of faculties, heads of academic departments, chiefs of units and teaching departments, librarians, pedagogical staff of pre-school and out-of-school educational establishments, teachers of general secondary and secondary special and vocational training, and specialists from certain sectors of the economy.

Efforts are being made to introduce distance learning methods and to improve the qualifications of teaching staff in educational institutions through extensive use of modern information technologies. Furthermore, seminars and conferences, both abroad and in Uzbekistan, have been organized for teachers and heads of educational institutions in cooperation with the Governments of Germany, Japan, Korea, and international organizations including UNESCO, ETF, ILO, ADB, and JICA.

A sufficiently high level of education and the absolute accessibility for general secondary education for all citizens of the country, irrespective of their gender, is a characteristic feature of the social development of Uzbekistan. Practically all people in the country are literate. The network of professional, secondary special and higher educational establishments is widely developed. Almost 30% of children get preschool education. Every year, 600 thousand graduates of secondary schools continue their education after graduation from secondary schools.

The system of continuous education consists of pre-school, general secondary, general special and professional, higher and postgraduate education as well as of in-service training and retraining. The secondary ten-year education system is going to be replaced by twelve-year education system. In the context of gender relations, the question about services for upbringing and looking after children and access of children to education may be approached in two ways: firstly, as to the influence on upbringing and education of girls and boys and, secondly, as to the influence (increase or decrease) of reproductive functions of women in the family.

Education faces a number of problems rooted in a historical and cultural inheritance and linked with traditional upbringing of girls at home, with some stereotypes of behavior of young girls and women and understanding of the role of women in public life. These factors cannot but have an influence on education of girls and women and their choice of profession. So long as young girls have a subordinate position in the parents' family and later on - in the husband's family, a decision about their education is as a rule, made by their parents and close relations. Even grownup girls and young women think that it is natural for them to follow the choice made for them by older people. A study conducted within the framework of a family planning project<sup>1</sup> proved that a decision about women's education is made most frequently by parents or by husbands and it are reduced mainly to pedagogical or medical professions. Most of those questioned believe that if they were to choose between the family and education (profession), the latter would be second in importance. Many of them agree that after marriage they will have to stop their education. On the other hand, due to an increased reproductive load, young women who completed education and qualification are not able to compete in market conditions because they lose experience and qualification.

The educational level of women is also under the influence of a high reproductive load because the largest numbers of children are born by 20-year old women. It also contributes to the fact that the coverage of girls and women with education, which is high during secondary education, later on goes down.

Therefore, to change the existing educational stereotypes and to adapt them to a varied economic and social life comprise the task of the state policies. The introduction of a 12-year compulsory education, along with its other aims, pursues the purpose of preventing the tendency to contract early marriages, which is partially linked to the graduation of students from secondary schools at the age of 15 years. A longer period of school studies could be helpful for overcoming this negative tendency.

Accessibility of education for girls in Uzbekistan depends mainly on the demographic situation and the living standards of people. Due to material hardships, many people, especially in the countryside, cannot provide equal conditions for education of all children and traditionally make a choice in favour of sons. Gender problems also exist in the educational system which while undergoing adaptation to new conditions is still suffering from insufficient facilities, information and a shortage of skilled teachers and disadvantages in the methods of instructions. Frequently, educational establishments themselves direct



girls in the choice of their profession. Educational establishments should pay much more attention to informative, educational and upbringing activities in order to change the traditional stereotypes of supremacy of males over females. In its turn, it might be helpful for girls to get an education as a foundation for their economic independence in the future.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

## B. Health

- 1) 1165 hospitals working and providing medical services in 2004
- 2) The share of domestic pharmaceutical consumption covered by national production has grown from 5-7% in 1990 to almost 30% currently
- 3) 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)
- 4) Between 1993 and 2003, the infant mortality rate fell from 70.8 to 16.4 per thousand
- 5) The share of private financing in the general expenditures for public health services increased from 6,3% in 2000 to 8,6% in 2003.

### General Situation

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On the Protection of the Health of Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan" and the state program for reforming the system of public health services constitute the legal basis for the state strategy on the development of public health services.

The Republican Scientific Center of Emergency Medical Aid (RSCEMA) has been established, with 12 branches in the regions, 171 departments of emergency medical assistance in large urban and raion hospitals, and sanitary aviation and ambulance services, which together provide emergency medical aid to the population. The capacity of the country's overall emergency medical services is 8,240 hospital beds, of which 3,665 are in RSCEMA and its branches, and 4,575 in the structure of the central raion and municipal hospitals.

From 1996 to 2003, 2,363 rural medical stations were opened, whilst over 3,100 nursing-obstetric offices (50% of the total) and over 500 rural medical ambulance stations (43.4% of the total) were closed down.

The implementation of the "Health-1" project, conducted in Ferghana, Navoi, and Syrdarya regions in accordance with the agreement between the Government of Uzbekistan and the World Bank, endorsed in 1998, was successfully completed in 2004. Under this project, primary health care was strengthened, general physicians and nurses were trained, the financing and management system of primary health care was improved and per capita financing of rural health facilities from regional budgets was introduced.

State educational standards for higher and secondary vocational education were developed and adopted. In the system of higher education, the transition to a two-level professional training was completed. While the first level prepares general practice doctors, the second level trains experts in specific fields with duration of study of at least 3 years for clinical disciplines and at least 2 years for fundamental theoretical ones.

**Table 1. Resources in the Public Health Care System**

Parameters	1991	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of hospitals	1388	1162	1159	1174	1173	1165
Number of hospital beds in them	258.8	138.6	140.1	147.0	146.7	142.9
Number of beds per 10,000 people	123.0	55.9	55.8	57.8	57.4	54.9
Capacity of out-patient and polyclinic facilities per 10,000 people	133.7	157.7	160.4	163.1	159.2	155.2
Total number of doctors of all specializations (in thousands)	75.0	81.5	81.4	81.0	80.4	77.9
Number of doctors per 10,000 inhabitants	35.5	32.8	32.4	31.9	31.4	29.9
Number of mid-level medical personnel (in thousands)	246.9	259.7	263.1	265.9	265.3	266.0
Number of mid-level medical personnel per 10,000 people	115.2	104.7	104.7	104.6	103.8	102.2

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

From 1999-2000, medical schools began admission to departments of high-skilled nursing and currently enroll 556 students. In 2002, 121 highly qualified nurses graduated and now work as heads of nursing departments in medical institutions, or as nursing teachers in medical colleges.

Public health care facilities employ 81,000 doctors. The ratio of doctors and mid-level medical staff to 10,000 inhabitants was 29.9 and 102.2 persons respectively in 2004 compared to 35.5 and 115.2 in 1991.

Improvements were made as a result of the increased efficiency of budgetary expenditures on free medical services, and the development of various forms of mixed and private financing. The share of private financing in the general expenditures for public health services increased from 6.3% in 2000 to 8.6% in 2003.

### **Improved supply of drugs**

The network of drugstores was decentralized and privatized. Budgetary allocations for the procurement of drugs by institutions of primary medical care are calculated taking into account the regional specifics, the number of the population, the incidence of diseases, and the needs of public health care facilities. Measures were strengthened to prevent the delivery of poor quality, non-standard and counterfeit medical products to the pharmaceutical market. The domestic pharmaceutical industry continues to develop. In 2003, Uzbek enterprises started production of 61 types of drugs. The share of domestic pharmaceutical consumption covered by national production has grown from 5-7% in 1990 to almost 30% currently. The demand for bandage materials, disposable intravenous injection systems, syringes, etc. is almost fully covered by domestic production.

### **Development of the health care system**

Decentralization of health care management and financing may better respond to the population's needs at the local level and lead to a more efficient use of resources, thereby contributing to an overall improvement in service quality. However, decentralization may also lead towards unequal access to health care services in the regions. Taking into account the advantages and risks, a gradual process of decentralization is being implemented. The Decree of Cabinet of Ministers No. 18 "On Improvement of Health Care Management in the Republic of Uzbekistan" of January 14, 1999 defines the major tasks of the Ministry of Health Care and functions of territorial health care departments.

Health managers are authorized to take decisions on the remuneration of employees within the limits of the wage fund, although the total payment cannot be less than the wage under the unified tariff rate. Contract-based employment is being introduced. Supply of resources for medical services is funded mostly by local governments. Raion and city budgets, i.e. the lowest tier of the budgetary system, finance 57% of all expenses for health care. Specialized centers and national health care facilities are funded from the republican budget.

When re-distributing responsibilities for financing the health care system, it was considered that local governments are better informed of the current state of the facilities and health needs in their particular area. As a result of restructuring of the primary health care services in rural areas, 50% of 2,363 rural health facilities were restructured, utilizing funds from local budgets.

An experiment was conducted in the Ferghana region, where rural health facilities were granted juridical status and their activities were financed from the regional budget based on per capita norm. This led to a more efficient use of resources, and allowed funds to be allocated for expanding preventive health measures.

However, the local ability to generate financial resources is rather limited, especially in the under-developed regions. Therefore, most of the local government expenditures are funded by means of allocation of a part of national taxes and of subsidies from higher-level budgets. In Uzbekistan, the proportion of local taxes in total local budgetary resources is still modest (approximately 17%) and it can be assumed that health care, as with other expenditures, is financed primarily from the national budget. Consequently, the problems persist on part of increasing efficiency in the use of public expenditures, ensuring transparency in their allocation and improving the funding of primary health care.

## Women Health Care

To maintain and to strengthen the health of women is one of the most topical tasks of health care in Uzbekistan. 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.

The main indicator of the state of women's health is the rate of disease. The Human Development Report of Uzbekistan for 1998 pointed out that «the reduced budgetary allocations for the state health care coupled with the increased prices for medicines, maintenance costs of medical institutions, equipment, instruments, tools and patient catering have narrowed markedly the potential of medicinal institutions for disease prevention and patient treatment». Over this period, the private health care was not able to compensate for the reduction of the state health care services.

That's why over the recent years the occurrence of so-called social disease (TB, venereal, oncologic, cardiovascular disease), including among women, as increased. It can not be explained only by negligence of sanitary and hygienic standards or of one's own health. No doubt that the health of women is affected by a double burden (at job and at home), malnutrition, shortage of some vitamins and micro components because of an unbalanced diet (insufficient consumption of meat, dairy products, etc.)

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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 2003, that is, from 4.6 percent of GDP to 2.4 percent. The effect of this decrease together with inflation means that the level of per capita real health expenditure has fallen to 65 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.

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. Infectious disease is the primary cause of infant mortality, with 80 percent of infants dying from acute respiratory infections. 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. 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 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. In addition, the avoidance of costly medical services has led to greater neglect of illness by women, particularly in the poorer classes.

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. 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 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. These, 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 draws 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, Ferghana 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. 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. 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 potable water throughout Karakalpakstan and in 64 percent of food samples taken from the region.

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 2. 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 2: 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>17.5</b>

Source: a 1998 ADB project that surveyed 600 households using random sampling methods

\* 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.

### BOX 3. Female suicides and trafficking

Female suicides surged in 2002, with 322 women committing suicide in the first four months, according to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. In May, Dilbar Guliamova, the deputy premier, made an unprecedented statement attributing 99 percent of female suicides to domestic violence. In spite of a law making it a crime to "drive someone to suicide," only twelve of those 322 cases led to trials.

Trafficking in persons also continued, but the magnitude of the problem remained unclear. In May, a U.S. district court in Texas found Sardar Gasanov, a former United Nations program officer and Tashkent native, and his wife guilty of "alien smuggling for profit." Gasanov and his wife had trafficked three women from Uzbekistan to the U.S. and forced them to dance nude in clubs. The couple was convicted after two of the women appealed to the FBI for assistance.

Source: *Relations of Sexes in Uzbekistan: Traditions and Modernity*, Open Society Institute, 2002

Infant and maternal mortality are decreasing while the number of women entering reproductive age is growing (up to 80 thousand women a year). Every second woman in Uzbekistan is at the reproductive age. The largest number of deliveries occurs in 20-24 year old group. Reproductive women have typically a high occurrence of extragenital disease, a high rate of premature birth and sickness during pregnancy. Sometimes women become invalids after pathological childbirth or abortion. Among the reasons of this is insufficient rehabilitation of young women after child-birth and a short intergenerative interval. Over the recent years, special attention in Uzbekistan has been given to the reproductive health of women and family planning.

Since 1991, the Ministry of Health has been implementing a regional program «Urgent Measures for the improvement of Women at a Fertile Age» with the aim of improving the health of women at the fertile age, ensuring safe motherhood and strengthening the genetic fund of the nation. Essentially, it is a family planning program designed to prevent unwanted pregnancies of women with extragenital disease, for improving the health of such women, extending the intergenerative interval up to 3-4 years and preventing abortions. Though during the nineties the birth-rate had a general downward tendency it is still on a rather high level in Uzbekistan. It is due to many factors:

- a conservative and patriarchal style of a national family life, especially in the countryside, traditional views on the reproductive functions of women and an insufficient knowledge of family planning;
- the prevalence of rural population having typically a higher birth-rate than residents of towns;
- high marriage rate and low divorce rate, especially in the countryside;
- the prevalence of people of indigenous ethnic origin (more than 80%) who characteristically have a high birth-rate and a low migration over the territory;
- a high level of unemployment of women who are not occupied in production and are not interested in promotion.

In this context, it is necessary to point out the enhancing tendency of early marriages and consequently of giving birth to children at a young age when the mother is not prepared, physically or morally. The numbers of such marriages are growing, partially under the influence of financial difficulties experienced by many children families, and of the possibility to terminate a secondary education at about 15 years of age.

The health of mothers and children is a major indicator of the level of social and economic wellbeing of a country. Moreover, the preservation of the genetic fund depends primarily on the health of the mother. It is not incidental therefore that the protection of the health of mother and child has been referred to the priorities guidelines of our state. The material and technical facilities required for these purposes are quite developed: there exist obstetrics and pediatric services, research institutes of obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, sanitation and professional disease. Over the recent period, marriage and family centers, family planning services, medical and genetics services were established in all regions of the country. Comprehensive programs for improving the health of fertile women and children have been devised and are being implemented. Many ministries, departments, charity foundations, commercial and public organizations are involved in their implementation. Efforts are undertaken for prevention of unwanted pregnancies. Causes of maternal and infant mortality are studied and the ways of providing practical health care at health care bodies and institutions in localities are looked for. The following measures have been introduced:

- Efforts are undertaken for explaining to people that a family should have 2 or 3 children and the intergenerational interval should be minimum three years;
- Education on the use of all types of contraception has been intensified;
- Women with extragenital disease are advised to avoid pregnancy and to stay longer in hospital before and after delivery; postnatal rehabilitation is practiced; efforts have been introduced to increase the quantity of maternity homes, to improve the attendance of infants by doctors and to encourage breast feeding.

Economic development of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics under the administrative and command system that has been taking place without regard to the demands and interests of people may be considered to be the major causes of environmental problems in this region.

Neglect of the environment resulted in too high concentrations of harmful substances in the air and water which are discharged by industrial companies. An uncontrolled application of chemicals in agriculture coupled with a low technological culture of cultivation have been leading to soil degradation. Nature conservation measures were given little attention and their funding was by a residual principle.

The most topical problems for the Republic are the problems of water shortage and pollution, soil depletion, salinity and erosion, high concentrations of pesticides, including those now forbidden for application. Anthropogenic burden on the environment is especially high in the Tashkent Region, in the Ferghana Valley, in the Bukhara, Navoi and Surkhandarya Regions. A worsening environmental situation causes a sharp increase of the occurrence of acute respiratory, gastrointestinal, kidney and blood diseases. Insufficiently high sanitation standards to protect residential areas from poisonous chemicals applied in cotton fields, a low quality of water supply, unavailability of sewage and regular waste disposal also contribute to the level of pollution. Only 70.9% of the country's population are provided with safe water (84.6 in towns and 60% in villages). A consequence of this is a high occurrence of virus hepatitis, typhoid and paratyphoid fever. Prematurely born children, defects of development of children, diseases of the sense organs, allergic disease, invalidity of children, defects in neuro-psychological and physical development are also a consequence of a polluted environment and unbalanced diet.

### C. Economic Activities

- 1) Overall employed women is almost stable in recent year, which was 44,1% (of all employed) in 2004
- 2) 26% of the Uzbek women have an access to a private ownership of land
- 3) Amount of micro credits received by women in 2002 was 15% (of all issued credits)

The socially oriented reforms pursued in the country and the emphasis made on the economic activities and realization of work potential of people have predefined new approaches to ensuring employment of people, including of women. Employment of women is under the influence of numerous factors that may be divided into two groups.

The first group embraces the social and economic factors (structure of economy and production, level of industrial development, work conditions, etc.) determining a general level of economic activity and employment of women from a position of labor demand.

The second one consists of specific factors influencing the supply of women's labor. To such factors belong birth rate, availability of pre-school institutions, development of the social sector as such, qualitative characteristics of women's labor, social and work motivation of women.

During the days of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan had a high level of women's employment, relative to other countries. The pursuance of the principles of universal employment required a system of counterbalancing measures that would alleviate the pressures on the work, force on the labor markets, and especially that of young people, women and pensioners. Among such measures there was compulsory secondary education, a broad access to day-time secondary special and higher education, a low retirement age, especially for women, long and partially paid leaves for child care, prohibition of dismissal for women having children, inclusion of maternity leaves into the service period accounted for pension allocation, etc.

Due to all these measures coupled with rather high living standards women opted to use all benefits available to them. In Uzbekistan, a country of traditionally high birth-rates, it resulted in that married women could stay home for 10-12 years, meanwhile retaining their jobs and even a portion of their income as well as the service period accounted for pension allocation.

Consequences of such policies are rather difficult to assess because unemployment in post-socialist times was never recognized officially. About 90% of all unemployed people were women, mostly in the countryside. So far as families in villages are extended and women have a very heavy workload at home, it may be assumed that many unemployed women were not seeking employment.

This way, by the beginning of the nineties Uzbekistan inherited an irrational and inefficient system of employment, specified by high hidden unemployment and labor supply and an unbalanced demand in quality and quantity. Therefore along with the new problems, the country had to embark on addressing the old problems of employment that had accumulated for many years.

Women were forced to abandon jobs in industry or agriculture not only because of redundancies, but also because of diminished numbers of preschool institutions. The budgetary allocations for the maintenance of kindergartens and crèches reduced greatly, the cost of keeping children there increased and became prohibitive for some people, especially in the countryside.

For equal treatment on the labor markets, men and women should have equal responsibilities at home. It means that it is necessary to change many traditional views on gender functions, distribution of the work load at home and responsibility for bringing up children. During the transition to the market economy, accompanied by structural adjustments and shrinking employment, some people at an able-bodied age, including women, have to get temporary jobs. Or they have to work in several places, part-time, at home, by contract or subcontract, or be self-employed at mini-enterprises, small firms and in the informal sector. Usually, such informal types of work do not provide a regular income and a person faces a danger of being ousted onto the unprotected labor markets. Besides, such work usually brings low income, small



additional pay they have to look after little children (mostly, 20-30 year old women). Such temporary withdrawal from the sphere of employment results in less opportunities for mothers to raise their professional level, to improve education or skills than men have. It aggravates even more the situation of women on labor markets having a much higher supply of women's labor than the demand for it.

Currently, the share of women in the total number of registered unemployed is about 60%, or somewhat less in comparison with the previous years. They are mainly women leaving their previous employment by their own wish or graduates of higher, secondary special and secondary institutions looking for jobs.

Due to various reasons, less unemployed women are provided with jobs than men. Women comprise 45% of the registered unemployed, and only 44% of them were provided with jobs. It signifies that the demand for women's labor on the modern labor market is somewhat less than the demand for labor requiring considerable physical strength. An overwhelming majority of such women is sent to work by labor services mostly at state enterprises and organizations. However, it is also relevant to men and is explained that mainly state enterprises ask for vacancies to be filled in with the help of the labor services. Recently, enterprises and organizations of other forms of property have begun to provide employment through the labor services. Jobs taken by women in different sectors also undergo changes. Several years ago a considerable percentage of women had jobs in industry. Currently women are employed mostly in agriculture where labor is excessive and wages are low. At the same time, the number of women occupied in such sectors as transportation, telecommunications, trade, etc. has reduced greatly. Partially it may be attributed to the low mobility of mother-women in the countryside where industry and other strategic sectors of the national economy are not well developed.

## Employment

Women's economic status has been affected by the shrinking economy and financial squeeze faced by state and non-state 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.

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.

Women are employed in different sectors in a very irregular way. Typically «women's» sectors are such sectors as health (72.6% of all employed), culture and arts (52.1%), insurance (49.2%) and education (63.6). Men's labor prevails in transportation (81.1 %), construction (87.2%), forestry (72.2%), housing and public amenities (71.5%). As for other sectors - industry, agriculture, trade and public catering, the share of women occupied there ranges from 35 to 45% (see table below)

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").

**Table 3. Percentage of women out of total employed people**

	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Employed in economy - total</b>	<b>43,8</b>	<b>43,7</b>	<b>44,1</b>	<b>44,1</b>
including in the industry:				
Industry	30,6	30,1	29,3	28,8
Agriculture and forestry	44,2	43,3	42,7	41,8
Construction	12,7	12,8	12,8	12,8
Transportation and communication	18,2	19,4	18,1	18,1
Trade and catering	29,9	30,7	30,5	30,8
Housing and communal services	29,1	30,5	28,4	28,5
Health, physical training and social security	71,1	71	72,5	72,5
Education	63,6	62	63,5	63,6
Culture and arts	52,4	50,2	51,8	52,1
Science and science maintenance	46,8	50,6	50,7	50,8
Finance, credits, insurance	48,5	49,8	49,2	49,2
Others	28,1	28	30,8	30,8

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

In every sector where the quantities of employed women and men are approximately equal, some industries have a higher concentration of female labor. It is relevant mainly to textile, garment and food industries (confectionery, milk products, etc.).

Apart from sectorial differentiation and concentration of women, there are also professional differences in the level of women's employment. For instance, men mainly perform 62% skilled manual work and operate machines in mechanical engineering, metalworking and instrument making (machine-tool operators, adjusters, repairmen, etc.). Women-workers are basically either skilled operators of computer assembly or a non-skilled staff involved in cleaning, packaging, marking, etc.

The tendency of declining involvement of women in public production and of having comparatively lower wages than the wages received by men may be explained by two reasons. Firstly, employers prefer to hire rather men than women. Secondly, due to unequally distributed duties between spouses, women frequently prefer to make damage to their productive functions. The existing distribution of work at home makes it impossible for a woman having children to work full time or according to a strict schedule. The mode of operation of pre-school and school institutions, services, trade and public amenities is also designed mainly for the women who do not work or work only part-time.

It should be pointed out that the striving of employers to hire rather men than women has also some grounds. Women work every month 20-25 hours less than men do; their work may be interrupted and this affects negatively professional experience and skills of women. That's why whenever it is possible, employers prefer to employ men. Regardless of that discrimination by indication of sex is legally banned in Uzbekistan, women at interviews before employment are asked about their family plans. Of late, before situation did not emerge today.

Payment for women's labor which is usually less than that of men's. It is explained not only by a low professional status or position of women, but also by differentiated systems of labor pay and legal prohibitions on the employment of women in some difficult and harmful types of work. [However, in the same economic sectors, women still work in conditions which do not meet sanitary and hygienic standards -about 12% of all women employed in industry and about 9% in construction].

Traditionally developed informal services in light and food industries are provided by women. They add a substantial amount to family income, have a tendency to grow during the transitional period and have a good potential for the development of entrepreneurship and self-employment of women. For instance, the products of handicrafts, spinning, carpet- and garment making can be distributed not only on the domestic market, but can also be exported. The food industry can be developed by establishing local small processing factories (meat and milk, processing of vegetables and fruit, cans) that will help to raise the

income of small family farms. This area of activities can involve women with many children or women released from agricultural enterprises.

It is especially topical because according to the data only 26% of the Uzbek women have an access to a private ownership of land (12,5% own land plots, 3.6% have gardens and 10.4% have kitchen gardens). This group of employed women needs special attention as far as the reforms in agriculture can result in the loss of guaranteed seasonal work and of access to social benefits.

The Republic has a rather substantial potential for expanding women's entrepreneurship, undertaken frequently in an informal way. However, for attaining this, relevant measures should be introduced in order to create a favorable economic environment for transferring this activity into the formal sector.

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 642,500 in 2001 to 575,100 in 2004. Over the same period the number of nurseries fell from 6865 to 6603.

### **Support for women in the labor market**

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan bans any discrimination by indication of gender and ensures a broad system of measures for the protection of women's rights on labor markets. The major components of this system are protection of motherhood, providing guaranteed maternity and pregnancy leaves, guarantees of employment and income, creation of special work conditions pregnant women and nursing mothers (for instance, an employer can not terminate a work contract with a pregnant woman or with a woman with children under three years of age); protection of reproductive functions of women, including prohibition or limitation of employment of women at heavy and harmful works, prohibition to force women with children to work according to a special schedule (night or overtime work, business trips, etc.), additional holidays. An employer is obliged to provide women mainly with day work and reduce the workday for women with little children.

In market relations, more and more often the question arises - what effect such measures have on ensuring equality of women's right and how big is this influence on changes in the structure of employment. As far as the measures for protection of women raise the cost of women's labor, will they provide a negative impact on employment opportunities and the promotion of women?

However, the mechanism of quotas did not fully consider the interests and requirements of target groups. Firstly, only companies having more than a hundred employees were obliged to allocate such quotas. Therefore small enterprises that could provide flexible forms of employment were not involved in job creating for women. Secondly, quotas concerned only a number of jobs. Therefore, in reality, to fulfill a quota assignment, enterprises applied only for low-skilled and low-paid jobs.

### **Creating new employment for women**

There were 430,000 jobs created in 2003, of which 253,400 went to newly hired employees and 176,600 to released workers.

Another 169,700 new jobs were created in the sphere of individual businesses, although these are characterized by instability and inefficiency. The implementation of local investment and manufacturing programs has not yet had any effect on the creation of new jobs, as their main goal was to support and re-equip large operating plants and capital-intensive projects, rather than labor-intensive ones.

Local employment programs for the period 2005-2007 have been developed and approved. The programs estimated the demand for jobs in all regions, paying particular attention to the employment of women (Box 4).

The development of regional employment programs was made possible through the involvement of local governments and community organizations. Cooperation between the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, its regional structures and local authorities and community organizations meant that the number of jobs created within the community coincided with the number of unemployed women in that area. It was possible to ascertain resource requirements in order to provide micro-credit to women for the development of family-owned businesses, especially in remote and mountainous areas with undeveloped market infrastructure.

To ensure higher employment, greater emphasis must be placed on job creation in labor-intensive sectors such as textile, fruit and vegetable processing, and processing of other agricultural products.

The ongoing market reforms in the country do not just create difficulties for women in the area of employment but also open new spheres for efforts and capabilities of women. As it has been mentioned, the Law of Uzbekistan ensures equal opportunities for women and men in using their economic rights.

#### **BOX 4. Women's Employment Needs**

In August-September 2004, a special households survey was carried out in each raion of the republic to determine the number of women in need of employment. As a result, 1.2 million households were surveyed. Exact calculations of the labor market status of women and of the number of women in need for employment suggest that only 184,000 or 3.7% of all women can be considered as economically active.

In addition, the following factors were taken into account when ascertaining the job creation need for women over 2005-2007: first, the number of women who will enter the labor force within the forecasting period, which was estimated at 348,000 units; second, that of women made redundant by the structural transformation of the economy, which is estimated at 135,000, including 47,000 in agriculture.

As a whole, the total number of jobs required to employ all women seeking employment will equal 667,000. This number does not include the number of women employed in the informal sector, which, according to the routine monitoring surveys on employment status, already approaches 1.2 million

*Source: Local employment program for the period 2005-2007.*

However, in real life, women do not use their rights as frequently as men do. This may be explained by traditional perceptions of the role functions of women and men. Or the reason may lie in unavailability of appropriate skills and practical experience of women. In any case, women should be promoted in realizing fully their adaptive capabilities. Such assistance should be provided to them both during training and business start-up.

Currently Uzbekistan is implementing several programs on training people's market skills and rendering a direct support to small business, including technical assistance. The Republican Chamber of Entrepreneurs, the Business-Fund, the Employment Promotion Fund, the TACIS, the European Union, the Business Women Association and other non-governmental organizations address this problem.

The programs aimed at women include market skills training, explanation of women's rights and opportunities. However, special projects intended for a direct support to women in starting up their business are conducted out as experiments, for instance, a UNDP pilot project extending credits to rural women. Implementation of such projects encounters difficulties, which are typical for many transitional economies, namely insufficiently developed banking system, the lack of banking experience of lending individuals, unavailability of pledges, bad repayment of credits, undeveloped system of credit insurance and high loan interest charged for protecting creditor from inflation.

Domestic loans have some limiting factors either, inflation which restrains savings, limited access for the broad public in obtaining many types of resources, undeveloped market infrastructure, poor institutional development of non-governmental organizations providing support to target groups needing credits. Solution of these problems is an important condition for a stable gender development. So long as these problems persist, women will hardly be involved in entrepreneurship on a broad-scale.

#### D. Political Participation

- 1) There are currently 5,000 NGOs in Uzbekistan
- 2) Over 50% of NGOs carry out their work in areas related to interests and rights of women
- 3) There is however a much higher representation of women in the national courts, where there is one female judge to every five
- 4) There is only 9,9 % of parliamentarians in the Oliy Majlis in 2002

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 5000 NGOs in Uzbekistan.

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, but in recent years the number of women in Oliy Majlis (Parliament) is increasing. (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Representation of Women in Parliament, 1985-2002**

Year	Members of Parliament	Share of Women	
		No.	%
1985	510	183	36
1990	500	47	9
1998	250	19	8
2002	250	24	9,9

Source: State Committee of Uzbekistan on Statistics.

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 9,9 percent of parliamentarians in the Oliy Majlis in 2002. 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 16.7. 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. In response to this drop, the reintroduction of a parliamentary quota has been set as an objective of the National Action Plan.

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. 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 Ferghana 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.

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 as their wages fall further behind the national average over the past 10 years.

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.

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. Problems such as the irregular supply of gas, electricity and water, and the high cost of health services and education are widespread. The cost of basic services such as transport, energy and heating are still subsidized by the Government and the cost of wheat still controlled.

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 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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

### Women's Political Participation and NGOs

There are currently more than 5,000 NGOs in Uzbekistan, including 130 national cultural centers, and more than 70 foundations.

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. 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. In addition, women's NGOs have the flexibility of small, independent organizations.

Most NGOs address aspects of human development such as health care, education, physical training, spiritual upbringing, protection of human rights, assistance to socially-vulnerable population groups, land improvement of residential areas, joint management of infrastructure of residential buildings, and others.

Women's NGOs considerably contribute to all of the above. Women's organizations such as the Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1991) and the Business Women Association "Tadbirkor Ayol" (1991) were among the first NGOs to be established in the country. These NGOs and some others that appeared during the first years of independence were created with active assistance from the government. In this respect, they closely interact with government agencies, have a sustainable financial base and organizational potential, and also provide support to government initiatives, among their other activities.

Presently, over 50% of NGOs carry out their work in areas related to interests and rights of women. The activities of these organizations tend to focus on vocational retraining and employment, counseling, the protection of the rights of women-entrepreneurs, the development of educational programs, the protection of women and children's health (see box 5)

#### BOX 5. An Example of the Activities of the "Mehri" Society

The "Mehri" society has opened a counseling and training center for women and their families, "Mapurahonim". The center offers women the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge which will help them find a well-paid job, and help empower them in general. The center "Mapurahonim" has organized free training courses for social workers - for taking care of infants and pre-school children, the elderly, the sick, and retirees, as well as for housekeeping. Moreover, "Mapurahonim" takes active measures to ensure the job placement of women who have taken part in their courses on providing practical services to the population.

*Source: Human Development Report 2005. UNDP*

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. 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 Ferghana 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 non-government 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. 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. 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.

There is also a general desire for better communication and coordination between government and non-government 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 Mokr—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.

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 non-women-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 non-women-oriented Cabinet Ministries. In particular, research is needed to assess the impact of more traditional gender ideologies that 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.).

## E. Law on WID/Gender

- 1) Family Code did not take into account nondiscrimination of women according to their family status and prohibition of family violence against women
- 2) According to the amendments introduced in the Labor Code, a pregnant woman by her consent may work overtime or she may not use pregnancy or maternity leave or leave for upbringing children
- 3) Civil Law declares the equal right of women to make deals, be involved in entrepreneurial activities
- 4) Conformism of women supports a despotic power of men in the family and secures grounds for the infringement of women's rights and different forms of violence against women

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, all citizens of the country have the same legal status and in the face of law they enjoy equal rights and freedoms, irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, personal or social status (Article 18). Stating the rights and freedoms of the individual, the Uzbek Constitution proceeds from the idea of equality of all citizens in the face of law. The Main Law ensures a whole set of various individual, political, social and economic rights for every person. Every person enjoys equal and inalienable rights to life, freedom and personal inviolability.

One of the fundamental constitutional principles is equality of rights for men and women (Article 46). The Uzbek Constitution has no provisions that would discriminate or injure rights or freedoms of women. As it is known, the Constitution formulates major rights and duties of citizens, which are the same for all members of the society, without any exceptions. The rights and duties of the citizens are regulated more specifically by the rules of sectorial law. The legal status of women is currently not different from the legal status of men. In a similar way, they are equal in the face of law. Meanwhile, the law sets forth some measures relevant only to women that can not be regarded as a «special system of women's privileges» hence measures proceed from the biological nature and reproductive functions of women. This is why the introduction and improvement of legislative measures for the protection of motherhood and reproductive functions of women is an objective requirement. It is not incidental that the family as a basis of the society is under a special protection of the state, as it is fixed in the Uzbek Constitution.

Since 1997, according to the «Law on the Authorized for Human Rights (Ombudsman)», Uzbekistan has a parliamentary control over efficient legislation on human rights, its enforcement by the state authorities, citizen's self-management bodies, enterprises, organizations, public associations and functionaries.

As it has been mentioned, equality of rights of men and women is ensured not only by the Main Law, but also by Labor, Civil, Family, Criminal, Civil Procedural, Criminal Procedural and other codes. Let us consider those concerning gender relations directly.

The Family Code enforced on September, 1, 1998, regulates marital and family relations, property rights and disputes, parents' rights and duties, rights of the child and guardianship matters. Registration of marriages is made by civil status registration bodies (a religious marriage has no legal power in Uzbekistan). In family relations, it is not allowed to limit rights directly or indirectly, to provide direct or indirect advantages when contracting a marriage or to intervene into family relations on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, conviction, social status or other factors. Spouses enjoy equal rights and have equal obligations.

However the Family Code did not take into account two most important principles fixed in international instruments on the rights of women, namely, nondiscrimination of women according to their family status and prohibition of family violence against women. However, the Family Code introduced some new provisions in the regulation of family and marital relations. One of such provisions is the right of spouses to conclude a marriage contract in which, by mutual consent, they may decide themselves the issues of the legal regime of their property, whether their property will be on the basis of common, separate or shared ownership. A marriage contract certified by notary is an incontestable document, defining and confirming property rights of spouses. Availability of marriage contract prevents arising property disputes so long as property rights are clearly defined in the contract by spouses. In case of dissolution of

marriage, it is not required to refer the issues of property rights for consideration by court. However, if property rights specified in marriage contract have been violated, a spouse whose rights have been damaged may appeal to the court.

A new provision in the Family Code is the right of spouses to make a decision about the term of payment of child maintenance. A notary-certified agreement on child maintenance has a legal force, the power of which equals to the power of a writ of execution. One more innovation is the right of spouses to sign an agreement about the alimony to be paid to another spouse.

The introduced innovations have expanded rights of spouses and their opportunities to solve essential property and alimony issues. They are aimed at attaining a gender equality because they provide equal rights to spouses, irrespective of their gender. The special importance these innovations have for the protection of the rights of women. Frequently, the rights and opportunities of women as wives and spouses are the most infringed upon.

The rules of the labor law do not allow infringement of the rights of women. In particular, an employer has no right to refuse to employ a woman on the grounds of her pregnancy or of her having many children. The Labor Code also has some provisions that protect women from work in harmful or difficult conditions. It provides some other privileges for women. For instance, a pregnant woman should be transferred to an easier and less harmful work and she is to be paid an average salary received at her previous job. The law provides privileges for women with children under two years of age. However, in the opinion of foreign experts, the legal provisions in respect to pregnancy and maternity leaves and limitations to work in difficult conditions create some objective obstacles for employment of women in the non-state sector. These limitations were introduced in Uzbekistan in women's interests. Meanwhile, the prohibitive method of legal regulation does not always accord with the interests of women. Therefore, according to the amendments introduced in the Labor Code, a pregnant woman by her consent may work overtime or she may not use pregnancy or maternity leave or leave for upbringing children. Such an approach will eliminate the contradiction between the measures on protection of women's rights and the requirement to ensure an equal treatment of all individuals, irrespective of their gender.

The Civil Law declares the equal right of women to make deals, be involved in entrepreneurial activities, stand up for their royalties and inheritance rights, etc. Women are not restricted in their rights in family life: the right to have a family, to bring up children, to make a marriage contract at any stage of family life and many other things.

The Criminal Code institutes responsibility for a direct or indirect violation or limitation of rights or for introduction of direct or indirect privileges to citizens on the grounds of their gender, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, conviction, individual or social status. In particular, pregnancy of women who have suffered tortures and physical injuries is qualified as an aggravating circumstance. The Civil Code of the country specifies responsibility for the crime against a sexual freedom, such as rape, sexual harassment by a boss, or by a person on whom a woman depends in a material or other way.

The priority of human rights fixed in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been realized in additional mechanisms of human rights protection. Unfortunately, far from all citizens know about it. The task of human rights education, including education on gender equality issues, is to raise the awareness of citizens about the existing opportunities for the protection of their rights and freedoms.

The Convention "On Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979, defined discrimination of women as "any difference, exclusion or limitation by indication of sex, which is aimed at weakening or nullifying the recognition, use or exercise of human rights and main freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field by women, irrespective of their family status, based on equality of men and women"

Despite the afore-said achievements in protecting human rights of women as individuals, especially in a legislative area, a lot is yet to be undertaken in this respect in Uzbekistan. In everyday life, the legal rights of women are frequently infringed or limited - be it a refusal of employment on grounds of pregnancy or having many children, exclusion from work in the state sector (it is not a secret that the number of women in the highest bodies is unproportionally small), or preferences in promoting men rather than women when all conditions are the equal. Infringement of women's rights can occur everywhere - in the street, in

public places, at work and at home. A pretext may be an illegitimate child, an unmarried status, a manner to dress, use of cosmetics and many other things. In all cases like this, the rights of women are infringed by indication of sex. Many incidents of these kind are seen in the supervisory activities of the Republican procurator's office. Although some of them may look as not typical, even the existence of such facts are contradictory to the path of democratic development in society. Let us have a look at some cases, which according to international standards of human rights are considered to be discrimination against women.

In some families, because of parents' intolerance of the views and strivings of their daughters there exists a very tense situation. In one such family, fighting for her right a young girl committed suicide by jumping from the nine level building.

Debates in another family were caused by a girl's wish to shorten her long hair. The daughter insisted on cutting her hair, but the parents were categorically against it before her marriage. As a result the girl has cut her veins and died.

Sometimes women have to face discrimination in courts. For instance, when divorced spouses referred to court with a dispute about a jointly owned house, the court has made decisions in favor of the husband who got the house. The wife was supposed to get financial compensation of 15 thousand Soum, or a woman with two children was actually deprived of her right to a share of property which belonged to her on legal grounds. This court decision was appealed against and the case was sent for reconsideration by court.

Unfortunately, incidents testifying to discrimination against women in different areas of life are not few. In 1997, two years after Uzbekistan had signed the Convention «On Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women», the Ombudsman under the Uzbek Parliament conducted a check on the enforcement of this Convention in the Syrdarya Region. It discovered that not enough attention was given to observance of political rights of women and to the involvement of women in the state administration and public matters. It turned out that among the 395 deputies of towns and regions women constituted only 10.7%, and among law-enforcement bodies - 28 %. Out of 322,3 thousand women which lived in the Syrdarya Region, only 45 participated in the activities conducted by regional branches of public associations "Soglom Avlod Uchun", "Kamolot", "Makhallya", "Tadbirkor Ayol", etc. The numbers of kindergartens and groups of prolonged stay at schools had decreased. The level of legal consciousness of women turned out not to be high.

The exposed shortcomings are linked mainly with the difficulties of the transition period. The problem of women's employment is one of the gravest problems in existing conditions. Women are usually the first to be dismissed. This problem needs to be addressed vigorously especially for raising the professional status of women and for the creation of conditions for women to be able to combine their family duties with involvement in social life.

Many cases have occurred in the Tashkent Region when disabled women or women having many children were refused to get employment or when women's rights were violated in joint ventures, for instance, women were prohibited from having children. Such cases are explained mainly by a low level of the legal ness and by the absence of knowledge of the existing rules of the Labor Code, both by employers and by women.

As it has been mentioned, cases of discrimination of women in Uzbekistan are mainly due to a general level of culture, low legal awareness and the lack of understanding of that the protection of human rights is an inherent part of a general process of democratization of the public life. In addition to this, the bureaucratic style of thinking, incompetence of some leaders, negligence and superficial approach towards service duties, neglect of human interests and nihilistic treatment of laws and rules are also the reasons for existing cases of discrimination. The problems of discrimination by indication of sex concern not only mature women but also young girls. Different forms of rough treatment linked with relations between the sexes, including forcing an early marriage, pose a serious threat that the girls and women will be traumatized physically and psychologically, get sick or have unwanted pregnancies. Moreover, in such situations, women frequently have no opportunity to consult a doctor, to ask for a legal or other help. In such cases, women often are not only discriminated, but are subjected to violence.

The difficulties of studying this problem are connected with a difficulty of exposing such facts, especially in family life, because the victims of violence at home frequently prefer to keep silence. Some statistical data are already available, however, they are of a rather general character and are not differentiated according to subjects and objects of cases of violence. Such statistics can not give a clear idea about a true situation in this area. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the system of recording cases of violence against women, which should be based on a properly compiled questionnaire. It is necessary to review and to amend, when required, provisions and procedures of civil law in order to ensure that the laws and procedures of civil law would guarantee an efficient protection of women from violence of all kinds and responsibility for such crime, irrespective of relations or relative links between a person who committed crime and a victim.

In Uzbekistan, the sources of different violence against women are rooted primarily in stereotypes of mentality. The feeling of men's superiority that has been forming for ages in this region and the idea of so-called men's inherent superiority over the «weak reasoning» of women have been enhancing a despotic treatment by men. Such attitudes are especially strong in family life. Moreover, a traditional Uzbek family in the past has been «closed» for society.

Conformism of women supports a despotic power of men in the family and secures grounds for the infringement of women's rights and different forms of violence against women. Therefore there were practically no witnesses and especially defenders of woman suffering from a psychological or physical violence of the «home-maker» or other «senior» family members.

Uzbek woman was brought up in the spirit of obedience and subordination to the will of the elder and to men's power and after marriage she thought it to be natural. Devotedness to traditions supported her spirit of patience, enhancing her submissiveness to all humiliating mistreatment in family life. This feeling has been cultivated for ages and even now it still overwhelms many Uzbek women who do not dare to wash their dirty linen in public and suppress the sense of their own dignity.

Meanwhile the problem of family violence is far from being a private one. It concerns not only the rights of women but also the rights of children. According to a major principle of the Declaration of the Rights of Child adopted by the General Assembly in 1959, law and other means should ensure to children an opportunity to develop «in conditions of freedom and dignity». Can the environment of family violence be conducive for a spiritual and moral health of the growing children? The men brought up in such an environment frequently reproduce the acts of violence against women they witnessed in their own families. Such succession of generations is vicious by itself and is contradictory to the social advance.

The Republican Procurator's office is obliged to consider cases of family violence. Being systematically beaten and humiliated by her husband, mother in law and other relatives, life in the husband's family became unbearable for this woman. Three times during two years of her married life she left her husband's family and returned to her parents, but each time, she was persuaded by her parents not to destroy hearth and home and return back. Depending totally on her husband and household, being constantly offended and humiliated, she resolved to commit suicide. The last thing that pushed her for doing this were the abuses of her husband in reply to her request to visit her parents. She poured some petrol on herself and set herself on fire. The husband smothered the fire with a blanket but he did not find it necessary to call for a doctor. The husband's family tried to heal the woman with the help of family means. Only ten days after, when the woman lost her senses, they informed her parents who immediately called a doctor. The woman with burn injuries was brought to a hospital too late. In a doctor's opinion she could have been saved with timely referral to medical help. An investigation found that the deceased had been speaking about her difficult situation, warning that she would set herself on fire. Though the mother in law claimed that fire would not «affect» her. The husband of the deceased was brought to for criminal responsibility for having caused a suicide and for non-provision of a timely assistance and was sentenced to a 7 year imprisonment.

The absence of respect for the individual, cold-heartedness and indifference of those near-by were also guilty for what happened to this woman. Parents, relatives and neighborhood who for 2 years witnessed how this woman was humiliated did not lend a helping hand or render support. It should be makhallya committees, women's organizations and legal consultative centers to give her possibility to overcome the sense of despair and helplessness and to try to help a woman to find a proper way out of such a situation.

Another equally tragic case happened to a woman who was unable to give birth to children. Because of this there were constant quarrels and fighting in the family. A culmination of this was when the husband brought a common law wife to live in the house. Being unable to survive this humiliating situation, the wife set herself on fire. She was taken to hospital in a very severe condition, but it was not possible to save her life.

Another case is known of a women, constantly beaten by her husband, referred to the court asking for a divorce, which was never granted to her and the women died because of a severe beating. Obviously that relevant bodies should be more attentive to referrals of women, especially in cases of family violence. In this situation a timely divorce could have saved the unfortunate woman from a tragic death.

Violence in the family is linked not only to physical tortures but also with a psychological pressure. Humiliating treatment and cold-heartedness destroy the human dignity of a woman, make her suffer and provoke her to extreme measures, as far as suicide. No matter what type of violence exists in a family, it will surely oppress a woman. It would be wrong to explain it only by specific features of the national culture. It is a social phenomenon the sources of which are rooted in gender stereotypes, which for generations have formed in human consciousness and are linked with a disdainful treatment of women.

International bodies interpret violence as a violation of human rights. Such an approach to the treatment and understanding of violence against women provides grounds to call for assistance to the relevant state authorities and, first of all, to the law-enforcement bodies which should act for the protection of human rights and freedoms. Elimination of discrimination and violence against women is a necessary condition for any society to advance. Obviously, this task may be addressed only with an immediate involvement of the society as such, both men and women, by overcoming the negative stereotypes of their consciousness and behavior. The Government, in its turn, should ensure the gender problems to be considered in all draft strategies and programs so that an analysis of consequences were made before decision-making, including in respect to children and youth oriented programs.

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