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The Impact of the Post – Soviet Transition on Women in Mongolia

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Abstract

The study analyses the impact of the Post-Soviet political and socioeconomic transitions on women in Mongolia particularly in terms of the challenges facing them. It reviews the impact of Soviet policies on gender roles and relations in order to contextualize post-Soviet developments. It identifies the critical issues affecting women from the perspective of their overall empowerment and prospects for achieving gender equality in the context of Mongolian society. It looks at both positive and negative impacts of the transformation in economic, political and social structures on women's status. Gender relations affect social and economic functioning at all levels. Analyzing gender issues involve examining women and men in terms of the roles they play in society, roles which change as societies change. Overall, transition to a market economy has resulted in a widening of gender differences in the spheres of politics, the economy and social life. Since the early 1990s, female participation in political life has declined and women are 'practically invisible as partners in setting new "rules of the game"'. The position of women in the labor market has deteriorated. Women have lost jobs faster than men, remained unemployed for longer periods of time, and had fewer job opportunities in the private sector. Women have had a higher unemployment rate than men. Reductions in employment and pay have resulted in greater dependence on government benefits, though these have been eroding rapidly. Women's caring functions within the family have also increased substantially at the same time as their incomes and available social services have declined. Overall, there has been a deterioration of Women's status. Following a brief overview of situation and status of women in Mongolia before transition, this paper analyses the current status of women and the major issues affecting them

Keywords: Transition, Sum, Labour-market, Monkhhood, Gender-equality, Female representation, Social-services, Aimag, Tugrik, Female Unemployment, Wage scales.

Introduction

Women in pre-transition Mongolia

In the earliest history, sources indicate that women had considerably more equality with men than females in other East Asian societies. One of every four boys joined the Lamaist celibate monk hood, a practice that restrained Mongolia's fertility rate. However by the early twentieth century, the status of women have eroded.

The dynamics of gender equality in Mongolia can be characterized as a sequence of historical periods. Equality was rapidly promoted after the 1921 Revolution; achieved impressive results in the 1920s and 1930s; underwent a period of regression in the 1940s; was then re-promoted, and since 1989, has experienced a period of retrenchment. The dynamics have not been linear, but the results have been dramatic in a region of the world where women have always been subordinated to men economically, socially and politically. In comparison to even developed countries, Mongolia's achievements are notable. Following the 1921 revolution, women gradually achieved equal opportunity with men in education and employment. Women could and did dissolve marriages, confident in the knowledge that state-provided childcare services would ensure that their lives were not disrupted or their progress impeded. Large families were recommended since the socialist ideology included efforts to build a large workforce, and all Mongolians naturally wished a larger population to fill the vast territory of their country. Under socialism, women were rewarded for having four or more children. Traditionally families were large, but great health risks and limited

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Availability of contraceptives played important roles. The socialist policy of education, encouragement of women to have large families, support for women to enter the industrial workforce and more political decision making power did not relieve women of their traditional tasks in the home, however, thus frequently giving women a double workload.

Educational achievements for both boys and girls were impressive in 1923 Mongolia's first secondary school had only five female students, but only five years later the number had risen to 558. Education of women was emphasized and their participation in politics and decision-making was encouraged. In 1931 about 40 percent of school enrolment were female and out of 600 people elected to local public bodies 30 percent were women, two of these as aimag governors. By 1969, 76 percent of all women were literate and by 1989 the literacy rate for the entire population, both male and female, had risen to 96 percent. (It is now reported to be 96 percent, but surveys show that this figure may be exaggerated) and forty three percent of university and technical college graduates were females.

Educational achievements are also reflected in enrolments in higher education; women constitute 50 percent of mathematics students, 63 percent of trade and business students, 78 percent of foreign language students, 73 percent of medical students, and 76 percent of pedagogical students. At the entire college level, women constitute more than three-quarters of all enrolments. While women account for just under half of Mongolia's workforce, they dominate in the banking, health and education sectors (60-80 percent). Women also predominate in several subsectors, notably communications, trade, technology, utility services, public canteens and insurance. Surprising it may be for foreigners in Mongolia to see that, for instance the vast majority of construction workers are women, as are painters and other occupational groups that in Western society are usually dominated by men.

These tendencies of education and occupation are not only prevalent in the cities (Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, Erdenet), but also in aimag and sum centers. About 45.1 percent of the female population lives in rural areas and roughly 225,000 women are herders. In rural areas women typically are occupied within the public administration, for instance as doctors, veterinarians, teachers, drivers and shop assistants, while only a few run private businesses. Some rural parents valued education for their daughters because it offered the girls an avenue of escape from the demanding and difficult life led by women in a pastoral economy. Also among herders women are usually well educated; most have 8 to 10 years of schooling. Many have 3 to 4 years of higher education as teachers, veterinarians, engineers or nurses. Almost all women can therefore read and write- skills that have gained new importance after the privatization of livestock and the need to cope with the mechanisms of a market economy.

Table.1: Literacy rates of the population aged 10 years and above, 1963-89 (Percentages)

Year	Total	Male	Female
1963	72.6	80.5	64.8
1969	82.1	88.9	75.3
1979	93.3	96.5	90.2
1989	97.0	98.4	95.7

Source: National Statistical Office, Literacy and Education of Mongolia's Population, 1997

Health care

In health care, medical services were provided by the state for men and women alike throughout the county at *sum* (local district) level. Improved health care during the socialist period resulted in a large increase in life-expectancy rates between the 1920s and 1990, rising by six years between 1960 and 1990. The different needs of males and females were reflected in the provision made for maternal and child health; pre-natal rest-homes were set up in all *sum* and maternity leave was generous. Over 90 percent of rural women gave birth in hospitals. This provision resulted in a decrease in maternal death rates from 170 per 100,000 live births in 1970 to 120 in 1990, and a decrease in infant mortality. The ratio of doctors to the general population increased dramatically, so that in 1990, there were more than 6000 physicians, three quarters of whom were women

Decision-making and public life

The socialist period saw an increase in female participation in decision-making and public life. In 1925, the first women were appointed to positions in local government and in 1929, one was appointed as a member of the People's Supreme Court. In 1931, 30 percent of local government officials, including two *aimag*(provincial) governors, were women. Later on, quotas of female representation were legally guaranteed in parliament, in ministerial posts and at government and *aimag* levels, though there were proportionately fewer women than men to be found in the most senior posts.

Employment

Employment was guaranteed by the state for both men and women (communist ideology held labor to be a duty of all citizens) and conditions were established to enable women to undertake work outside the home. These included the provision of kindergartens and day nurseries in both cities and rural communities, and state support for the care of the elderly and disabled (usually the responsibility of women rather than men). At the same time, an official list of jobs and standards for women (prepared in 1964 and 1985) drew a distinction between men's and women's work in the employment structure. Pay was similar for men and women and wage differences were small, characteristic of the compressed wage scales of socialist economies though difference operated through the allocation of additional rewards, benefits and privileges. Wages were centrally controlled and remained little changed throughout the 1980s— monthly wages in the material sector rose only from an average of 526 tugriks in 1981 to 568 tugriks in 1989. By the late 1980s, women in Mongolia had achieved a measure of equality and education greater than many other Asian countries.

Female population in Mongolia 1998

1,198,217 females (50.4 percent of the total population of 2,179,576)

Age structure of the female population

11 percent (132,411) over the age of 50.

42 percent (504,879) aged between 20 and 49

47 percent (560,927) aged 19 or below

36 percent (430,997) aged 14 or below

Total urban population 1,252,300 (52.0 percent)

Total rural population 1, 134,700 (47.5 percent)

Life expectancy: females 65.4 years, males 62.1 years.

Number of female-headed households (1997):

51, 732 (14.7 percent of all households).

The Effect of the Transition on Women Unemployment

Females have a slightly higher but similar unemployment rate to males. It is higher for three out of the five years given but the difference in male-female unemployment rates is small (an average of 0.4 per cent compared to the average of 6.0 percent for other transitional countries referred to earlier). The rates of female unemployment are in fact similar to those in Western countries but those for male unemployment are higher. A worldwide trend is for female labour force participation rates to move closer to those of males although there are still significant differences between male and female work by sector, occupation and type. Female labour force participation is strongly influenced by gender differences in the definition of work in different countries, particularly in the informal sector and in agriculture, where it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between women's housework and unpaid work. In general, women tend to be in the minority in industry but occupy a high proportion of service jobs. The greater availability of part-time work in service jobs attracts more women who often have less opportunity to receive training for changing employment. Are these general trends to be found in Mongolia? As can be seen in Table below women in Mongolia predominate in some occupations (services, finance and trade) and men in others (industry, construction, telecommunications and transport). Women have also moved into new areas of employment such as finance and real estate.

(Female employment (2000)	
<i>Sector Percentage of female</i>	
<i>Employees</i>	
Hotels and catering	79.8
Education	66.3
Health and social services	64.9
Financial institutions	61.2
Trade (wholesale and retail)	54.2
Public services	50.3
Agriculture and hunting	46.8
Real estate	45.0
Civil service and armed forces	42.4
Industry	41.2
Processing	34.9
Electricity and natural gas	30.3
Mining	39.6
Construction	39.6
Telecommunications and transport	38.5

While women predominate in numbers in some sectors, they are likely to be in the minority in senior positions or management roles. Where employment is within the state sector (such as education, healthcare and social services) retrenchment of staff, as sector budgets have been cut, has affected women more than men as a result of the composition of the labor force. Today there are indications that women who dominated in the banking, health and education sectors have lost jobs or that their positions have become less desirable. The public sector now has little capacity to pay reasonable wages, and jobs as teachers, doctors and public servants are losing prestige. In recent

years women have experienced that urban positions formerly available have slipped out of their reach and that their work is more secretarial than executive in character. Young women seeking work find the search difficult. Also Young women can no longer count upon the material health care and childcare supports which their mothers took for granted. Managers of privatized firms are becoming increasingly reluctant to hire women of child-bearing age or with children. This trend is not easily reflected in statistics. Women make up 52 percent of all registered unemployed. And, although official unemployment was 8.7 percent in 1994, actual unemployment is twice as high. According to survey conducted in 1999 by the SantMaral Foundation, the most respected polling organization in the country, the first cause of concern for women was unemployment which was followed by poverty and education. Their own economic conditions were their most pressing problems. Unemployment often has devastating consequences; although gender unemployment breakdowns for the unregistered unemployed are difficult to obtain, collateral evidences suggests that joblessness had slightly more effects on women. A report commissioned by one of the leading women NGO's noted that because of "privatization and selling off of governmental shares in pivotal enterprises, women in the labor force became far more vulnerable than before. The private sector industries that have sprouted in the 1990's employed some women but often under unfavorable circumstances. They occasionally hired women as temporary workers, thus eliminating most, if not all, benefits, including insurance. Even when they employed women fulltime, they occasionally took advantage of them- for example, depriving them of overtime pay. Thus women working in the private sector employment preferred to return to state employment.

During the transition, the nation's leadership elite has become conspicuously more male in composition; the political leadership is now entirely male to the extent that in 1995 there was not one woman of ministerial or vice-ministerial rank, and only three out of 76 members of the parliament were women- a fall from 24.9 percent under the previous system to 3.9 percent after the first democratic free election in 1992. (In the June 1996 elections, the number of women in parliament increased to 7). Women still wield less policy-making power than 50 years ago; only 11.7 percent of the members of the Supreme Court are women, only 11 percent of those in the diplomatic service are women and no woman is a governor of an aimag. Only one out of 342 sums have a female governor.

Women's Health

All health services deteriorated after 1990 and real per capita expenditure on health reduced by 42 per cent in the early 1990s. Mortality rates have increased for males and females, higher for males than female, even for males from age thirty onwards. Following transition there has been a decline in nutrition and dietary balance, availability of safe water and sanitary services, and an increase in sedentary life style. High maternal death rates are identified by the World Health Organization as an indicator of gender inequality. From 1990 onwards, there was a decline in maternal health care and facilities and an increase in maternal malnutrition, protein deficiency, and post-delivery toxemia, all leading in turn to an increase in birth

complications, post-natal anemia, premature birth and infant malnutrition and morality. The maternal mortality rate doubled between 1990 and 1994; the rate for 1997 has returned to near pre-transition levels of 140 per 100,000 births in 1985

Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births, 1992-97.

Year: 1992,1993,1994,1995, 1996,1997

Maternal mortality rate: 200, 240, 212,185, 176, 143

Source: Source: National Statistical Office

There is some regional variation in maternal mortality. It is twice as high in rural as in urban areas, partly due to the rise of home deliveries resulting from the decline in local services (the maternal mortality rate is higher for home deliveries). By 1994, only 40 of the 392 rest homes in the *soums* were functioning. Some had reported by the late 1990's but with poor building and services, and "women are not happy with them," a UN study noted. By contrast, infant mortality rate has declined to 29.5 per 1,000 live births, but this apparent reduction is likely due to deaths, particularly in the countryside, where there are few doctors. Among older women with high risk pregnancies, and due to under reporting of the falling birthrates, particularly. Infant mortality rates vary throughout the country according to location (rural and urban) and social groups: 'A child born in Ulaanbaatar, to a mother with tertiary education, aged between 24-34 years, living in an apartment with tap water has the best survival chances In order to improve health services, a reform of the health service is in progress, switching priorities from highly specialized healthcare and large urban-based hospitals to more local, family-doctor based, primary healthcare services and health promotion rather than disease treatment.

Family planning and birth control

During socialist times, abortion or abstinence from sex were the main means of birth control. In 1943, abortion was made legal for women with serious health problems. During the centrally-planned economy, the government had encouraged large families as a matter of policy and the shortage of contraceptives caused women to have children at too early or too late an age (under eighteen or over forty) and to have inadequate spacing between births. Women considered pregnancies a civic duty rather than an individual family decision and thus had an inordinate number of births. The high fertility levels which failed to take into account the health of the individual women, often led to maternal mortality. There is a high rate of abortion (336 reported per 1,000 in 1995) and low use of preventative methods of family planning. The demand from women for contraceptives and information about them is high. Sex education is seldom, if ever; taught in schools and only to a very limited extent within families (it has been unusual for mothers and daughters to speak of such 'taboo' subjects, especially in rural areas). During the 1990s, there has been an increase in unmarried mothers (now 12-13 percent of mothers giving birth). Birth control within Mongolian society is most often seen as the female's responsibility and condom use is low. About 30 percent of reproductive-age women use contraceptives, and of these, 80 percent use Intra-Uterine Devices. During transition, sexually-transmitted diseases have increased and their

incidence is probably under-recorded. The low level of condom use increases the vulnerability of the population to the HIV virus though the number of known cases so far is very small. The responsibility for family planning and sexual health tends to be seen as belonging to females rather than shared with males, and education and awareness-raising programmes for males have been few. Inequality in allocation of responsibility for sexual health is illustrated by an attempt in September 1997, by the city authorities in Ulaanbaatar, to impose compulsory HIV testing for all females in the city between the ages of 15 and 40, though not for males.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Unemployment and poor health in a society without unemployment benefit, where medicine is expensive and where a healthy diet is difficult to obtain, have led to social deprivation and more than one in four people lives in poverty. Social problems that were not known to exist before have developed or increased. Alcoholism, the number of street children, prostitution and the crime rate has all increased. Moreover, as one study notes, "there is a low level of awareness among staff of enforcement agencies such as police officers to combat violence against women," and "the issue of violence against women has not made much headway within the mainstream institutions and organizations, whose decision making instances are male dominated. Abortion was legalized in 1989 and increased dramatically, but after having peaked in 1991 with 31,217 abortions the number is now 17,257, which is less than prior to 1989. The same tendency is seen from the number of divorces: in 1986-92 the rate increased by one third, but is now back to the level of 1985; 731 in 1994. There were 2,243 cases in 1990, and about 6,000 in the first quarter of 1993; underreporting is widely suspected.

The previous system rewarded women with many children. Certain benefits are still granted to women with four or more children, mainly retirement at the age of 50 (as compared to 55 for others) and higher pensions. But today neither common salaries nor pensions are adequate to support a large family, let alone secure the children a good education. For instance, an apartment may no longer be a natural fringe benefit of a good job, but has to be bought at prices in the range of 2-2.5 million tugrik, compared to a common salary of 20,000 tugrik per month.

The statistical information given above should only be seen as indicative of tendencies in the Mongolian society. Statistics are not easily collected due to the poor infrastructure of the country and the nomadic lifestyle, and therefore are not necessarily reliable. For instance, figures on unemployment can hardly be trusted when there is no unemployment benefit and no prospect of getting a job by being registered. For women the numbers are even less credible, since women on maternity leave (two years) are forced to apply for jobs because the maternity pension is but a meager supplement to the husband's salary. Pensions are generally low and cause bitterness among people who have worked all their lives only to end up in poverty. No pensions are given to single women, only the fathers are obliged to pay maintenance (in 1995, approximately 2,000 tg per child per month) until the child is 16. Widows may only receive a pension if their husbands died at work, not if they died in fights or accidents outside their place of work. Women who have four or more children may stop working

and receive a pension of 6,900 tg (8,700 tg in the city) which is not nearly enough to support a family. To sustain themselves and their families in this era of economic distress, some girls and women living below the poverty line turned to prostitution. One survey conducted in 1996, found 3,000 prostitutes in Ulaanbaatar, a figure that has surely risen with the decline in living standards since then. Prostitutes serviced Mongolian men, but the influx of foreign consultants and experts provided new and often wealthier clients. It was no accident that a large number plied their trade within a block of the Ulaanbaatar hotel, where many foreigners stayed. Ironically, some female college students became sex workers to cover the cost of their education, which the communist government had earlier offered gratis. Others were vulnerable to confidence men who sold them into prostitution in foreign lands. Street children appeared in the 1990s. By 2000, in a country in which, according to one journalist, "no one was homeless ten years ago" (that is in 1990), there were perhaps 6,000 such children in Ulaanbaatar alone. "In a culture where children are traditionally treasured and to be childless is considered devastating, the existence of street children is a source of anguish", one foreign observer noted. By the late 1990's Mongolian and foreign residents in Ulaanbaatar noticed "the voices of street children living underground among hot water pipes (that) echoed up in the manholes". Save the children- UK and other foreign organizations, as well as domestic agencies, sought to help by providing shelters, teaching the children brick making and other skills, starting literary classes, and founding summer camps, which also offered a rudimentary education and training for potential employment. World vision, another philanthropic organization, has erected bathhouses and provided food for a few of the children. The Mongolian government was either bereft of resources or often relied on private philanthropies or foreign aid organizations to cope with the street children.

Women and poverty

Poverty is a new phenomenon in post-1990 Mongolia. Loss of employment, high inflation and erosion of real earnings created new problems for households and caused many to fall below the poverty line. At the same time, the social safety-nets of socialist times fell away because of the lack of state funding. Taken together these circumstances resulted in the rise of poverty, a reduction in education and health care provision, a rise in malnutrition and social problems such as homeless children, alcoholism, family violence and prostitution. Groups vulnerable to poverty in Mongolia have been identified as orphans, female-headed households, the elderly without family, the physically handicapped, households with more than four children, the unemployed, and herders with small numbers of animals in remote areas. It is estimated that around 36 percent of the population in Mongolia is living below the defined poverty line though in some areas this proportion may be higher. Single heads of households, particularly women, are identified as a vulnerable group, especially if they have children. This matches a global study which concluded that, throughout the world, 'the strongest link between gender and poverty is found in female-headed households, which are a significant source of female poverty'. The number of female-headed households in Mongolia was 51,732 in 1997 (14.7 percent of the total), a large increase compared to

19,289 (4.5 percent of the total) in 1990 approximately 25 percent of those living below the poverty line. A quarter of them have six or more children and half belong to the poorest group in the population. The proportion of female heads of families with children under the age of 16 is increasing among the poor. Female heads of poor families include a high proportion of widows: 65-80 percent of all deaths in the age group 20-29 are male. It is also the case that many more households function in practice as female-headed households in cases where the men are unemployed or are unable to work because of ill-health or alcoholism. One factor in female poverty is that women are more likely to lose their jobs when firms reduce employee numbers. With unemployment, alcoholism, crime, and domestic abuse all on the rise, some women opted for divorce or were abandoned by their spouses. A survey in 1998 found that only one half of the 180,000 people between the age of sixteen and forty nine were married. The Pensions Law (1990 amendment) legislated that women with four or more children could be pensioned off from work on the grounds of being occupied in 'social care'. Although the law states that this is to be by agreement, it has made such women vulnerable to job-losses. In 1994, 55.8 percent of all 'retired' women of working age were those who were pensioned off because of the number of their children. Alongside this has been reduction in the social services which enabled women to work: state funded kindergartens, child-care and nurseries in urban and rural areas. Government allowances to the elderly and disabled have been eroded by inflation, increasing their dependence for care on their families, in practice mostly on women. Under pressure from international donors, the government reduced its budgets for health and education two sectors of economy that employed a significant number of women. The existing Maternal and Infant Law provides benefits for employed women who are pregnant: 101 days maternity leave with 400 tugriks a day, plus two years of child-care leave with no pay (but with social benefits allowance), during which time their jobs are retained for them. However, this entitlement is seen by employers as a hazard in employing them. Particularly in the private sector, employers are reluctant to comply with this and try to avoid employing young married women of child-bearing age or with children. Having scant support from any state safety net, some poor women survived via the informal sector. They set up stalls in food markets and sold clothing, jewelry, household goods, and fresh milk at kiosks or on the black market. In this connection, the World Bank developed programmes in its own words, "to assist women in adjusting to the transition to a market economy" and to promote "private sector growth, economic efficiency, and development of small and medium scale industries." The need for cash exacerbated women's travails. They had to pay for their children's schooling, including food, lodging, and materials if they attended boarding schools. During the communist era, the government had not charged for any of these educational expenses, but since the early 1990's, such subsidies have been discontinued, partly at the behest of international donors. The Constitution of Mongolia states equal rights for men and women. The law formally reflects the equality of women developed during socialist times and there are provisions for equal opportunity in education, employment and financial assistance for childbirth. However, women's role and visibility in public affairs has

significantly reduced since 1990. Following the national elections in 1992, the gender imbalance became more marked. Women's representation in parliament dropped from 25 per cent to 4 percent, rising later to 8 percent after the 1996 elections. During socialist times, a quota system for female representation had operated but this ceased after 1990, and though some women now advocate its return, others oppose it. In all government departments there are numbers of women to be found but mainly in lower positions. Only 11.7 percent of the members of Supreme Court are women, only 11 percent of those in the diplomatic services are women and no women is a governor of an aimag. Only one out of 342 sums has a female governor.

Women and education

Every citizen has the right to free primary and secondary education, according to Mongolia's constitution though the indirect and direct costs of education to households are rising. The education sector has been hard hit by the economic transition. The percentage of the state budget allocated to education fell from 22.9 in 1991 to 17.6 percent in 1999 and then climbed to about 19 percent in 2000, but the budget itself shrank because of the increased emphasis on limited government. Nonetheless, as of 2002, schools continued to close because of lack of funds. These reductions have clearly had an impact on teachers. Because the total number of teachers fell, while the absolute number of students increased, the teacher-student ratio has similarly increased from 1 to 21.4 in 1990 to 1 to 25.4 in 2001 (and in primary grades, the ratio was 1 to 31.8 in 2001) Reports accumulated throughout the 1990's of teachers not being paid for long stretches. One newspaper reported on may 14, 1999, that teachers in the second largest city in the country had not received their salaries in over two months. As of November 11, they had still not been paid. As a result teachers were not uncommon with teachers complaining about poor salaries, lack of health insurance coverage and inadequate heating facilities in their schools. The strikes would persist, for, as one leader argued early in 1997, "despite nearly 60% inflation since January 1996 remuneration has not been increased. Teachers begin to resign in the mid to late 1990's, and strikes persisted, with a major one in Ulaanbaatar in 1999. Differences have emerged in participation rates of boys and girls and between rich and poor *aimags*, rich and poor families, and urban and rural children. The gender disparity in education has widened to the disadvantage of boys, particularly in rural areas where their labor is needed for herding. From 1989 to 1995, enrolment rates overall fell from 98 percent to 84 percent in primary schools, and from 65 percent to 54 percent in secondary schools. In 1996, net primary school enrolment rates were 93.8 female and 92.9 male. At secondary school level, net enrolment rates were 65.5 percent female and 49.1 percent male. Cohort survival rates at the end of the primary cycle have declined to 80 percent. Participation rates favor girls increasingly as they progress from Grade 1 to Grades 8 or 10. The net enrolment rate in secondary education (1996) for rural boys was 41.6 percent for boys and 58.3 percent for girls. In 1996, 48,435 school-age children were out of school; of these, 20,660 (42.6 percent) were girls and 27,835 (57.4 percent) boys. The school drop-out rate is high, reaching over 25 percent at its worst point but now reducing. About 80 percent of out-of-

school children work in agricultural activities, usually herding animals. In terms of education staff, female teachers is in the majority (75 percent), though the majority of school principals and directors of aimag education administration are male (3 out of 22 education centre directors in 1998 are female) Teachers' pay, like that of all government employees, is low (the equivalent of 25-45 USD per month). The trend for more females to take up educational opportunity increases at higher levels of education. Higher education has expanded since 1993-4 (by 1997, there were over 36,000 full-time students) The public sector has grown by 46 percent and the private sector has doubled despite the introduction of student fees in 1995 and the transfer of costs to students. Public universities now receive only 10 percent of their funding from government. In contrast to other Asian countries, female students far outnumber males in Mongolia: 68 percent of students at public universities and 71 percent at private universities are female. However, this picture reverses itself for university staff, especially at senior levels. University teachers are predominantly male, except for teacher education and business studies courses. The proportion of female students at post-graduate level is much lower than for first degree courses. The trend is for males to enter the labour market earlier than girls. In the future, if the present pattern continues, levels of literacy and educational qualifications are likely to be one factor affecting women's ability to participate in the labor market is the availability of child-care. Places in nursery and kindergarten schools have reduced since 1990 and only 20 percent of children are provided with places. More schools are available through fee paying but many women and families cannot afford these. In 1990, 118,800 children enjoyed pre-school education facilities, but by 1996, the number had dropped to 68,000 and half the facilities had closed. This has implications for future labour markets and gender equity.

Continuing education for adults

Transition to a market economy has also created needs for new kinds of education and training, formal and non-formal, for adults. Transition requires policy-makers to re-think educational provision, priorities, delivery systems and use of limited finance in times of budget cuts. It provides an opportunity for innovation. One major initiative in non-formal education was the Gobi Women's project, targeted at nomadic and rural women since they were identified as a particularly vulnerable group in the move to a market economy. This project was funded by Danish Government aid and implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the Government of Mongolia. The project provided non-formal education for 16,000 women in six Gobi aimags through a system of distance education using print, radio, local learning groups and traveling tutors for income-generation, handicraft production, food-processing, healthcare, animal care, family planning and doing business in a market economy. Learning was located in the family and community context and much activity took place at the local level, supported by local committees. Evaluation of the project showed that it was an effective way of disseminating information and of supporting local learning groups and individual women, reaching remote people dispersed over large distances and generating centers of activity in sums. Though one goal of the project was income-generation, it was more successful in achieving

income-stretching than income-generation. However, some women did begin to trade and barter more, for example, making a camel saddle which could be traded for one camel or a few sheep. Educated women have bonded together to form non-governmental organizations to criminalize domestic abuse, to improve conditions for women in the labour force, to conduct research on employment, prostitution, child labour, and inequalities in wages for women. One such organization concluded that "there is a clear need for government policies and schemes to improve the position of women in the labour force" Foreign agencies, such as the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank, have experimented with provision of micro-credit for women seeking to increase their incomes and have issued reports on gender gaps in employment and sexual harassment in the workplace. An important change in the government has been the first appointment of women to significant positions in the Cabinet. Since 1999, two women have filled the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Finally, education favors women in future. More than seventy per cent of students in higher education are women, offering hope for their rise to managerial positions in the economy, health, education, and government and to attempts to address the problems faced by Mongol women.

Conclusion

While transition affects all citizens in Mongolia, women have tended to suffer more from these adjustment policies that eliminate subsidies for food, utilities, transportation and childcare. The transition to a market economy has been costly in terms of widespread impoverishment, social polarization, crumbling infrastructure, a rapid deterioration of living standards and social safety nets, deepening gender inequalities, and the decreasing presence of women in the government and formal political parties. Most women have tended to work in the less profitable and less high profile sectors of the market economy, including working as small-scale shuttle traders or as merchants in local market.

The transition has had a sharp impact on enrolment rates for girls and boys, eroding the gains of the socialist period. Enrolment rates have declined more sharply in males than female rates, particularly at higher grades. This is due to increased drop-out rates especially for boys. The underlying cause of increased school dropouts is the shift from state-based entitlements to family and market-based entitlements, which puts the burden of upholding the child's right to education on parents.

One of the most dramatic structural changes since the transition, the shift from industry back to agriculture and to a household livestock economy, has reduced investment in human capabilities and eroded girls' but more particularly boys' right to be educated. The preference for girl's schooling as better-off parents continue to support them through secondary and higher education may be because education is seen as the only avenue for girls' economic security and opportunity, whereas for boys, the livestock sector and the business opportunities it gives rise to, has expanded.

During the transition, women have lost entitlements to healthcare and lost jobs as health professionals. Maternal mortality rates particularly in remote rural areas have risen sharply and are still high. In the area of reproductive rights, the recourse to abortion, the rise in teenage pregnancies

indicate women's lack of empowerment over sexual relations and are a source of concern for their reproductive health.

Moreover, violence against women, particularly in the domestic sphere, is rising and there is still no legislative framework to address neither it, nor any meaningful public dialogue or debate concerning it which includes both women and men.

The stresses and dislocations under the transition have made relationships between men and women in the family more fragile. It has brought out the tensions in a relationship that is one of cooperation but also of conflict, as a result of disparities between obligations and resources, rights over decision-making and responsibilities between women and men.

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entitlements.” The private sector employees “often remove women rights to maternity benefit, specified leave and equitable pay and treatment in the workplace.” The minimal government championed by the market economy supporters could not enforce regulations about safety, health, and equitability, leaving many women workers vulnerable to the whim of their private sector employers. Women who were accustomed to job security and full contractual rights and obligations in the labor forces” found themselves without such social welfare guarantees in the marketplace. Another survey found that women faced “widespread sexually harassment at the workplace” and that “women do not complain through fear of losing a job and later risk getting their marriage dissolved.” (United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Women in Mongolia*, 21.) A weak government offered scant assistance to women confronted with such harassment. Many sources contended that wealthy or well-connected women receive the bulk of the credit offered through governmental and international donor programmes. It is difficult to gauge the extent of such favoritism, Liberal Women’s Brain Pool, *Women’s Empowerment*, p. 40.

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