

Women in Mongolia

Mapping Progress under Transition



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UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks to promote gender equality. It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas, by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.

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Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition

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List of Acronyms

NPAW = National Programme for the Advancement of Women
CCA = Common Country Assessment
CEDAW = Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMEA = Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)
GCSD = Gender Centre for Sustainable Development
LSMS = Living Standards Measurement Survey
MOSTEC = Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture
NCWNC = National CEDAW Watch Network Centre
NHDR = National Human Development Report
NSO = National Statistical Office
UNDAF = UN Development Assistance Framework
USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development
WIRC = Women's Information Research Centre

Glossary

aimag = province
bag = small rural settlement
deel = clothing
dzud = winter storm
ger = household, or home
hural or khural = legislative body
negdel = collective
soum = county
tugrug (MNT) = currency unit; currently there are approximately 1070 tugrugs to \$1US

Map of Mongolia



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Preface

I am pleased and honored to introduce *Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition*, a UNIFEM report on the experiences of the women of Mongolia in the context of the political and economic transformation of their country. There are a number of important reasons to celebrate the launch of this publication:

First, the publication represents an inspiring example of the way in which strong partnerships between Governments, women's groups and the UN can lead to action for the advancement of gender equality at the national level. The idea of mapping progress of Mongolian women in the transition sprang from a series of discussions held on the occasion of my visit to the country in 1999 at the invitation of the Government of Mongolia. The call for my visit was in itself a signal of the seriousness of the Government of Mongolia to address the needs of women. My consultations with Government and NGO representatives focused on the opportunities and challenges for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, with a view to identifying concrete ways in which UNIFEM could support the Government commitment to the Mongolian National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW). Our meetings culminated in a mutual commitment to work jointly towards strengthening economic security for women, developing new political leadership and representation of women in decision-making, and increasing protection of women's human rights through a review of legal frameworks and the justice system. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was subsequently signed between UNIFEM and the Government of Mongolia, formalizing our commitments and setting the stage for the development of this report.

Second, *Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition* was elaborated through a genuine consultative process between the women of Mongolia, the Government and the UN system in the country. UNIFEM is especially gratified that the report strongly builds on our own efforts to develop new tools of accountability for gender equality in collaboration with governments and civil society. More specifically, the publication represents the first national-level response to the findings and recommendations contained in UNIFEM's global report, *Progress of the World's Women 2000*, launched on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Special Session in June 2000, Beijing +5. This report takes our work further by analysing the impact of the policies of transition upon women in Mongolia, identifying specific needs and charting priorities for action.

The findings contained in *Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition* demonstrate that women's gains in past years have eroded since the transition in a number of areas. For instance, women's profile has increased among the unemployed while it has declined sharply in terms of political representation. While the costs of privatization have been felt by both women and men, albeit in different ways, the benefits have yet to reach women to the extent they have men. The report points to the links between women's greater job loss, higher unemployment and the increase in female-headed households living below the poverty line since 1990.

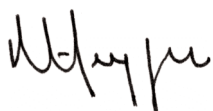
In addition, the reports finds that economic "shock therapy" in Mongolia has driven women into the informal sector where they must cope with greater income and health insecurities. Women in the rural areas face the greatest challenge as the decline of industry has forced families to depend on agriculture, particularly livestock

herding. Increased demand for labour in herding households obliges women to spend more hours in productive work while also taking on greater responsibilities for domestic and care work, owing to the sharp reduction of public expenditures on social services.

Identifying the challenges facing Mongolian women in the context of the economic transition is a first critical step towards designing effective responses. The report contains numerous recommendations, touching upon all spheres of women's lives. On the issue of violence against women, for example, while NGOs have become increasingly active, legislative frameworks are not in place and corresponding government action to protect the rights of women needs to be strengthened. The report emphasizes passage of a draft law on domestic violence and strengthening of the law enforcement and judicial systems as immediate priorities. In the case of women's economic activities, the report concludes that women have responded to the cashmere export market opportunities by taking up herding of cashmere goats and processing of cashmere hair. It recommends a full study of women's participation in this particular sector, as a potential entry point for policy and programme interventions for women's economic empowerment. It also highlights the importance of developing a national system to produce sex-disaggregated data that can shed light on the gender disparities across all areas covered by the report, including education, health, governance and women's rights. The need to build local expertise to analyse the data and propose gender-sensitive policy options is also emphasized.

As a follow-up to the findings of this report, UNIFEM is looking forward to assisting the Government of Mongolia in its review of the NPAW to ensure that it corresponds to the realities of Mongolian women's lives. An effort is also being made to build the local expertise for mainstreaming the priorities of the NPAW into the Action Programme of the Government, and strengthening capacity to identify indicators and collect sex-disaggregated data for monitoring. The report's findings are also expected to help strengthen coordination mechanisms of multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as well as bilateral and NGO programmes.

It is my hope that completion of this study heralds a new phase in the transition process, one where women will no longer bear a disproportionate burden of economic hardship nor be denied equal access to the benefits of emerging economic opportunities. The commitment and initiative of the Government of Mongolia and the civil society that it represents should serve as an example for other countries seeking to reverse the adverse impact of the transition on women. UNIFEM is honoured to be an active partner to these efforts and we remain committed to facilitating and lending our technical expertise towards advancing gender equality in Mongolia.



Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Director, UNIFEM

Chapter 1: Women in Mongolia: An Overview

On 27 September 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Government of Mongolia and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for cooperation in the implementation of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW). A common concern identified in the process of preparing the MOU was the inadequate information base for understanding the status of women and for developing policy interventions and monitoring outcomes. Thus a first step of the cooperation was to undertake a rapid Situational Analysis to examine the salient aspects of women's experiences in current-day Mongolia and highlight the crucial issues that have emerged and are being articulated by women

This study analyses the status of women in Mongolia, particularly in terms of the challenges facing them as the country undergoes transition. It identifies 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, social and political structures over the last decade on women's economic, social and political status, and highlights the commensurate changes in gender relations and women's participation and influence in these transition processes.

Following a brief overview of Mongolia and its social, political and economic history, this chapter outlines the current status of women and the major issues affecting them. Subsequent chapters look at each of these issues in depth. Thus Chapter 2 examines women's social status in the light of demographic

trends, focusing on education, health and the rise in gender-based violence. Chapter 3 analyses the economic position of women and the impact of the economic transition. Chapter 4 examines women's political status, in terms of political representation as well as their role in decision-making and policy formulation, focusing particularly on the National Programme for the Advancement of Women and its implementation. Chapter 5 pulls together the main issues and includes some recommendations for the empowerment of Mongolian women and the achievement of gender equality.

Mongolia: background and history

Mongolia is located in the centre of Asia and covers an area of 1.5 million square kilometres. It is the 18th largest country in the world in terms of surface area. The total length of its frontiers is 8,153 km, bordering Russia to the north and China to the south. Mongolia is one of 30 landlocked countries and the nearest point to the sea is about 1000 km. The average altitude is 1580 metres above sea level, 700 metres higher than the global average. Mongolia has diverse geographic zones, including the mountains (Altai), tundra, the taiga forest (Siberia), the Central Asian steppe and the Gobi desert. Nearly 90 per cent of the land area is pasture or desert, with 9 per cent under forest and 1 per cent arable. There are substantial reserves of copper, molybdenum, iron, phosphates, tin, nickel, zinc, tungsten, fluorspar and gold. Coal reserves are immense even by world's standards – at least 100 billion tonnes and potentially oil and gas.

Mongolia's climate shows sharp variation. It is

dry continental and has four distinctive seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. In January, the coldest month of the year, the air temperature sometimes falls to -45°C . In July, the warmest month, air temperature goes up to $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$. The daily temperature fluctuation reaches 30°C . Mongolia has considerable sunshine, averaging 250 days a year.

For thousands of years, the pattern of human settlement in Mongolia has been shaped by these agro-ecological and climatic conditions, giving rise to extensive, pastoral herding. Mongolia has one of the lowest population density in the world, 1.5 people per square kilometre. The total current population of Mongolia is 2.4 million, 50.4 per cent of which are women. There are 535,300 households, 54,530 of which are headed by women (1998 data). Roughly half of the total are herder households.

The present administrative system divides Mongolia into 22 *aimags* (provinces), 342 *soums* (counties) and 1,681 *bags* (rural settlements). The latter are dispersed settlements, many of them very remote. There are three large cities: the capital city Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan and Erdenet, the latter two along the main rail route in the Central region. A third (32.5%) of the population lives in Ulaanbaatar, and over half (51.5%) live in urban settlements, with the rest in rural areas.

The current situation in Mongolia needs to be set in a dynamic context of socio-economic and political transformations. Mongolia's political, economic and social evolution has been influenced by internal dynamics as well as by relations with bordering countries.

A unified Mongolia was forged by 1206 with the creation of the Mongol empire by Chingis Khan. In the 1730s when the Manchus defeated the Mongols, feudal relations were institutionalized. In 1921, with the collapse of the Manchu Qing dynasty and the proclamation of the People's Republic, Mongolia became the first country in Asia and after the Soviet Union to declare itself socialist.

Thereafter, constitutional, social, economic and

political change took place under the influence of the Soviet Union, transforming Mongolia from a nomadic pastoral economy and a feudal theocracy to an urbanized industrial and centrally planned one-party state. Livestock production was collectivized into state farms and mechanized. The state-provided economic and social infrastructure and services in rural areas led to the creation of urban settlements in rural provinces.¹ Civil and political rights as well as economic and social rights were guaranteed by the constitution, and citizens enjoyed extensive state-provided health and education, as well as social and employment protection. These developments led to significant transformations in the economic, social and political status of women and major achievements in human development.

The state-induced industrial transformation was brought about as part of the economic cooperation regime that guaranteed markets in the CMEA countries. A considerable proportion of the resources for state entitlements came from Soviet subsidies, which were estimated as "annually equivalent to 30% of GDP" (UNDP 2000a: 29). The breakdown of the former Soviet Union brought about the abrupt collapse of the system that underpinned Mongolia's social and economic infrastructure and activities. Russian aid was curtailed along with concessional supplies of petroleum and other raw materials. In addition, Mongolia lost its guaranteed markets with the dismantling of CMEA.

The response to this crisis was what has become known as the "shock therapy" of transition (ibid.). The rupture with the regime forged over nearly seven decades (1921-1990) was abrupt, in the economic, the social and political fronts. When production could not be sustained under the new conditions, the formal state sector shrunk dramatically through closures, retrenchment and privatization. The shock therapy consisted of policy measures which triggered a rapid

¹ Before 1921, there were 5 *aimags* and 100 *hushuuns* or administrative units within *aimags*; today there are 21 *aimags* and 342 *soums*. Since Chingis Khan's reign, these local units were responsible for the management of pasture land.

process of market liberalization and privatization of state-held assets—mainly livestock, and state industrial and agricultural enterprises—as well as macroeconomic stabilization measures. Prices were liberalized and a private banking system created, before the achievement of macroeconomic stability (UNDP 2000a). Import liberalization suddenly further exposed hitherto protected industries to the rigours of foreign competition. Mongolia joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1997.

The transition decade has two broad periods: the first between 1990 to 1995, when output, income, employment fell dramatically, with devastating effects on living standards of women, men, girls and boys; and the second from 1995 onwards, when macroeconomic indicators have begun somewhat to improve. Box 1, which presents the major trends since the transition, shows that there has not been a recovery to the pre-1990 situation. Apart from the contraction of the economic base, what is striking is the de-industrialization of the country and the rising share of the primary sector, extractive industries and agriculture, and more recently, trade, transport and services. The other striking feature is the deregulation of the economy and the concomitant growth of the private informal sector—which has not, however, offset the shrinking formal state sector. In the wake of the loss of Soviet assistance, multilateral and bilateral development agencies have stepped in to cover some of the financing gap and provide technical assistance. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has extended two Structural Adjustment Loans to Mongolia.

The collapse of the Soviet system created a moment for fundamental and rapid economic restructuring along the lines of a proactive neo-liberal policy agenda, with a minimal role for the state. It also opened the space for swift political restructuring, which saw the dissolution of the one-party system and the creation of a multiparty parliamentary democracy system, and a national parliament, the *Ikh Khural*.

A new Constitution in 1992 established the basis

for a pluralistic society respectful of human rights and freedoms. The Constitution not only endorsed the rights instruments inherited from the Soviet period and consolidated human rights contained in the international bill of rights, but also, progressively, includes the rights to solidarity and the right to a safe and healthy environment. Administrative controls over the physical movement of persons and goods within and across borders were considerably relaxed. These political reforms were shaped in a context of vigorous participation in debates and consultations by an emergent civil society. They reflect the agenda-setting of active and vibrant NGOs, with active links to regional and global networks, and the growth of an independent and dynamic media. Women's NGOs, who have been particularly active in this process, especially valued the opportunity to create a new system of governance that would promote individual choice, initiative, freedom of expression and of movement.

The transition project has been characterized as the creation of a democratic society underpinned by a market economy. The Constitution of 1992 embraces both economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights and the linking of human rights to human development is increasingly part of the discourse as well as of the agenda for national development and the basis for development cooperation.

An intrinsic part of a rights framework is the concomitant obligations and responsibilities of the parties who have contracted to it to defend, uphold and promote these rights. The 1990s UN Conferences have provided the setting for making commitments for human development and for the upholding of rights which explicitly take into account the context of economic and political restructuring in many states. In the face of an economic climate that has suddenly become very harsh, the dominant approach to economic management so far still seems to be the pursuit of macroeconomic stabilization, structural reform and market-led economic growth. There is no discernible economic and social rights conditionality, beyond a social

Box 1: Mongolia and Core UN Human Rights Instruments

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (adopted in 1966 and ratified in 1974)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996/1974)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979/1981)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989/1990)

safety net approach for vulnerable groups. It is this policy agenda and practice that have led to the outcomes detailed in subsequent chapters. How to inflect this development path to create synergies between human rights and human development is a challenge that is just beginning to be tabled in mainstream development.

Human rights before and after 1990

Before 1990, Mongolia became a party to 29 human rights treaties including CEDAW. These treaties and conventions have provided a framework for civic and political rights on the one hand and social and economic rights in the other. The outcomes in relation to civil and political rights for women have included the right to vote, to participate in public life and the setting of quotas for women in parliament.

Social and economic rights improved in the context of a transformation of the country's economic and social structures. Together with industrialization and urbanization, there was extensive provision of state social and economic services in health, education, transport and communications. In the social sector, the notable gains were in housing, social protection and employment rights. As a result, by the end of the 1980s, Mongolia had a high ratio of parliamentary seats for women (20-24%); high literacy rates; high and rising enrolment ratios for both women and men; rising shares of women at all levels, rising levels of educational attainment by women. In addition, employment rates in both gender stereotypical and non-gender stereotypical occupations and sectors were rising while

maternal mortality and infant mortality rates (sex-specific indicators) were falling.

Since the 1990s, Mongolia has endorsed agreements at major international conferences - in particular the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. Some of the conference commitments have special relevance to the transition period in relation to women's economic and social advancement:

- Commitment to providing secure and sustainable livelihoods;
- Commitment to minimize the negative effects of economic reform programmes;
- Commitment to eradicating poverty;
- Commitment to women's equal access to land and other property;
- Commitment to measuring and valuing unpaid work;
- Commitment to corporate responsibility.

The Conferences have led to the setting of time-bound targets particularly in health and education. While there are no international targets for women in the economic domain, a target of 30 per cent has been set for women's share of seats in national legislatures.

Three core indicators have been identified to monitor progress in meeting commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women as part of a set of 40 core indicators for the UN Common Country Assessment Indicator Framework, which was adopted in 1999. These core indicators can be taken to be core indicators of social, political and economic status respectively, and constitute the backbone of the situation analysis of women in Mongolia. They include:

- The ratio of girls' secondary school enrolment ratio to boys' secondary school enrolment ratio;

- Women's share of parliamentary representation;
- Women's share of paid employment in industry and services.

An additional commitment is to disaggregate data by sex for all remaining 37 indicators.

The benchmarks of women's equality used in UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2000* (UNIFEM 2000) are a female/male net secondary school enrolment ratio of 95-105; women's share of parliamentary representation at 50 per cent; and women's share of paid employment in industry and services between 45 per cent and 55 per cent.

The ratio of girls' secondary school enrolment ratio to boys' secondary school enrolment ratio

There is a reverse gender gap in Mongolia, indicating that girls' share is higher than boys' share. Indeed Mongolia's ratio is higher than the target range for gender balance, 95 per cent to 105 per cent. However, the girls' secondary enrolment rate, although high, is still below the target of 95 per cent (80.9% as of 1998). This target in respective enrolment rates in addition to shares is to ensure that gender equality is not achieved at the same time as drops in these capabilities for both men and women. It is to ensure a leveling up of achievements, not a leveling down in the drive to reach equality.

Women's share of parliamentary representation

This share has declined from 23 per cent in 1990 to 3 per cent in 1992 and has risen to 10 per cent in 2000, but it is still half that of 1990 and far from the international benchmark of 30 per cent. The decline is the result of canceling the quota system set up in the Soviet period to ensure some representation by women.

Women's share of paid employment in industry and services

While this indicator is one of the three core indicators under UNDAF, "there are no internationally agreed time bound targets for gender equality and women's

empowerment in employment" (UNIFEM 2000: 71) A range of between 45 and 55 per cent can be taken to mean that equality has been achieved in employment. In Mongolia, women's share is within the range but has fallen since 1989, indicating both the decline of industry and industrial employment, and women's declining share within the sector.

Up to 1990, Mongolian women experienced high levels of achievement in each of the core indicators. Since then, the declining levels or the deteriorating underlying situation are a result of the transition measures, the pace and sequencing of these measures. The analysis and the interpretation of these indicators, their movement over time, the identification of complementary indicators and information gaps yield a more detailed, comprehensive and sobering picture of the situation of women as a result of the transition. The main outcomes and impacts of the transition on the economic, social and political status of women can be summarized as follows.

The social status of women

The interpretation of the reverse gender gap in education as an indicator of women's empowerment and men's disadvantage in education is complex. Education is often seen as an important lever in empowering women and in raising their social status beyond the traditional attributes which ascribe status to women, such as bearing numerous children. The implication of this reverse gender gap in education has to be set in the context of many other social trends, including falling fertility and family size, the rapid rise in female-headed households, which constituted 10 per cent of all households in 1998 (a 24% increase since 1995) and the largely youthful character of the migration towards Ulaanbaatar on the one hand and the *ger* settlements in rural areas, and away from small urban settlements in rural areas.

The critical issues raised during focus group discussions concerned the ability of women to generate and exercise choices in inter-personal gender relations

given the trends in domestic and gender-based violence, abortion, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The gender imbalance at higher levels of education was also seen as problematic in terms of the social, intellectual and emotional partnerships that educated women could develop with men. The gap between the laws and instruments that establish economic and social rights and the low level of implementation was interpreted as an indicator of the inability and/or reluctance of women to affirm and to claim rights. One pervasive issue was the attitudes towards women's presence in the public arena and women's own sense of their self worth.

In economic and financial terms, despite the existence of a reverse gender gap, the returns to women from education may be lower given women's position in the occupational and decision-making hierarchy in formal employment and the cluster of indicators which point to a much lower share of income for women. The relationship between achievements in education and pay, position and prospects for promotion and advancement in employment and business appear tenuous.

The economic status of women

In the absence of specific targets for economic status, the report examines women's economic status in the light of UN conference commitments (see UNIFEM 2000), which are particularly pertinent to the situation of women in transitional economies.

Commitment to providing secure and sustainable livelihoods and to minimize the negative effects of economic reform programmes

There has been falling output and government expenditure, falling personal income and higher cost of living and women have been affected more adversely than men. The high share of women in industry disguises the fact that women's employment in manufacturing has declined in absolute terms and more sharply than men's.

Women have a precarious foothold in formal private markets, disadvantaged from the start from a very much lower endowment of state-disposed assets than men, as a result of how privatization was conducted, and a much higher and increased burden of domestic sector obligations. Like men, women are exposed to the risks inherent in private markets, without the support of the measures necessary to take up private market opportunities. These measures are the complementary services that the state and private sector organizations can provide, such as economic infrastructure, information, training, marketing, product development and other services, which have been run down in the transition, particularly in the urban settlements.

In addition, there has been a sharp reduction in state child-care provision, which constrains women's ability to enter and compete "freely" in markets. At the same time, women face discrimination in recruitment in private markets because of their child-bearing and child-care obligations.

Women's unemployment and poverty is a new phenomenon, leading to a large-scale shift to the informal sector and to unpaid work in the domestic/household sector. Retrenchment in the public sector has not been accompanied by measures to retrain women. With the shrinking of employment and income in the formal private sector, women and men in urban areas have turned to the informal sector to set up businesses and seek employment. Women make up a majority of the self-employed in the informal sector, where competition drives prices and costs down through lower personal income tax and social fees. The majority of traders do not pay social insurance and health insurance. Precarious present earnings are at the cost of future livelihood security, social and health protection.

At the micro level, the domestic unpaid sector has largely absorbed the shock. There has been a shift into the informal sector and into the domestic sector, much of which unaccounted for and unsupported. The transition has largely depended on intensified, and arguably unsustainable use of both natural resources and women's labour. Women's labour has intensified

with the growth of the livestock economy. It has also intensified through caring for others, as health, education and child-care services have been reduced, particularly at the *aimag* level and user fees have been introduced. Health indicators, in particular maternal mortality rates, have deteriorated over the transition, from 131 per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 158 per 100,000 live births in 1998.

At the same time, concentration on natural resources as the sole means of livelihood has increased the vulnerability and exposure of rural women, men and children to disasters such as severe winter storms (*dzuds*) induced by climate variations and worsened by the degradation of pasture land and the collapse of supporting livestock and services.

Commitment to eradicating poverty

Poverty is a new phenomenon in Mongolia, and it is disproportionately female. The poorer the households, the higher the proportion of female-headed households and there has been a sharp rise in the proportion of female-headed households. Poverty is due both to unemployment and falling incomes, and in female-headed households, loss of income earners in the household, the loss of state entitlements, deteriorating health and education and the erosion of the natural resource base. State social transfers are a minor share of poor household's income. The poverty profile is accompanied by increasing disparities along gender, age and regional lines, as a result of exclusion from market sources of provisioning. There is a poverty alleviation programme with a special component for female-headed households and vulnerable groups. However, the dominant policy approach to poverty in terms of vulnerable groups and safety nets needs to be revisited. This report offers many avenues for revisiting the processes and dimensions of poverty.

Commitment to women's equal access to land and other property

The privatization of herds and housing and state enterprises, the disposal of state assets through direct allo-

cation, vouchers and auctions have overwhelmingly benefited men, as heads of households. This has important consequences for women's ability to mobilize collateral in credit markets. The Family Law does however provide for equal sharing of property acquired in marriage.

Commitment to measuring and valuing unpaid work

The increase in women's time and energy workloads with the shrinking of the formal state sector employment and income, the expansion of the informal sector and domestic sector have been a cause for concern among women's groups and agencies concerned with human development issues. A forthcoming UNDP-supported time-use study, although limited to one time period (spring), will facilitate the illumination of gender differences in time use and activities and the strategies women and men use to sustain livelihoods during the transition.

Commitment to corporate responsibility

Both employment and reproductive rights legislation has been put in place but its implementation seems so far to be avoided by the as yet small corporate sector. In the much larger informal sector, the notion of corporate responsibility does not exist.

The political status of women

The low and declining share of parliamentary seats points on the one hand to the nature of the political machinery, the nature of recruitment and the entire selection process of candidates for political parties. It also highlights the issue of the financial, social and political resources a candidate needs. There is a link between the entry of women and the treatment of women's issues by the political parties, who relegate women's issues to the social sphere and in terms of a vulnerable group in need of protection. Women's perceptions are that they are discriminated against as women, or that they have little legitimacy as leaders in the political sphere. These factors inhibit their choice to

exercise their rights to become candidates and their capability to function as decision-makers.

The dispiriting evolution in the indicator for political status does not however capture some of the gains and the consolidation of civil and political rights since the transition. Nor does it show women's initiatives in key issues and their dynamism in NGOs. The gains are seen in terms of the exercise of more freedom of choice and expression and the open spaces created by institutions such as the media.

While the institutions for governance, the legislature, the judiciary, the executive as well the laws for upholding rights have been put in place and developed, the institutional mechanisms and the capacity for effective implementation have lagged behind. Where policy frameworks exist, such as the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, the institutional machinery is still not functional. The capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming by women actors and advocates and within state mechanisms has yet to be generated and mobilized. Women and the national women's machinery have not been able to mobilize effectively so far to promote and uphold rights and to influence the processes and outcomes of the transition.

Chapter 2: Women's Social Status

From the perspective of Mongolian women today, representations of women in Mongolian history and culture reveal many contrasts, forged by both the nomadic culture and a feudal social organization. In contrast to neighbouring cultures, they do not convey a picture of women's subordination but are dominated by the icons of noble women.¹ However, except for queens and wives of noblemen, who were involved only as consorts and mothers of rulers, most women were not involved in macro-level decision-making. Women were excluded from public life, their status outside the household was low, and their political and spiritual rights were denied (UNESCO 1990).

During four centuries of feudal theocracy, Lamaist Buddhism played a major role in Mongolian society. Herders were serfs, bound to fiefdoms by structures emanating from the theocratic and aristocratic class. Almost every two boys born to a family was customarily assigned to Lamaist celibate monasticism (44% of the male population). This custom contributed to the exceptionally low fertility rate and the small population size.

Confined to the private sphere of family and kinship networks, women's social status was affirmed through motherhood. Among herder families, the social value placed on women's role in the family and on motherhood was grounded in the nature of nomadic pastoral-hunting societies. The remoteness of settlements, the circular migration patterns associated with livestock management and the sparseness of the population scattered over vast distances in inhospitable terrain made the household - the *ger* - the locus of survival.

Women's status under socialism: public and private spheres

In 1921, the People's Revolution dissolved feudal relations and brought major changes for Mongolian women. The first constitution, adopted in 1924, declared that "all citizens of Mongolia are entitled to equal rights irrespective of their ethnic origin, religious belief and sex." Arranged marriage was prohibited by law in 1925, providing the legal framework for women to choose a husband. Women's civil rights were enshrined in the 1926 legislation, which ensured equal rights to work, education and political participation (NCWNC 1999). This constitutional and legislative framework challenged and eroded the traditional norms that governed women's exclusion from the public sphere (meso and macro levels) and their subordination to parents in the household (micro level).

Population policy and the evolution of gender relations

An important component of the socialist agenda to transform Mongolia into a modern industrial state, with a strong economic and social infrastructure, was population policy. The objective was to increase population size and concentrate it spatially around economic and social infrastructure and state economic enterprises, such as rural cooperatives. This led to a strong pronatalist population policy as well as to a policy of urbanization within the rural provinces.

The transformation of women's social status during the socialist era and the "pro-active policy for women" was certainly rights-based, placing an intrinsic value on women's civil and social status. But in the areas of economic and human resource development and national security, it had also an instrumental character. In a large country, with long borders and a small dispersed population, population growth was and continues to be perceived as an issue of national security as well as vital for the growth of a labour

¹ The famous painting, *One Day of Mongolia*, is the exception; it illustrates the gender division of labour, the position of women in daily life, in economic and social settings.

force. A pronatalist policy can in principle frustrate women's entry and participation in the public sphere by confining women to caring work in the reproductive/domestic sector. However, in a labour-scarce economy, women's labour in the new sectors of the economy was needed, while investments in health and education improved the capabilities of the workforce. State provision of health, education, and especially child care, reduced women's unpaid and unaccounted responsibilities and obligations in these areas within the family, while at the same time transforming their social status through formal state sector employment in these sectors.

However, the policy level changes which facilitated women's entry at the meso level into the formal state sector did not challenge the nature of gender relations in households. Men remained and were officially designated the heads of households. While women were able to earn income from employment when economic production shifted from herder households to collectivized state entities, interpersonal caring work and household chores in the domestic sector remained predominantly women's obligation. The social norms governing appropriate work and responsibilities for women and men were formalized in the Labour Code (Art. 106), which assigned child-care responsibilities to women (or male single parents) and prohibited women from certain occupations, such as in the mining industry (Art. 101).

The policy and administrative measures consistent with the pronatalist policy illustrate the tension that existed between women's status and rights in employment at the meso level and the child-care obligations of women with larger families. Provision of child care and education facilitated women's entry into employment, while measures rewarding women who had many children, such as child allowances, early retirement and pension benefits, also facilitated their exit from the labour force. Mothers of large families were compulsorily retired at age 45 with full pension. These measures shaped the conditions under which women exercised reproductive choice.

The policy environment in the transition

The democratic reforms since 1990 have consolidated and enhanced the legal framework for civic and social rights. The 1992 Constitution emphasized personal freedoms by guaranteeing rights and liberties of the individual, including access to medical care, freedom

of association and political participation, freedom of religion and freedom of opinion, gender equality, freedom of movement within Mongolia and abroad. The right of women to own and inherit economic resources, labour and cattle and other properties are provided for by Mongolian Constitutional Law, the Civil Code, the Family Law and the Criminal Code. In addition, CEDAW, and in particular its reporting and monitoring mechanisms, is being used increasingly to spearhead the progressive removal of discriminatory provisions and to promote gender equality.

At the policy level, the National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) issued by the government in 1996 is a product of the advocacy and mobilization of women NGOs and gender advocates in the state sector, particularly in the wake of the global conferences. The NPAW reflects the perceived impact of the transition on women and reacts to the effects of the policy regime created under the transition.

Transition policies have substantially altered the position of women in families and at the meso level. In the absence of a developed private market, privatization policy has been to allocate state assets such as livestock and housing to private households. The household ceases to be just a social entity and reverts to becoming an economic entity as well, as in traditional pastoral nomadism. And crucially, ownership of these assets has been usually assigned to the head of the household, normally the man, unless there is a single parent woman head of household. The privatization of assets has been accompanied by the creation of private property rights and rights of inheritance. The Family Law has been amended to require a child to take its father's name (Section 24a). In herder households, particularly, which make up 35.9 per cent of total households, the renewed importance of headship carries many implications for gender relations in decision-making, in who controls income and spending, in the purchase and disposal of assets and in the division of labour among household/family members.

While there is very little systematic research about these social changes, the broad social and population trends bear the imprint of the policies and structures developed over the last eight decades and women and men's responses to them. As Figure 2.1 shows, the population growth rate rose rapidly in the late 1950s and early 1960s to reach a peak of nearly 3 per cent per annum in the late 1970s. It began to fall thereafter and more sharply during the transition, reaching 1.9 per

cent in 1998, largely due to the fall in the total fertility rate from 4.6 in 1989 to 2.4 in 1998.

The high growth rate up to the 1980s was due to the pronatalist policy; the falling mortality rate due to investments in health and social and economic infrastructure. The fall since the late 1970s has been attributed to a fall in birth rate as a result of the desire to limit family size, as revealed by the large number of abortions, despite the fact that abortion was illegal until 1989.

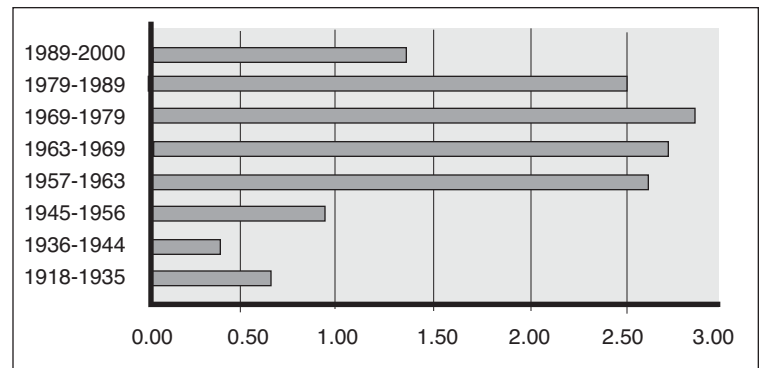
The fall in the birth rate could be attributed to women's greater access to education, in particular secondary and tertiary education, their increased access to employment in the formal sector and their wider choices to assert social status. It may also be that despite the official glorification of motherhood and the material inducements for large families, combining caring work with employment continues to impose significant burdens and pressures on women, who still bear these responsibilities almost exclusively.

While the fall in total fertility can be seen as an expression of improved choices (Government of Mongolia 1999a), its achievement through abortion raises the question of the extent to which abortion is an indicator of women's empowerment. Women's recourse to abortion, at the risk of their health and survival, may say more about the constraints on women's options than about their ability to exercise free choice. An unwanted pregnancy in the first place may signal women's lack of control in sexual relationships. In any event, the micro-level decisions of women to limit pregnancies and family size in contravention of official policy and legislation have played an important part in modifying both policy and legislation. In 1989 contraception and family planning were legalized, albeit on health grounds rather than on the basis of reproductive rights.

Many factors may account for the falling birth rate since the transition, including:

- economic hardship and vulnerability;
- the pressure to pursue supplementary income sources, which further decreased men's contribution in the home, while increasing women's unpaid household and care work;
- the higher costs of raising children;
- the precarious employment prospects of women with children;
- the decline in child-care services;

Fig. 2.1 Annual population growth rates, % census years



Source: Compiled from NSO data

- social and attitudinal factors such as education and young women's attitudes towards marriage and raising a family.

Gender and population dynamics

The high population growth rates of earlier decades continue to expand the size of the population and influence its age composition. More than half of the population is under 21, with nearly 45 per cent under 18 years old. The changing age profile of women is an important social phenomenon. Differences in education levels, income and employment, employment conditions and prospects, mobility and region of residence, and in attitudes over life choices, emerge between older and younger women. This is the case even with the strong intergenerational links between women of different ages, manifest in women's efforts to educate their daughters and among members of the women's movement and networks. This phenomenon will continue to have significant implications as young women begin to affirm their voice and presence, particularly in the media and in civil society, and shape the character of gender relations.

The distinctness of the age group of younger women is more manifest when the different trajectories of young men and women are considered. Among the important changes is the reverse gender gap in education, particularly at higher levels. This raises concern about the prospects of young, educated women for finding a marriage partner, given sharp disparities in education levels as well as the potential absence of social, cultural and intellectual affinities between the prospective partners. This apprehension has to be set in a context of the changing and conflicting social and cultural norms and expectations. These norms are as

much about definitions of gender identity, of what it means to be a woman or a man and how to assert this identity, as about relations of power between women and men and how these are negotiated in a variety of settings.

Valuing marriage between women and men as a relation of equal partnership and cooperation puts an emphasis on the "connectedness" of women with their partner and family in one household. On the one hand, economic conditions are making it possible for more young women to assert their "separateness" as individuals and to lead independent lives, particularly if they choose few or no children. On the other hand, during the transition, the disparities between women and men in households have intensified in terms of the division of labour, leisure, resources, rights, responsibilities, management and decision-making. Women and men

have shown different capacities to cope with the social and economic dislocations and hardships, and tensions and conflicts have intensified. The manifestations are seen in divorces, the rise in female-headed households and domestic violence, often related to alcohol abuse by men.

In 1998, there were 535,300 households registered in the country, a rise of 26.8 per cent over 1989. During the socialist period the family, living in household units embedded in wider social kinship networks, remained the primary unit of social organization. In the transition their importance as a primary unit of economic organization has been reinforced on the one hand with the acquisition of assets disposed by the state such as livestock and housing and on the other by family-based income-generating activities and self-employment in the informal sector. With the erosion of state entitlements, family-based kinship networks that cut across rural and urban areas have become more important. However official statistics use the construct of households and do not have information on relationships within households and between households.

Box 1: A single mother, female-headed household in Dundgovi.

Ms. C is a 45 year old single mother of six, living temporarily in Middle-Gobi *aimag*. Her eldest daughter is 17. Unable to get to a hospital, she gave birth to the youngest one, now a year old, in the *ger* with the help of her eldest daughter. She used to work in Ulaanbaatar city before the transition. Some of her relatives who were members of the agricultural cooperative during the socialist era called her to become a herder in her native Uvurkhangai, when they themselves were allocated herds with privatization.

She combs goat's hair, which she sells as raw cashmere in exchange for flour, rice, tea, salt, sugar, candles or children's clothes. Sometimes she gets some cash. She feeds children with milk and dairy products processed at home. She lost most of her 100 animals, including horses, cattle, sheep and goats during the drought of last summer and the *dzud* of last winter. All her relatives had the same problems and moved to other places looking for better pasture land. She herself got help from acquaintances to move to the Middle Gobi province.

Ms. C then became pregnant, a stranger in a new place. She has been trying hard to keep her animals alive and keep her children healthy. They had the help of a young man, living in a nearby settlement when they needed "man's strength" to look after the animals. Ms.C's eldest daughter also became pregnant; she has just given birth to her baby and is going to marry the young man.

Ms. C is in desperate need of veterinary services, medicines and fodder. She feels isolated, cut off from information. She has four children of school age, but cannot afford to send them to school. She considers her immediate priority to improve the health of her animals so that in long run she will be able to send her children to school and have some savings to start a small herding farm. She looks at the future quite optimistically. As Mongolians say, "children bring luck" and she is trying hard to improve their life.

Source: Interview conducted as part of UNDP Disaster Management Team Mission to Dundgovi, May 2000

Female-headed households

The number of female headed-households has risen, and are now over 10 percent of total households. During the period 1995 to 1998, total households increased by 4 per cent, whereas female-headed households have increased by 27 per cent (see Table 2.1).

A 1998 survey conducted by the Women's Information Research Centre (WIRC), involving a sample of 3,800 men and women, also shows that 10.6 per cent of households were headed by women. The percentage is highest at *bag* level (closest to rural areas) and lowest in *soum* centres (WIRC 1998).

The marital status of the head of household varies from never married to divorced and widowed, the latter being an important category. While the majority of female-headed households are not poor, one of the reasons for the higher incidence of poverty among them compared to male-headed households are the much lower number of income earners including male income earners per household. This raises the possibility that such households may not be intergenerational but that the young have left the household to set up new ones, or to migrate to urban areas, increasing the vulnerability of elderly women and their dependants.

Divorce

Divorce is possible through administrative or judicial channels. The number of registered divorces has remained more or less stable over the transition period, in contrast with the perception of increased marital problems or of "divorce within marriage." Part of this may be due to the fact that many marriages are not registered so they do not require divorce to end them. The official statistics may underestimate the true extent of divorces.

However, divorce, although legal, is most likely to lead to a woman living alone. This goes against the grain of social and cultural norms and can weigh heavily in decisions to remain married, even when women are financially able to separate. But the consequences of divorce have become much worse for women since the transition and the privatization of assets. Divorce will reduce income even though women have become important contributors to the family income. The economic insecurity divorced women face may restrict their options to leave failed or even violent marriages, especially given the erosion of employment rights and the loss of secure employment opportunities.

One of the main concerns is the question of the distribution of family assets, especially the right to the family home. The responsibility for child maintenance rests with the father, although mothers have custody of children. Residence is given to the family occupying it, the presumption being that it is the woman with custody of children who has the entitlement. In practice, enforcement of these claims and obligations is problematic. The privatization of the housing market and state property has complicated this issue and placed a significant burden on men and women who wish to separate but are constrained due to the lack of housing, especially in the urban areas.

Rural-urban differences

The situation of women in Mongolia reveals many areas of commonality of experience and many areas of difference. One such area of difference is where women live and women's options for choice in where they live and their leverage in changing the conditions in these areas. Mongolian women have a strong sense of shared national identity, which celebrates the ecological and physical diversity of Mongolia and its free-ranging nomadic traditions across the vast territorial expanse.

But population distribution and migration within

Table 2.1: Female-headed households, 1995-1998

Year	Total number of households	Female-headed households	
		Number	% of total households
1995	514,100	44,077	8.6
1997	531,100	51,732	9.7
1998	535,300	54,530	10.2

Source: Compiled from Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1998

Mongolia have been shaped by state policies and socio-economic conditions. In the Soviet period, there was a process of creating a sedentary population around industrial, urban and administrative settlements, with physical and administrative controls over population movements. As part of the egalitarian policy, social and economic infrastructure was installed to provide for access to education, health and amenities for all the population irrespective of regions. Local governments at the *aimag* level were responsible for providing local services, such as education, housing and basic health care. One example is the creation of boarding schools to cater for girls and boys of herder families in *soum* centres. Herder movements as well as access to social services are regulated within administrative divisions.

There is a growing recognition, however, of the differences and disparities among the different regions. Mongolia is conventionally divided into six regions. Ulaanbaatar *aimag* is one region. The other *aimags* are grouped as follows into the remaining five regions:

- Far Western: Bayan-Olgii, Uvs, Hovd.
- Western: Zavkhan, Gobi-Altai, Hovsgol
- Central 1: Tov, Orhon, Darhan-Uul, Selenge
- Central 2: Arhangai, Bulgan, Ovorhangai, Bayanhongor
- Eastern: Hentii, Dornod, Suhbaatar
- Southern: Dornogobi, Omnogobi, Dundgobi, Gobisumber

Low population density and remoteness from urban, industrial and international transport axes are important factors affecting the socio-economic situation of women, particularly since the transition. The Central regions have had the most intense industrial development, manufacturing and mining in particular, and have been best served by transport infrastructure

since the Soviet period. Areas close to the Chinese border to the South and in the Far Western region have become more active economically, particularly with cross border trade. Private sector informal activity has grown rapidly since the transition in the latter areas and in urban areas particularly, while it is in the urban settlements of *aimags* and *soums* that state administrative, economic and social services have been most affected, with state spending curtailed and their viability threatened.

The revenue base of rural *aimags* is derived mainly from the taxes paid by herder households and other sources of corporate income. While compliance is not guaranteed, especially when there are drops in herder income, the central government has the right to determine which economic entities pay to the central rather than the local budget. Taxes paid on petroleum and mining operations, which operate mainly in the central regions and Ulaanbaatar, are allocated to central rather than local government. Only four *aimags* are self-financing, while the central government subsidizes about 60 per cent of local budgets. With such centralization, state revenue and spending is not the main source of disparity among *aimags*. Among rural *aimags*, it is the emerging differences in economic choices and opportunities that affect the situation of women and

men residents.

Sharp disparities continue to exist however between urban and rural areas in access to social services, education, health, information, electricity, domestic fuel wood, safe water, all of which impact on women's domestic responsibilities and overall well-being. Mongolia's population is increasingly urban, as Figure 2.2 shows, but at the same time, for the roughly half of the population living in sparse rural areas, conditions have become even more remote and the disparities between localities more severe..

Migration

While there is no comprehensive policy on migration, other policies have had an impact on this phenomenon. Privatization of herds and retrenchment of state employees have led to movements of population into rural settlements. There has been a 200 per cent increase in the number of herders. In the opposite direction, the deregulation of economic activity with the resulting dynamism of areas where consumer markets are relatively more buoyant and the economic decline of urban settlements in rural areas have intensified migration into Ulaanbaatar, which now has 32.5 per cent of the population. There are signs that these population movements take place within families, with

the young, more educated members migrating to the cities, leaving the older family members in the rural areas (UNDP 2000b).

This acceleration under the transition has taken place despite continuing controls over migration. Migrants into Ulaanbaatar have to have permission to live within the city and this is onerous in terms of financial and transaction costs. Unregistered migrants cannot work in the formal sector, have to pay for health services and "are sometimes denied access to education and health care" (UNDP 2000b). Despite these penalties, the rapid proliferation of *ger* settlements within

Table 2.2 Total population by *aimags* and capital city

	Year 1989		Year 2000	
	000s	'000s	% distribution	Per sq.km persons
Arhangai	84,5	95,5	4	1,7
Bayan-Olgii	90,9	91	3,8	2
Bayanhongor	74,6	84,1	3,5	0,7
Bulgan	51,9	61	2,6	1,3
Gobi-Altai	62,8	62,8	2,6	0,4
Dornogobi	57,11	51,5	2,2	0,5
Dornod	81,1	76,1	3,2	0,6
Dundgobi	49,3	51,1	2,1	0,7
Zavhan	88,5	88	3,7	1,1
Ovorhangai	96,5	110,8	4,7	1,8
Omnogobi	42,4	46,9	2	0,3
Suhbaatar	50,8	55,9	2,3	0,7
Selenge	87,0	100,9	4,2	2,4
Tov	100,1	97,5	4,1	1,3
Uvs	84	89,7	3,8	1,3
Hovd	76,6	86,3	3,6	1,1
Hovsgol	101,8	118,3	5	1,2
Hentii	73,8	70,8	3	0,9
Darhan-Uul	85,72	84,8	3,6	25,8
Ulaanbaatar	548,4	773,7	32,5	164,6
Orhon	56,1	73,9	3,1	88
Govisumber	0	12,1	0,5	2,2
Total	2044	2382,5	100	1,5

Source: Population and Housing Census of Mongolia, 2000

Ulaanbaatar is a testimony to the relative attraction of major cities in livelihood strategies.

There is no systematic research on the migration profile, but there is a presumption that migrants are mostly young women and men. With young children, mostly girls in boarding school in *soum* centres, the population appears to be differentiated by age and gender according to place of residence. The ageing of the rural population as part of the trends in education and urbanization may have been offset by the rise in herder households, which have doubled over the decade. Age and residence location become significant in analysing the situation of women and in tracking changes over time.

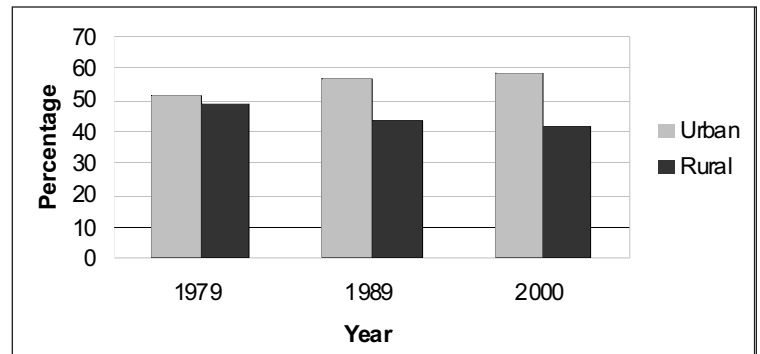
Violence against women and the impact of the transition

Violence against women is one of the most extreme manifestations of the disempowerment of women and the conflictual and oppressive nature of gender relations. The struggle to define such violence as a violation of the human rights of women and to bring the issue into the public arena is one of the critical dimensions of the process of women's empowerment. In Mongolia, what happens within the household and family unit, of which the man is considered the head and thus the authority, is treated as private and women victims feel the pressure of "saving face" for the family. In the legal sphere, there is no provision in the Criminal Code to prevent domestic violence and to protect the victims, despite government accountability as a signatory to CEDAW and other human rights instruments.

In Mongolia, the problem of domestic violence and violence against women in other settings has been brought into the public arena. One reason is the perception that such violence has increased recently as a result of the ways in which the stress of the transition has affected gender relations. Another is the growing consciousness among women and women's groups: a will to recognize and name the problem, to break the silence over it in the new environment of freedom of expression and the promotion of individual rights.

The research that has been conducted to generate information on domestic violence has been done by women's groups. Surveys by the National Centre Against Violence (NCAV), of 300 women in 1998 and 5,000 women in 1999, show that one in three women has experienced some form of domestic violence.

Figure 2.2: Percentage distribution of total population by urban and rural area, at last 3 censuses



Source: Population and Housing Census of Mongolia, 2000

Anecdotal information from the Centre indicates an increase in domestic violence, along with increasing rates of unemployment and alcoholism (NCWNC 2000). But in the absence of baseline data, it is hard to establish whether its incidence has increased and/or whether women are now more empowered to talk about it, do something about it and challenge the gender norms which allow it to continue in silence.

The NCAV Survey in six districts of Ulaanbaatar examined the impact of violence on women. Asked how domestic violence affects work and participation in public life, 30 per cent of respondents replied that it decreases interest in work, 22.7 per cent that it affects self-confidence, 20 per cent that it affects their social status and that they lose respect from colleagues. In addition, 17.3 per cent mentioned lower participation in public activities, lower access to information, loss of friends and colleagues, 9.7 per cent mentioned loss of patience (NCWNC 1999). There are cases of women in prison who have killed a violent husband and or/relative in self defence (IWRAW 1998). The survey reveals that nearly half of the victims have neither reported the case nor taken any action.

Another problem faced by women is unspoken but widespread sexual harassment at the workplace. Scarcity of jobs creates a situation conducive to such harassment. Cultural attitudes and dependence on the employer because of lack of jobs in general prevents an active struggle against this form of gender-based violence. Women resisting assaults from their supervisors or employers have to leave. Statistical data on this problem is not available because women do not complain through fear of losing a job and later risk getting their marriage dissolved. The gendered character of these work settings at the meso level and the relations

of power between women and men are starkly exposed. But these relations of power are closely interwoven with those in the family. Women stand to lose jobs and/or family. Women in this instance are forced to sacrifice their self-esteem, autonomy and well-being for material security. The one existing shelter run by NCAV has housed 342 women for a total of 3,060 days in the last three years (NCWNC 2000). These figures indicate the dearth of facilities as well as the likelihood that most women will not go to a shelter unless they fear great risk to their physical security and survival.

Domestic violence in the household continues to a large extent because the structures and mechanisms at meso-level and macro-level institutions do not address it. Actions to transform this situation have to address the political will to do so. A snapshot of this dynamic situation shows an effective polarization along gender and institutional lines:

- There is a dearth of research on the root causes of violence against women, its forms and prevalence;
- There are legal and other counselling services in a few *aimags* but no systematic support to victims of gender violence;
- There is a low level of awareness among staff of enforcement agencies such as district and *aimag* police officers to combat violence against women;
- There is very little scope for legal redress as yet.

Women NGOs' advocacy and service provision

Women's groups have been active in using the information they have produced for advocacy and awareness raising. Many women lawyers have mobilized within NGOs to draft new legislation and introduce new amendments to existing laws. For example, a draft law on domestic violence has been prepared by the NCAV and the Mongolian Women Lawyers Association (MWLA) for submission to the Parliament. In addition, the Family Law now includes a provision that "the marriage of the couple shall be dissolved without giving any probation period, in case if one of the married couple proved to be imposed any form of violence or keeping the spouse under permanent pressure or violence that threatened the other's life, health condition and abused the children."

The National Centre Against Violence has been working effectively in last five years in the areas of public service, advocacy, information dissemination, and raising public awareness: NCAV conducts training

and advocacy campaigns using press and mass media based on their materials and using new methodologies. A Family Education Centre was established at the NCAV, which is networked with public institutions, non-governmental organizations and enforcement agencies working in the area of halting domestic violence against women and children.

A more recent strategy has been to use CEDAW as a key human rights instrument to make governments more accountable. "In 1997, the government prepared its 3rd periodic report for the Committee on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee plans to consider this report in January 2001. The Government generally has not advertised the CEDAW Convention to the public" (NCWNC 2000). The National CEDAW Watch Network Centre was established in 1998 to monitor and evaluate the government's fulfilment of their obligations under the CEDAW Convention. It prepares reports on government action, lobbies government to improve its performance and conducts general community training on CEDAW. It has prepared a Shadow Report to CEDAW for 2001 to submit at the same time as the Mongolian government report to the CEDAW Committee. Violence against women is one of the three aspects covered in the Shadow Report. As part of the preparation of this report, it has collected material on violence against women and is training NGOs on the reporting process and the content of the CEDAW Convention. The report will then be used as a tool for government to become more aware and more accountable for the implementation of CEDAW and upholding women's rights.

The National Population Policy (1996) and the National Programme for the Advancement of Women proposed concrete action plans to combat violence against women. The working group of the National Council on Women's Issues has evaluated the activities carried out vis-à-vis violence against women and has recommended revising the objectives set in 1996 and improving some provisions.

However, the issue of violence against women has not made much headway within the mainstream institutions and organizations, whose decision-making instances are male-dominated, even when women constitute the majority of middle management. There are very few or no government activities to address the issue of violence against women, whether at the policy-

making or implementation level. While the draft law on domestic violence "has been developed with wide community consultation ... the NGOs have not been able to secure more than limited parliamentary support" (NCWNC 2000). "Rehabilitation services for women who experienced violence are limited; educational campaigns for zero tolerance against any form of violence towards women have had minimal impact" (Government of Mongolia 1999b).

Across the spectrum of issues on a rights-based development agenda, the main constraint in achieving outcomes is the implementation capacity, even when the legislative framework is in place. But in the area of violence against women, to which all women are exposed, the legislative framework is still lacking.

Women's health care and the impact of the transition

During the socialist period, considerable policy emphasis was placed on equal rights of access to education and health care as important dimensions of human development. Mongolia had free universal access to medical services. With the transition, the withdrawal of subsidies from the Soviet Union induced a fiscal crisis. The response has been to reduce the share of public expenditure going to health, as part of a comprehensive health sector reform package to decentralize and privatize certain elements of health care.

The Constitution of 1992 guaranteed the right of access to health care. Mongolia is party to all the human rights instruments which legally bind it to guarantee rights to health and to uphold and promote reproductive rights. Abortion and contraceptive use were legalized in 1989. The thrust of reforms, however, has effectively been to create two categories of citizens: clients of health care services and vulnerable groups. The policy is to shift responsibility for health care more towards individuals and the private sector through the introduction of user fees and a contributory social insurance system, introduced in 1994, which now covers half of all insurance funding. All formal sector employers pay social insurance fees equal to 19 per cent of wages, of which 13 per cent goes to pensions. Formal sector employees pay social insurance equal to 10 per cent of wages, of which 3 per cent goes to health insurance.

With the adoption of a national health policy in

1997-1998, the emphasis has shifted towards preventive medicine, through "client-oriented" primary and family care practices and "community involvement and decentralization." The state gives entitlements to designated vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, disabled, single mothers, large families and orphans, who are unable to pay and would be excluded from health care. Vulnerable group funding comes through the social assistance system established in 1996.

State endowment of an extensive medical and public health infrastructure is a legacy of the socialist era. Public investment in education also yielded health personnel. In 1998, there was an average of 411 persons per physician and 133 persons per hospital bed (NSO 1999). These figures have to be put in perspective over time and disaggregated by a number of important variables. The person-physician ratio fell (improved) steadily after 1985, when it was 397, until 1992 when it reached 260 (if the figures are reliable), then began to rise (worsen), reaching 411 in 1998. The indicator of persons per hospital bed improved from 1985, when it was 86, to 1989, when it reached a low of 48, then began to worsen steadily over the transition years to reach 133 in 1998. Part of the reason has to do with the failure of provision to keep pace with the rapidly rising population. But a considerable part has been due to the transition measures.

One of the factors is the downsizing of the state health sector. Government spent only 3.3 per cent of GDP on the health sector in 1998 as compared to 5.5 per cent in 1990 and health's share of total government expenditure also fell. Capital expenditures fell by 42 per cent over the period. As Figure 2.3 shows, women have a higher share of employment in the health sector. Their employment has fallen more sharply than men in the early period of transition, where men's seem to have risen.² Salaries are often paid in arrears.

The decline in employment in the sector and in the number of public sector institutions has reduced provision and access. Some unavoidable costs are quite significant in a harsh and bitterly cold climate. A considerable share of the health, as well as the education budget is devoted to maintaining buildings and providing heating.

The national averages mask disparities in

² This is linked to the dip in the population/physician ratio and could be a statistical error.

provision between rural and urban areas, which pre-date the transition. The closure of maternal rest homes that provided pre- and post-natal care has affected rural areas particularly. In contrast to the decline in state provision, private health enterprises – private medical practice and pharmacies – have increased.

The state budget continues to cover all expenses related to childbirth and pregnancy. In 1998 there were 447 obstetricians, 1664 maternity hospital beds and 785 beds for gynaecological patients, 83 per cent of them in private hospitals. There were 282 rest homes for pregnant women, out of which 203 (71.9%) were in inadequate buildings. Rural women’s health is particularly at risk. During the previous regime, *soum* hospitals provided rural and herding women with accommodation for two weeks prior to delivery and expectant mothers were trained how to handle newborn babies. This system has now collapsed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The closure of maternal rest houses in rural areas in the early 1990s is largely responsible for the current inadequate services and facilities. Although many of these facilities have reopened, women are not happy with them.

The disparities in access by women and men, girls and boys are sharper for the rural areas and for those with low income and no formal employment. There are significant time, transaction and financial costs in accessing health systems. In rural areas, physical access to *soum* and *aimag* centres is limited by lack of transport and communication links. The situation is exacerbated by a bureaucratic referral system among *bag*, *soum* and *aimag* levels which slows timely access to urgent health needs. Poor women and men face exclusion from health care as the result of the introduction of user charges and a voluntary social insurance scheme

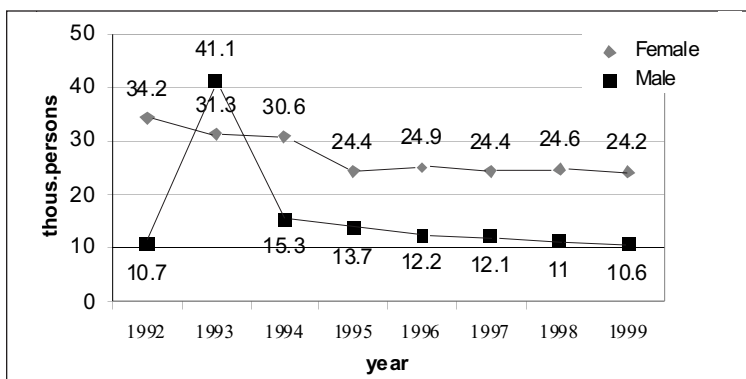
skewed towards the formally employed with a fixed and officially registered residence.³ Health insurance for mothers with maternity leave and hospitalization for patients with infectious diseases are covered by the state budget. Although those without health insurance should be provided with free care supported by local budgets, it has become common for hospitals to reject people who have no fixed residence or insurance. Some state-funded charity hospitals have opened their doors to vulnerable people but they cover only a small proportion of them.

A 1998 Living Standard Measurement Survey was conducted by the National Statistical Office on a sample of 2,000 households in order to measure the incidence and level of poverty in terms of household consumption and expenditure and compare access to services in rural and urban areas (UNDP/NSO 1999). The survey found that health expenditure is 2.3 per cent of total expenditure for the poorest, 1.5 per cent for the non-poor. The poorest spend 20 tugrug per month while the non-poor spend 160 tugrug per month. The data shows that the non-poor make more visits to public health institutions than the poor. For *aimag* hospitals the average number of visits by the very poor is 1.3 compared to 2.1 by the non-poor. For urban district hospitals, the averages are 1.7 and 3.2, respectively. The non-poor spend three and a half times more on health each month than the poor (ibid).

According to a World Bank Survey conducted in 1995, 40 per cent of the poor population could not afford medical services and could not get medical assistance when they needed it. There are no statistics about the impact on women who normally complement other sources of health provisioning with unpaid health care in the home and family. The efficiency and cost effectiveness of the reform may simply have shifted costs to women already burdened by increased responsibilities when state entitlements have shrunk and they cannot afford market sources of entitlement.

Quantitative access measures overstate effective access and the degree to which access to health care translates into health and well-being for women, men, girls and boys. The quality of health-care provision is a cause for concern. To some extent this predates the transition, in the lack of fit between curative provision and preventive needs, between the other types of provision, geographical coverage and the pattern of needs,

Figure 2.3: Employment in health sector by sex, 1992-1999



Source: Compiled from NSO 1998.

³ Currently 90% of the population are enrolled.

particularly for reproductive health. The problems are in the quality of medical education, medicines, the health administration system and responsiveness to user needs. There is considerable public dissatisfaction with the quality of health services.

The effectiveness of health provisioning can ultimately be assessed by progress in the health status of Mongolian women, men, girls and boys. There have been improvements in many health-related indicators. Life expectancy for women and men have increased slowly and women have a higher life expectancy at birth than men. Infant mortality rates have fallen from 64.1 per 1000 live births in 1989 to 37.3 in 1999. Immunization coverage for communicable diseases has reached 90 per cent for children, and shows the careful targeting of programmes for child survival.

By contrast, however, maternal mortality rates have risen sharply since the transition, as Table 2.3 indicates. The rate was 157 per 100,000 live births in 1998, compared to 119 in 1990, stark testimony to the depletion of human capabilities with the transition. Moreover, herding women constituted 49.3 per cent of maternal deaths. Factors contributing to high maternal mortality rate include: diminished quality of medical care and services (36.4%), distance from the medical care centres or late arrival (28.1%).

Women's reproductive health

The Government of Mongolia adopted the Reproductive Health National Programme in 1997. The main focus is on women, who bear responsibility for contraception. There were 9,135 abortions in 1998, based on figures from state hospitals. Private hospitals are increasingly used for abortions, but there are no data for them (see Table 2.4). Another concern is increasing cases of teen-age pregnancies. Overuse of abortion as a method of contraception is a dangerous phenomenon among girls and young women. In some *aimags*, it is reported that adolescents make up 26 per cent of pregnant women.

Public health

There are indications that while the incidence of many communicable diseases has decreased, others, such as brucellosis, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), are on the increase. Moreover, the exposure of about 51 per cent of the population, mostly in rural areas, to unsafe water has increased the risk of contracting water-borne diseases. So too have

Box 2: Women and family care

Ms. Ts, a trained veterinarian who was made redundant with the privatization of veterinary services following the transition, has a temporary job in the *aimag* centre. Her mother, who is 58 and lives 30 km away, has been hospitalized with stomach and liver disease. As Ms. Ts explains, the Gobi *aimags* have difficulties in safe water provision and most people are affected to some degree by water-borne diseases. Ms. Ts's mother is a life-long herder who delivered 11 children. Herding women work all day all their life without any annual leave (except maternity leave) and do not take care of their health.

When her mother is in hospital Ms. Ts visits her three times a day to bring her meals and medications, which the *soum* hospital cannot provide.

Source: Interview of Ms. Ts during Disaster Management Mission to affected areas, May 2000

women's domestic work burdens to process water and/or cope with sickness in the family. Environmental health concerns increasingly affect Mongolians as pollution levels increase in cities and sanitation has worsened with the deteriorating infrastructure.

The state of food hygiene has emerged as an issue of concern particularly in urban areas. With import liberalization and with the thriving informal sector in food preparation, food is being marketed without adequate norms and standards, exposing consumers to various sources of contamination. The links between diet, nutrition, health and well-being have often been poorly specified in Mongolia, and it has therefore been difficult to make the issues a focus of effective policy-making and concerted action until recently. Women have the main responsibility for buying, preparing food and feeding the family.

Adequate nutrition is a significant problem in Mongolia. The continual increase in poverty, amount of income spent on food, rates of unemployment and source of resources all point to the spiraling food

Table 2.3: Maternal mortality rates, per 100,000 live births, selected years

Year	Maternal mortality rate
1990	119
1993	240
1997	145
1998	157

Source: Health Management Information and Education Centre, 1998

Table 2.4: Abortion rates among women age 15-49, selected years

Year	Abortion rate per 1000 women
1991	62.6
1993	38.02
1995	30.7
1996	32.8
1998	23.4

Source: Health Management Information and Education Centre, 1998

insecurity Mongolia is experiencing under the transition economy, as food production has declined and food prices have increased substantially (NRC 1997).

The decline in consumption of food and vegetables is due to reduced production, falling imports and rising prices. During the last decade, the domestic production of food items has faced serious problems due to the dismantling of agricultural state farms and food industries. Although food imports have increased since the mid 1990s, many families cannot afford high prices of imported food due to their generally low income.

Average calorie intake per person per day was 2,621 calories in 1989, 1,963 calories in 1993 and 2,158 calories in 1998. Calorie intake has not yet reached the level it was before the transition. In addition to protein and energy under-nutrition, particularly among young children, there are micro-nutrient deficiencies. Only 32 per cent of all households consume iodized salts because of the high price on the open market. While there is no sex-disaggregated data on nutrition status, recent survey data communicated by UNICEF indicates that there is no son preference as regards nutrition.

Table 2.5: Evolution of food consumption per capita, 1989-1998

Year	Meat/meat products	Milk/milk products	Eggs	Flour/bakery	Potato	Vegetables	Fruits
1989	93.1	20.7	26.9	105.3	27.4	21.5	12.1
1990	97.0	18.0	29.0	97.0	23.0	20.0	9.0
1992	109.6	19.5	11.0	77.0	12.0	3.2	0.4
1994	96.1	20.0	3.5	82.1	13.0	4.8	0.5
1996	97.0	25.8	1.4	95.1	11.0	8.5	0.3
1997	96.0	25.8	3.8	100.1	13.1	9.0	0.0
1998	94.8	26	3.6	98.4	21.6	16.8	2.4

Sources: Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1992, 1996, 1997, 1998

Stress, health and life-style changes

The deteriorating nutritional indicators have an incidence on the health of women, men, girls and boys, but to an extent which has not been adequately researched. Changing consumption patterns partly to do with globalization are leading to the emergence of a range of chronic non-infectious diseases, including coronary heart disease, various cancers, dental caries, and others. Again the gender aspects of the phenomenon have not been researched, both in terms of differential health status and impacts on women's unpaid care work obligations.

According to a survey on alcohol consumption and abuse, 79.6 per cent of adults are consuming alcoholic beverages and 90.7 per cent of male and 69.1 per cent of female population consume alcohol. Of males consuming alcohol, 54.2 per cent are considered to be moderate users and 19.7 per cent excessive users. The proportion of excessive users is an indication of the extent of alcoholism in Mongolia. Alcohol abuse is one of the factors cited by women behind the country's deteriorating health status, increasing stress levels, crime and domestic violence. Given women's role as care providers in households, the effects of men's alcoholism on their responsibilities and through domestic violence directly on their own psychological and physical well-being can be surmised but not adequately understood, gauged and addressed.

Work related health issues

For rural women, continuous, unvalued and unpaid work makes it hard to find time to visit doctors and care for their own health. This work routine starts at dawn and finishes late into the night: herding animals, assisting delivery and caring for young, milking, processing dairy and animal husbandry products, caring for elderly and children, preparing food, sewing clothes for family members, treating guests and visitors and so on. Previously women gathered at least twice a year in the *soum* centres and were covered by medical check up care schemes. Now many rural women are asking to revive this traditional practice, which was stopped due to financial constraints and, to a certain extent, the neglect and lack of professionalism of local health centre management.

Several thousand women employed in the informal sector are working in

inadequate/difficult occupational safety environments in urban centres, thus aggravating their health condition. For example, vending kiosks have poor or no heating and cooling facilities. Women in the informal sector tend not to have social and health insurance coverage. This puts at risk both their health status and their ability to maintain income and livelihoods when they are sick. However, there is virtually no data on this situation.

During the transition, women have lost entitlements to health and lost ground in their position as health professionals. They have been particularly negatively affected in relation to reproductive health, where the toll in women's lives and morbidity has been very high. The maintenance and enhancement of their health status has become more precarious, more dependent on their economic situation and subject to their exposure to violent men. The changing policy regime has created many sources of inequality among women, based on income, residence and employment status. The diseases of "affluence" as well as poverty have begun to coincide. Less able to assert their rights to health and achieve a better health status in the public sphere, women have borne an increasing burden of family and community care work, as health provisioning for everybody but particularly the poor, has become more dependent on domestic care work.

Women's education and the impact of the transition

The right to education is one of the rights specified in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Mongolia adheres. Achieving gender balance at high levels of enrolment in primary and secondary education is included among the international development targets. For Mongolian women particularly, this policy and rights education framework represents a rupture with the traditional norms and customs, which have acted as barriers to their entry in the public sphere since feudal times.

Education was the cornerstone of the socialist policy to transform Mongolia into a modern state that guarantees its citizens equal and universal access to major dimensions of human development. There was free and compulsory education at all levels for both boys and girls throughout the socialist era. The government set a goal to eliminate illiteracy during the period 1921-1940, and to achieve universal education up through the eighth grade.

To achieve these goals, an extensive network of state infrastructure was created for all levels of education, including kindergartens. Specific institutions and mechanisms were developed to include boys and girls from remote rural areas and to take into account the conditions under which nomadic children can attend school. One particularly significant innovation was the establishment of boarding schools in *aimag* and *soum* centres. Children from remote rural areas stay in these schools in term time, returning home during a two-week break between quarters and a three-month holiday in summer. The starting age for primary school, age 8, seems to have been governed by the length of separation from parents and the hazards of travel in the harsh climate.

Considerable state resources were allocated to schooling in order to fulfil the educational goals. Schools' operational expenses were covered, which in the extreme climate imply nearly 30 per cent of state educational expenditure on heating costs alone, as well as building maintenance and capital expenditure. Education was free and the state covered schoolchildren's expenses related to schooling, including boarding expenses.

During the transition from a centrally planned to a free-market economy, educational sector reforms have aimed to create a modern educational system equal to world standards. The Law of Education (1991) and the ensuing Package Law on Education reaffirmed the basic principles of equal opportunity for education, free primary education, guarantees for vulnerable groups' education, and coordination of the population's informal and professional education (MOSTEC 1999).

The major new concepts are freedom of choice, diversity, decentralization and a customer-centred approach. The new education system is to be supported not only by the government but also by private sector initiatives and investments as well as by foreign educational institutions. Underpinning this policy of ending the state monopoly of education provision and greater customer orientation has been the introduction of user charges and fee-paying private sector provision. Non-formal education was introduced in Mongolia in 1993 as part of the right to basic education for all.

The economic reform measures introduced during the transition have resulted in a decline in educational expenditure and the introduction of a system of

Box 3: Pre-school institutions*

	1998 as % of 1989
Creches	
Number of creches	8%
Number of children in creches	80%
Kindergartens	
Number of kindergartens	7%
Number of children in kindergartens	83%
Number of children age 0-4	75%
Number of children age 5-8	108%

* The report uses ages 0-4 for creches and ages 5-8 for kindergarten, the age groups which the Statistical Yearbook presents for demographic data. The majority of children under 4 are brought up at home.

user fees. There has been a rise in fee-paying private establishments especially at tertiary levels, mostly in the capital city. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has fallen from 10.4 per cent in 1989 to 5.5 per cent in 1998 (NSO 1999). Capital expenditure has been sharply reduced, expenditures on building maintenance and heating have declined and schools, especially boarding schools, have been closed.

One of the major impacts concerns pre-school institutions, the number of which dropped by half from 1989 to 1998. Due to the economic crisis, many nurseries and kindergartens, previously funded by the state, were obliged to close, resulting in a shortage in rural areas and some urban districts. In 1990, there were 441 creches that accommodated 21,600 children. This number declined to 34 in 1998, with an enrolment of 1,600 children.

While this drop may in part reflect a decline in the birth rate, the number of creches (serving children

from 0 to 3 years) and kindergartens (serving children a 4 to 8 years) has fallen more sharply than the decline in the numbers of children in these age groups. This dramatic shrinkage leaves early child development totally dependent on unpaid caring labour by mothers in the home. There are disparities in access to private kindergarten because of income inequalities. Low income and unemployed parents cannot afford the fees, even where there is space available.

Employment in the education sector

In the past few years, there has been retrenchment of some 3,000 teachers (UNDP 2000b) and salaries are sometimes paid in arrears. As a result of the transition measures, there has been an absolute decline in employment in the sector, for both men and women (see Figure 2.4). The number of teachers at primary and secondary schools decreased in 1989-1998 by 1,500 (NSO 1999). This trend was more evident at *aimag* levels.

The high share of women among teachers is an indication of the tremendous progress made in relation to women's educational achievements. The share of women remains high, at 75 per cent, especially at secondary level. However, despite this high share, there is a sharp gender disparity at higher levels in the occupational and decision-making hierarchies. The majority of school principals and directors of *aimag* educational administration are male.

Literacy

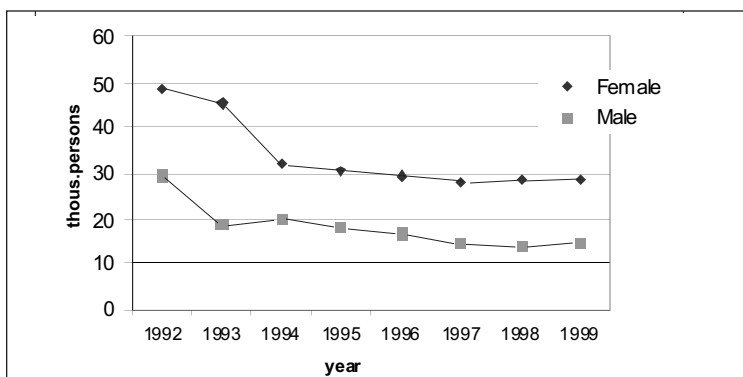
With free and universal elementary education, Mongolia has a literacy rate of between 80 and 90 per cent. Under the socialist regime literacy reached 98 per cent for men and 95 per cent for women. Since the transition, there are estimates that literacy has decreased to 87 per cent, but there is neither disaggregation by sex nor a rigorous assessment of the extent of this regress (UNDP 2000b).

Gender-specific enrolment rate and levels

School enrolment was high in the socialist period, with primary enrolment rates for both boys and girls above 95 per cent and secondary rates above 75 per cent for boys and above 85 per cent for girls in 1989. Enrolment rates were—and are—consistently higher for girls with differentials widening at higher levels of education.

The ratio of girls' to boys enrolment rates in secondary education is one of the three indicators for

Figure 2.4: Employment in education sector by sex, 1992-1999



Source: Compiled from NSO 1998, 1999.

measuring progress in gender equality selected by the UN System Common Country Assessment. The target for equality is a range of 95-105 per cent (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 shows the ratios for three years compared to the target. Mongolia has a reverse gender gap, which means higher enrolment rates for girls than boys. This gap increased over the first half of transition, and narrowed thereafter. The reverse gender gap for herder children is higher than the national average, and is higher for children of middle class, higher income parents (UNDP/NSO 1999:54). The reverse gender gap as well as declining enrolment rates for boys and girls are due to drop-outs. What happens to the reverse gap will depend on drop-out rates for girls and boys over the next few years.

In the secondary sector, the enrolment rate for girls has declined, despite the higher share of enrolment compared to boys (see Figure 2.7). While girls' enrolment rates before the transition were higher than boys' enrolment rates, enrolment rates have fallen more sharply for boys than for girls after the transition. Both boys and girls have lost out on education, but boys more so than girls. The narrowing of the gender gap is thus also consistent with a levelling down, the opposite of progress in human development and in contradiction to the right to education.

The picture is more complex when other levels of education are taken into account. In fact, the higher the level of education beyond primary, the lower the enrolment rates, and the greater the disparity between women and men. Thus the gender gap in enrolment rates in primary school is much less than it is in secondary school, where enrolment rates for both boys and girls are lower. While enrolment rates for boys have risen in the latter part of the decade of transition, they still are not at the levels of 1990.

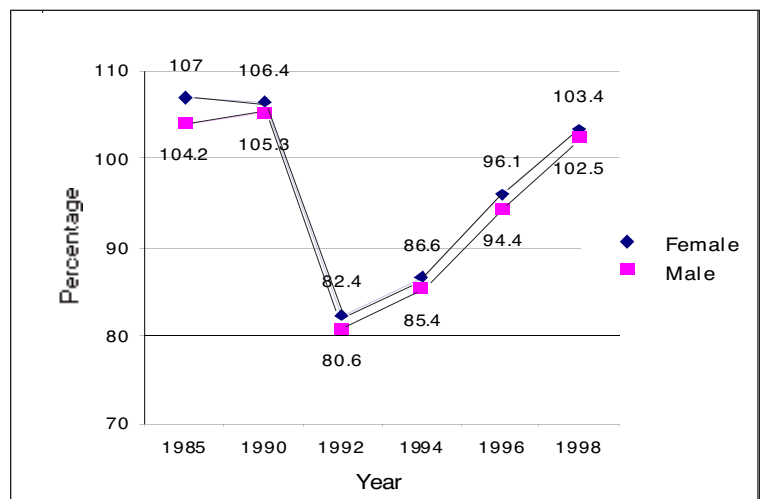
At the tertiary level, female enrolment rates fell in the first half of the transition and rose again more recently. For men, enrolment rates are lower, falling in the first half of transition and then reaching the former levels. Women's enrolment rates have risen above the level at transition and they are now 70 per cent of students at tertiary level. There has been an overall 50 per cent increase in enrolment at higher levels of education, much of which is due to the rise in private sector education. While this indicates greater opportunity to take up employment prospects in the new economy, only higher income families can afford the fees, introducing inequalities among women.

The problem of drop-outs

The transition has had a sharp impact on enrolment rates for girls and boys, eroding the gains of the previous period. Male enrolment rates, particularly at higher grades have declined more sharply than female rates. The phenomenon of lower enrolment in higher grades is the result of boys and girls dropping out of school. In fact, school drop-outs are a major problem of the transition in Mongolia. In 1993, an estimated 23 per cent of compulsory school age children were not enrolled in grades 1-8. There were about 100,000-120,000 drop-outs in 1993. In 1994, primary school drop-outs numbered 10,465 and secondary school drop-outs 12,588. The drop-out rate for boys in the higher grades has been significantly higher than for girls. Drop-outs among herder families rose to 80 per cent in 1993. Between 1985 and 1998, the numbers in boarding schools, which cater mainly for herder children, has decreased by 75,000. These statistics may be an underestimate of actual attendance at school. The definition of a drop-out is a pupil who has missed a year's school. Long periods of irregular attendance, which are known to happen, are not taken into account and there may be different patterns for boys and girls.

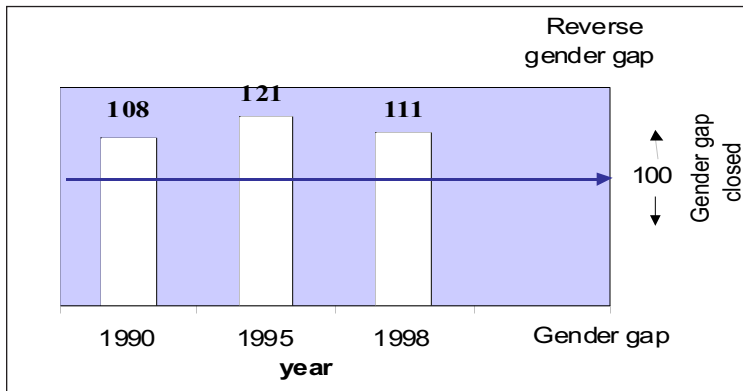
Other indications of declining education since the transition concern the quality of education as conditions deteriorate. Low teacher salaries, paid in arrears, compel the search for multiple other sources of livelihood. This undermines morale and motivation, detracts from time and energy to concentrate on educational attainment.

Figure 2.5: Primary level enrolment rates by sex, 1985-1998



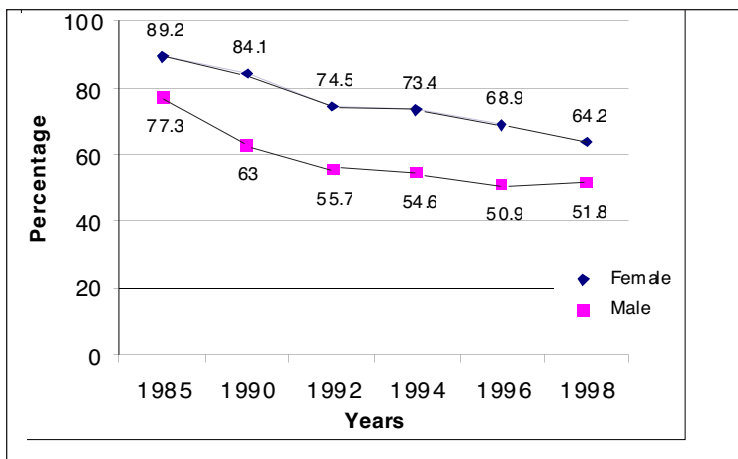
Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

Figure 2.6: Secondary crude enrolment ratio, male/female. 1990-1998



Source: Compiled from "Women and Men in Mongolia," 1999

Figure 2.7: Secondary level enrolment rates by sex, 1985-1998



Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

With the transition to a market-based society, the onus of upholding the child's right to education has shifted to parents. A boy's or a girl's educational opportunity becomes dependent on parents' ability and willingness to pay. These depend on their evaluation of both the direct costs (financial) and indirect costs (in terms of the opportunity cost children's time) as well as the perceived social, psychological and economic returns from education. These are perceived differently for sons and daughters as both costs and benefits have altered in different ways for both boys and girls, bringing in new constraints and new opportunities. Parents may also be reacting to the motivation to learn by their own sons and daughters, an area on which there has been little research. While direct costs

are not in principle a major element in gender disparities, both indirect costs and returns are strongly differentiated by gender. Direct costs on the other hand have had an important impact on enrolment rates and they are responsible for the inequalities of access on grounds of income and location, which have intensified during the transition.

Direct costs

The implication of a reduction in the state budget in education has been an increase in the share of the household budget going to education. In the absence of baseline data, there are no figures to quantify this trend, but according to UNDP data, 10 per cent of household expenditure went to education in 1998, with the non-poor spending six times more on education than the poor (UNDP/NSO 1999). Many children from low-income families are excluded from pre-school, mainly because of their parents' unemployment and inability to pay. In 1998, the kindergarten enrolment rate for 3-7 year olds was 25 per cent (NSO 1999:165). There is a strong correlation between income levels and drop-out rates.

There is growing differentiation and disparities among both girls and boys due to intensifying income and regional inequalities. There is a disparity in general conditions, education programme and equipment between kindergartens in rural and in urban areas as well as between private and state kindergartens. Many schools faced with energy and building maintenance costs closed their dormitories. As a part of the government programme to introduce a greater measure of cost recovery in the education sector in the mid 1990s, families sending children to the boarding schools had to contribute the meat necessary for meals. This could be a burden for many families and may contribute to the higher school drop-outs. An estimated 85 per cent of herders have a herd size barely enough to live on (*Gobi Business News*, July 1999).

The rural-urban differences that reveal themselves in different drop-out rates between urban and rural boys also introduce differentiation among rural and urban girls. Women in rural areas tend not to go beyond primary and secondary education into tertiary education. This is due in part to their herding life-style and family circumstances but is mostly due to financial constraints on continuing their education in larger cities. The average annual tuition fee for a university student ranges from MNT150,000 to 300,000, which

is beyond the annual and fluctuating income of most herders.

Indirect costs

While direct costs have contributed to the exclusion of many boys and girls from schooling, external factors have also operated to reduce investment in human capabilities and to erode children's right to education. The most dramatic structural change has been the restructuring of agriculture along the lines of the traditional household livestock economy. The scale of this restructuring can be gauged by the three-fold increase in the number of herders and a doubling of the herd. The gender division of labour in this economy has meant an increase in herding tasks for men and boys and women. But the shifts to a family-based economy has meant a reliance on unpaid family labour.

In the early days of the transition, the lack of fuel and spare parts for agricultural machinery resulted in the need to substitute manual labour, which may have increased the demand for labour among young men and adolescents. For boys, the sharp drop-out rate is more directly associated with the increase in livestock, which leads older boys and adolescents to travel long distances for pasture and spend long hours in livestock related tasks. Increased livestock may mean a more fixed ratio of herders to livestock, with the result that more herders are needed.

The result is that boys in herder households are twice as likely to drop out than those in non-agricultural households and the drop-out rate among herder boys is sharper in the 12-15 age group, the age at which boys would accompany an increased herd of livestock to distant pastures. While low income is the main reason for dropping out among urban boys, an added factor for herders in rural areas is the need to earn a livelihood.

There are clear indications that for better-off herder households who have expanded production, the size of the herd is too large for the available family labour and that adolescent boys have been working either for pay or for food and lodgings. For households totally reliant on herding, a herd size below 100 is considered too low for survival and this fact may also account for the supply of adolescent boys' labour from poorer families to wealthier herder families.

While there is little information about this emerg-

Table 2.7: Enrolment of school age population aged 8-15

Age Group	Total			Of herder children		
	Male	Female	Difference	Male	Female	Difference
8-11	92.9	94.3	-1.4	89.8	94.8	-5.0
12-15	80.1	91.5	-11.4	73.1	89.2	-16.1

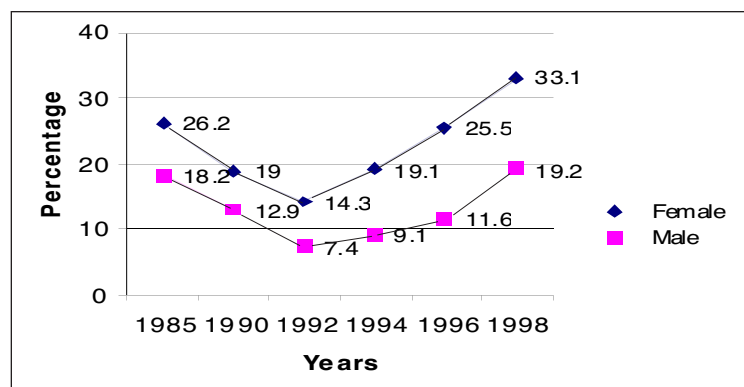
Source: Adapted from UNDP 1999, table 29

ing informal labour market for boys and none for women and girls in the rural economy, the increased size of the herd has also meant an increased need for livestock processing. But the need for added labour during the transition may have resulted in the intensification of women's work, rather than the withdrawal of girls from school. In addition to the work of livestock production, women are responsible, regardless of their education and experience, for child-rearing, cooking, processing of milk products, cleaning, hauling water and tending small animals. Smaller livestock, which are the responsibility of women and younger children (including those under 8 years old), are tended nearer home and may not affect girls' enrolment.

Returns from education

Apart from the direct and indirect costs of education, which affects girls and boys differently, the social, psychological and economic returns of their respective schooling may be perceived differently. The introduction of private property rights in herds, which has benefited male heads of households and can be transmitted to male heirs may be a factor. For women on the other hand, in an increasingly knowledge-based

Figure 2.8: Tertiary level enrolment rates by sex, 1985-1998



Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

economy, education is an investment that will yield returns. Even when this calculus is not consciously used in providing for sons and daughters, the fact remains that income from herding, based on boys' and women's labour is being used to finance girls' education.

The preference for girl's schooling is generally also more linked to perceptions of gender difference. Parents tend to assume that boys can do any type of job and sustain their lives as compared to girls. But an emerging factor of differentiation may be that 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.

With the economic restructuring that is taking place, the link between educational attainment and employment has become weaker in the rural economy, while the business opportunities that have emerged are not as knowledge-intensive as in the capital city, where trade and services are concentrated. The picture is of unemployment and lower income among the professionals working at the meso level of cooperatives and the administrative sector of *soums* and *aimags*. Veterinarians, teachers, agricultural scientists who have been made redundant have become herders and often cannot use their knowledge for lack of complementary services and inputs. The skill and intellectual "capital" in rural areas has been devalued and human capabilities have eroded.

The decision to provide for sons' and daughters' education despite economic hardship may be strongly motivated by the fact that parents are themselves educated and place a value on education and have a strong desire to transmit this inheritance to their children. The gender disparities are here quite sharp, as high-income parents are willing to pay high fees for their daughters' tertiary education in private schools. Apart from economic rationality, an intrinsic value is placed on girls' education, and the social and cultural benefits of girls' schooling is emphasized by parents. Girls are perceived to be more able to assert their place in the public sphere through education. There has not been any in-depth qualitative research on whether mothers' and fathers' perceptions differ and how decisions are made and resources found for girls' and boys' schooling.

Education is necessary for women to obtain employment but is not quite so important for men. Certainly, the signals in the employment market and public life generally point that way: education cannot

be a factor in explaining women's lower share of business, top management and decision-making positions. Women became an integral part of the professional labour force owing to their educational achievements. According to 1996 data, 43 per cent of scientists with doctoral degrees, 31 per cent of economists, 80 per cent of physicians and 70 per cent of lawyers were women (UNDP/NHDR 1997). Enrolment in subject areas by gender reflects this.

Subject choice is highly gendered, except in the mathematics and computing areas. Near gender balance prevails in mathematics and computing, but women have a much higher share in all areas except engineering, architecture and arts, where men are predominant. Except for engineering, which also has the highest share of students, women either have no disadvantage, or in fact have a positive advantage as far as educational qualifications and skills are concerned in emerging areas. This is particularly the case in business and management sciences, which has the second largest cohort of students. The high share of women in this area is potentially interesting for women's entry in these new emerging areas of the economy. Their share is lower in computing but it is at least equal to men's.

The low share of women in engineering may be linked to the gender typing of occupations, in industry, particularly in extractive industries and utilities. Women's exclusion from what is now the largest sector of production and exports may be perpetuated in the future. But what happens to the younger generation of women's ability to translate educational achievement into high-level employment will depend on how the knowledge and skills acquired are valued in the world of work and business and how private sector employers value women employees or business partners.

The nature of the curriculum and approaches to the discipline areas need to be adapted to the new orientation and openness of the economy. To date, however, this is not happening in Mongolia, resulting in a growing mismatch between the types of knowledge and skills valued in the market and those of graduates. Already, there is limited or uneven labour market for highly intellectual professionals with certain skills and knowledge. Educational approaches and methods place little emphasis on problem-solving and creative skills, the sorts of competencies that are increasingly valued in employment.

Retraining and non-formal education

The formal educational sector continues to cater mainly for a sequential form of education, preparing new entrants for life-time employment in well-defined professional and technical areas. While the rates of enrolment of younger women in tertiary education may potentially equip them better for the changing economic system, the situation is not as promising for older women already in employment or who have been made redundant in declining occupations and sectors. There has been a restructuring in the employment market in relation to most of these subject areas. Some sectors have become more important, such as business and management while others have declined. Especially in the countryside, there is no strong correlation between education qualifications in particular fields, including agriculture and employment opportunities.

The increasingly flexible employment market in the wake of privatization and liberalization places a high value on new skills and competencies. In the transition period many people have lost jobs that were almost "for life" during the previous regime and for which they had had formal education. Many women interviewed by the Women's Information Research Centre's Survey on the Economic Status of Women in the Transition said they wished to change their occupation and were willing to undergo training or retraining to do so. This was especially true for women who had lost their jobs when industries closed down at the beginning of the transition and their skills were no longer required. For such women, retraining was the only avenue through which they might re-enter the labour market as skilled workers. Clearly new labour demands require retraining in many new areas but it remains to be seen whether women will gain equal access to such training and job opportunities generated within the private sector.

According to a 1999 National Centre for Non-Formal Education survey, there were at least 20,000 people being served by non-formal education programmes. About 75 per cent of the students were illiterate. More than 250 training courses were offered. Almost 3,000 people acquired new professions through these training programmes. Only about 1,000 school drop-outs returned to formal education after participating in programmes offered by more than 200 learning centres at *aimag* levels throughout the country.

The Ministry of Science Technology, Education

and Culture (MOSTEC) emphasizes the need to develop more extensive use of non-formal and distance education. In fact, one of the successful modules of distance education for retraining of women was the UNESCO-funded project for "Gobi Women." It is hoped that such approaches will cover the increasing needs for job training and retraining, for continuing professional development of people in variety of fields and for reaching the groups not being served by the formal system, such as drop-outs, adults and nomadic families. This requires a number of measures, including improvement of facilities for distance education, increasing the quantity and quality of educational and instructional materials and training of teachers.

For women in particular, the issue of economic and financial returns to education is crucial, since educational qualifications may not be the main criterion for recruitment and promotion, or the ability to create and sustain businesses. Specifically, they have to contend with the gender biases that structure the economic system.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered various aspects of women's social status and how they have evolved in Mongolia over the last eight decades and particularly the last ten years. Some critical issues have emerged

Table 2.8: Women's share of enrolment in tertiary education by subject, 1998

Subject area	Total enrolment	% women
Medical sciences	4231	85.8
Public information	1168	78
Humanities	6619	77.9
Pedagogy/teaching	11,455	76.2
Production	7398	74.5
Business and Management Sciences	11,952	69.5
Social Sciences and Economy	5482	65.6
Law	4448	65.5
Agriculture	3545	65.4
Natural Sciences	2345	58.5
Social and Other Services	2751	56.3
Mathematics and Computing	2353	49.7
Arts	2495	47
Architecture	189	34.4
Engineering	13,801	33.9
Others	4988	40
Total tertiary	85,270	62.3

Source: MOSTEC 1999

in relation to women's empowerment and gender equality.

Despite the gains made in the socialist period in relation to social and cultural rights and women's human rights and the continued and broadening adherence of Mongolia to international human rights instruments, the dominant policy approach in the transition has not been rights-based. Instead, it has been driven by rapid market liberalization with a social safety net approach for vulnerable groups.

In this context, there is a dearth of gender-sensitive research on the new phenomena impinging on the situation of women and official statistics do not reflect the societal changes brought about by policy change. In addition, there is inadequate gender analysis underpinning current social sector strategies and actions being undertaken at the conceptual, analytical, formulation, implementation and monitoring level. In particular, unpaid care by women, household and domestic sector provisioning of basic social services is not recognized as a key dimension of a comprehensive social policy framework. There is a need to account for unpaid time spent in interpersonal and intergenerational health care of family members and voluntary community care.

Throughout the transition, there is evidence that traditional gender relations are enduring and entrenched norms about women's domestic and care work and men's status as heads of households have become more pronounced. The intensification of women's unpaid caring work looking after the sick and caring for young children has had consequences for their physical health and psychological well-being. In particular, they have made gender relationships in the family more fragile and have brought out the tensions in a relationship based on cooperation but also conflict, on divisions of roles and obligations and rights but also disparities.

Looking to the future, it is possible that falling fertility and rising education among young women may lead them to assert their autonomy and separateness from men in a society where motherhood and marriage is still generally highly valued. However, continuing recourse to abortion and a rise in teenage pregnancies suggest 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 it, nor any

meaningful public dialogue or debate concerning it which includes both women and men.

The relatively egalitarian character of Mongolian society is giving way to increasing inequalities based on gender, income and region of residence. These inequalities have reduced access to education and contributed to a deterioration in health and education status and social protection. The social costs of the transition have been high, and rural women have paid for them with increased maternal mortality rates as well as increasing isolation and exclusion.

The chapter has also raised some questions for future research. First, what is the fit between the content of education and the emerging needs of the labour market, and the employment and income prospects for women? Is the quality and relevance of education, in particular, science and technology, including information and communication technology, business and finance appropriate in the context of globalization?

Second, the reverse gender gap in education does not translate into greater opportunities for women in the labour market and carries potentially negative impacts for women's interpersonal relationships with men. How can the women's movement address this issue in a way that supports transformation in gender relations rather than in a manner that reinforces norms and perceptions about the relative position of women and men?

In summary, the chapter has highlighted the complex, disturbing and damaging ramifications of a sharp decline in public expenditure in the social sector and also the lack of mechanisms and indicators to track the differentiated outcomes for women and men, girls and boys. It has uncovered the gap that exists between the rights-based agenda to which government policy subscribes and the means to hold them accountable for upholding those rights. At the level of women's agency, the progressive trends in women's social status, particularly in education and reproductive choices, are not enjoyed by all women and they have yet to shape the character of social change in the direction of women's empowerment.

Chapter 3: Women's Economic Status

The economic policy of the Mongolian People's Republic between 1924 and 1990 was to nationalize and diversify the economy through centralized state planning. The transformation of the economy was geared to its integration into a broader system of regional planning and allocation of resources under the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Egalitarian principles and reliance on physical controls rather than market forces to allocate resources underpinned the policy of low wage differentials, guaranteed employment, guaranteed export markets, physical control of production and subsidies. It is within this particular policy regime and economic philosophy that the rights to employment for women and men and to "human development" were guaranteed in accordance with the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The year 1990 saw a profound and sharp shift in economic policy. With the termination of the former Soviet Union's financial and technical assistance and the collapse of CMEA, the policy response was to dismantle the command economy and rapidly establish a market economy and private property rights, privatize state assets and liberalize prices and trade. In addition to this radical economic restructuring, the current medium-term economic and social development strategy emphasizes macroeconomic stabilization, both fiscal and monetary. The government intends to reduce the tax burden on businesses and private persons, while decreasing overall fiscal spending and the government deficit relative to GDP.

This process of economic liberalization was pursued during the 1990s at the same time as the government continued to adhere to the rights-based framework of international human rights instruments contracted under the socialist regime and also endorsed the commitments made at the 1990s UN conferences,

including the commitment to address the negative impacts of economic reform and macroeconomic stabilization. Specifically, governments committed themselves to:

- Providing secure and sustainable livelihoods
- Eradicating poverty
- Ensuring equal access to land and other property
- Measuring and valuing unpaid work
- Promoting corporate responsibility

Economic restructuring in two eras

Under socialism, livestock ownership and management was transferred from individual households to the *negdel* (collective) and movements of herds were restricted through the creation of settlements. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the *negdel* system was accompanied by a process of urbanization, as the social and economic infrastructure and services for rural areas were set up in *aimag* and *soum* centres. Industrialization also encouraged the urbanization of the countryside, particularly around metal and mineral areas in the Central regions, along the major railway axes linking Russia to China.

A large-scale industrialization process began during the 1960s with the emphasis changing from agricultural activities to the manufacture of semi-finished and finished products and the development of mining, infrastructure, transport and communications. As a member of CMEA, the government also prioritized the expansion of the livestock sector and the creation of an agro-industrial economy. By the late 1980s, industry was producing almost twice as much as agriculture.

During the 1970s and 1980s, about 90 per cent of Mongolia's foreign trade was with CMEA countries—the largest share with the Soviet Union. Industrial goods, services and turnkey projects

accounted for a large proportion of imports between 1970 and 1983. A wide range of consumer goods, including household items, textiles and food, was also imported. Copper, molybdenum, fluorspar, coal and other minerals, livestock produce, textiles and leather goods were exported. Until 1990, selected industries (milk, bread, meat, glass products, felt footwear, children's clothing, timber and coal mining) received subsidies to offset losses from low, fixed retail prices. Most industries, however, showed a profit at least on an accounting basis and paid taxes to central or *aimag* governments.

Employment was guaranteed by the state for both men and women and conditions were established to enable women to undertake work outside the home. But employment was structured along gender lines through state regulation. An official list of jobs and standards for women (issued in 1964 and 1985) distinguished between male and female work in the employment structure. Mining was an area of prohibited employment for women. Women's occupations were in the traditional sectors of health care, education and

child care, but also partially in some other sectors generally considered as male preserves in other countries, such as science and technology.

Women's employment accelerated with their graduation from the education system. The number of women employed in different economic sectors increased by 87.3 per cent from 1969 to 1989 against an increase of 68.4 per cent for male employees. By 1989 women were 47 per cent of the employed workforce. Pay was similar for men and women and wage differences were small, characteristic of the compressed wage scales of socialist economies; differentiation operated through the allocation of additional rewards, benefits and privileges. On the basis of the available data, it is unclear to what extent and how this differential operated along gender lines.

With the collapse of CMEA and the Soviet economy, this economic system became unsustainable. In 1990, Mongolia lost aid equivalent to 30 per cent of GDP and was deprived of concessional supplies of petroleum and other raw materials, as well as its markets with CMEA countries. In a situation of such severe external shocks, domestic policy measures were equally drastic. Since 1990, the economic transition has been called "shock therapy" (UNDP 2000a). This implies that little was done to cushion the impact but rather that the government used the crisis to provoke changes in structures, behaviour and attitudes and to galvanize individual initiative.

A large number of laws have been enacted to create the property rights and incentives to foster private-sector development. These include the Consumers Law, Customs Law, Economic Entities Law, Foreign Investment Law, Anti-Monopoly Law, Banking Law, Bankruptcy Law, Privatization Law, Securities Law and various tax laws and regulations. This legislative dynamism, however, has not been accompanied by adequate institutions and mechanisms for effective regulation, enforcement and arbitration. Instead, the system of price controls and regulation was abandoned and prices rapidly liberalized. By 1993, 90 per cent of livestock had been privatized. A private banking system was allowed to develop rapidly without the experience and the institutions necessary for its effective operation and solvency, and in conditions of monetary turbulence. There were successive devaluations

Box 1: Shock therapy since 1990 in Mongolia

- GDP is still below 1990 level
- GDP per capita in US dollars in 1998 is 27.5% of 1989 level, despite rises since 1995
- The exchange rate in 1989 was 4 tugrug per 1 \$US; in 2000, 1070 tugrug per \$1US
- Exports in 1997 are 43.9 % of 1989 level; imports in 1997 are 49% of 1989 level
- Industrial (manufacture, utilities, metals and minerals) output in 1998 was 68% of 1989 level
- Manufacturing output in 1998 was 29% of 1989 level
- Crop production in 1998, including wheat, oats, barley, vegetables, was 41% of 1989 level
- Government consumption fell from 30% of GDP in 1989 to 25.8% in 1998
- Inflation rate rose to over 300% in 1992 and the price index was 180 in 1998, with 1996 as base. The current annual rate is 6%
- Agriculture's share of GDP has risen from 15.5% in 1989 to 32.8% in 1998
- Livestock output in 1998 was 133% of the 1989 level
- Extractive industries output in 1998 was 255% of the 1989 level
- The share of cashmere and sewn garment exports in total exports rose from 17% in 1995 to 23% in 1998, while the share of mineral products in total exports fell from 65% to 47%.

Source: Compiled from data in the Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1999

of currency.

In the wake of these changes, production in many state enterprises was abandoned in the face of shortages of fuel, raw materials, spare parts and finance. After the severe contraction in the early years of transition, the economy, which had become more open with liberalization, suffered from unfavourable terms of trade as the prices of key export commodities such as copper and cashmere fell in the latter half of the 1990s. Export markets collapsed, and domestic markets disappeared with the shrinking of real incomes, bankrupting many enterprises. Workers were laid off and public expenditure on social services sharply reduced.

It is in this context that a private sector came into existence. The development of the private sector has a dual character, formal and informal. The formal sector of medium-and large-scale enterprises has emerged from the disposal of state assets through vouchers and then through auction, and sponsored by the legal and regulatory framework described above. The informal private sector has developed rapidly in the interstices of a shrinking public sector and a slowly growing formal private sector, mainly as an outcome of the coping strategies of women and men affected by the severe economic dislocations.

As Box 1 indicates, there has been sharp economic contraction and manufacturing has given way to agriculture. The economic base rests narrowly on the primary sector, with mining and minerals extraction and processing and livestock production. The meso-level economic infrastructure and services have also contracted, particularly those supporting livestock production and marketing during the socialist period. The locus of economic activity has effectively shifted to the informal sector, as a new outgrowth straddling both the meso and micro levels and in fact has reverted back to households at the micro level.

In the first half of the 1990s, the broader dimensions of the economic crisis were reflected in severe economic contraction, large fiscal deficits, rapid expansion in money supply, high inflation and a precarious balance of payment situation. In 1991-1992 real GDP declined by 17 per cent and industrial and agricultural output fell by 26 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. Real output in construction, transport and communications sectors declined by 27 per cent, 71 per cent and 38

per cent, respectively.

In the mid 1990s there was some progress towards macroeconomic stability. While there was positive economic growth over previous years by 1994, this has still not reached 1989 levels, nor have exports and imports. By the second half of the 1990s inflation had been considerably reduced, the foreign exchange rate became largely stable and the balance of payments position improved. Even so, the economy is still quite fragile.

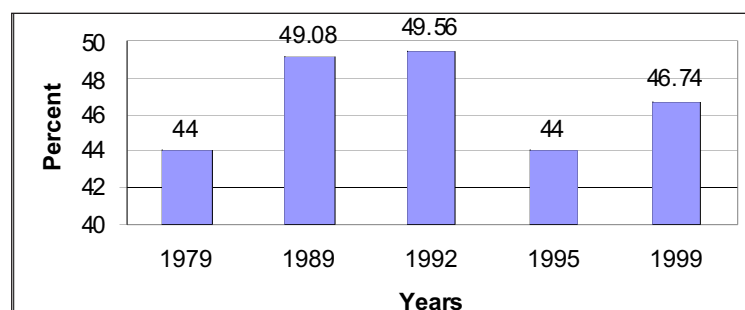
Gender relations and the status of women

Mongolia has emerged from these policy reforms as a fledgling democracy simultaneously with new phenomena of poverty, insecurity and unemployment. Structural reforms have induced major changes in the structure of employment, intensifying disparities in the participation of both men and women in the economy. The costs of structural adjustment and retrenchment have been disproportionately borne by women, who at the same time have not benefited from the potential opportunities offered by market-led development at a level commensurate with their capabilities and compared to men. But there are many complex facets to this overall assessment.

Gender equality in employment

One core indicator cannot capture the current situation of women and how they experience this situation. On the other hand, interpretation of a core indicator and a cluster of other related indicators can build a more complex picture of the dimensions of Mongolian women's situation at a moment in history and in the

Figure 3.1: Women's share in paid employment in industry and services, selected years



Source: Compiled from NSO 1999

Table 3.1: Female employment (1997)

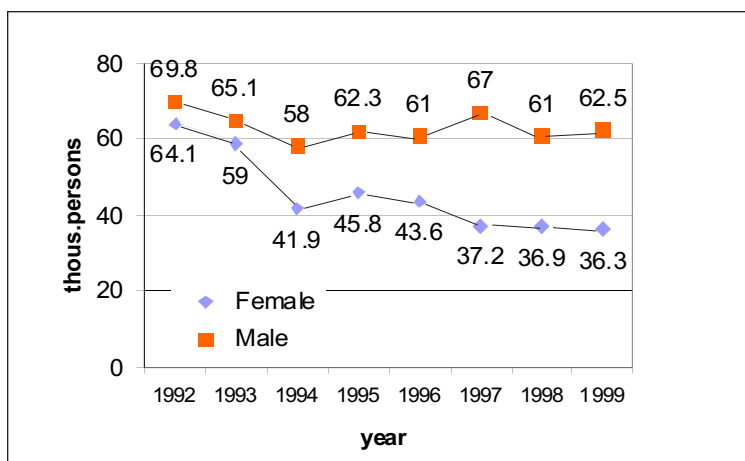
Sector	Percentage of female employees
Hotels and catering	79.8
Education	66.3
Health and social services	64.9
Financial institutions	61.2
Trade (wholesale and retail)	54.2
Public services	50.3
Agriculture and hunting	46.8
Real estate	45.0
Civil service and armed forces	42.4
Industry Processing	41.2
Electricity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

Source: NSO 1998.

process of empowerment.

The core indicator in the *UN Common Country Assessment Development Assistance Framework* for assessing progress towards gender equality in employment is the share of women in industry and services. This measure has been chosen because in most developing countries, formal paid employment is generally in these sectors rather than in agriculture. Moreover, the general direction of structural transformation and thus employment expansion is towards industry and services. The drawbacks with this indicator are that it

Figure 3.2: Employment in manufacturing sector by sex, 1992-1999



Source: Compiled from NSO 1999

does not take into account the fact that growth in such employment does not decrease women's total workload and that employment can be with low pay and under poor, precarious conditions.

Figure 3.1 presents the change in women's share of paid employment in industry and services over the past decade. Women's share is well within the range for gender equality in employment, reflecting the gains in employment during the socialist period and the declines and then improvements during the transition period. Mongolia in fact presents an opposite case to the scenario that underpins the choice of the indicator at the international level. Like other transition countries, restructuring has been accompanied by employment losses for both women and men as well as lower shares for women in these sectors. But the specificity of Mongolia is that the share of agriculture has risen with the transition. And this rising share has been accompanied by profound changes within agriculture, pushing it back to household production, rather than towards modern agro-business.

Assessing the status of and prospects for gender equality in employment and the economy requires that the industry sector be disaggregated into extractive industries, utilities and manufacturing. In the first two sub-sectors, men have continued to pre-dominate, whereas in manufacturing ("industry processing" in Table 3.1), women's share, which was slightly lower than men's at the end of the socialist period, has fallen over the succeeding decade. This is because employment levels have fallen in absolute terms and in relative terms it has fallen faster than men's (Fig. 3.2).

The services sector includes social, financial and business services as well as wholesale and retail trade. Retrenchment of staff in the social sector as a result of cuts in public expenditure on social services, has affected women more as a result of their larger share of employment in these sectors (Chapter 2, Figs. 2.3 and 2.4), since women are concentrated in lower and middle grades, rather than in senior management and decision-making positions. The gender inequalities within these women-intensive occupations cannot have helped women when tough decisions were made about who would lose jobs.

Despite the asymmetries of power between women and men within these state institutions,

women's interests are still relatively protected under legislation regulating public sector employment. The second phase of privatization, however, targets the selling off of government shares in "pivotal" enterprises, such as health, education and science. Prospects for women's employment depend on how competitive they are in the labour market relative to men and under what terms they can enter such markets or retain their jobs as these sectors become privatized. The mining and mineral sector, which has been most dynamic since the transition, is one that is least women-intensive, partly as a result of state restriction on women's employment in some occupations in these sectors.

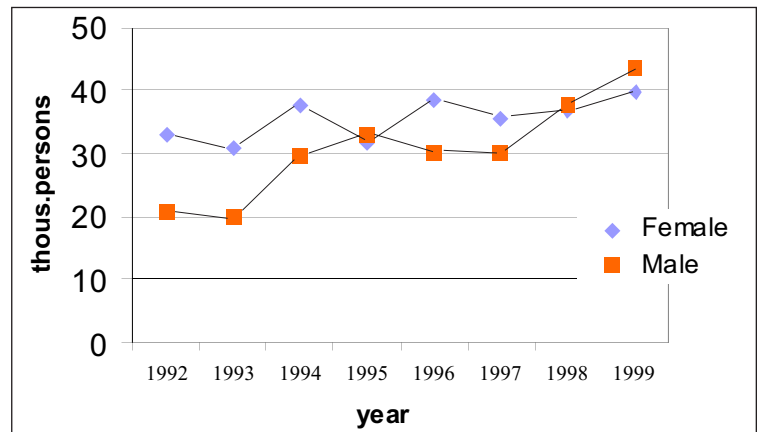
With trade liberalization and the influx of imports the private formal trade sector has expanded. But this expansion of employment is accompanied by a higher rate of growth for men, who now overtake women in this sector (Fig. 3.3). On the other hand, women have also moved into new areas such as finance and real estate (Table 3.1).

What happens to women's share will also depend on rising areas of employment such as information and communication technologies (ICTs). The increased use of computers and information technology will have a significant impact on employment in Mongolia. These technologies, technical education and knowledge of foreign languages are fast becoming integral to operations and management in both the state and private sectors in major populated areas. According to unofficial sources, at present there is a very limited number of women engaged in mid- to upper-level ICT-related jobs in engineering. A lower percentage of computer programmers are women. Traditionally, secretarial positions have been occupied mainly by women who are still dominant among data entry workers in various sectors. How this will evolve will depend on whether women can generate financial returns from their investment in ICT education at the tertiary level, which is at least equal to men's (see Chapter 2, Table 2). It will depend on whether highly educated and skilled women can obtain jobs and set up ICT-related businesses.

Barriers to women's entry in the private sector

The terms on which women can enter labour markets are strongly biased against them and in violation of

Figure 3.3: Employment in wholesale and retail by sex, 1992-1999



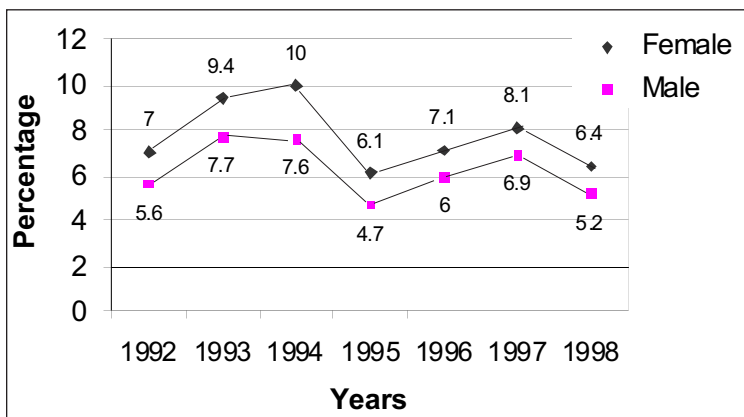
Source: Compiled from NSO 1999

their rights, reflecting how gender inequalities structure the setting up of markets and market institutions. The conditions under which employment is obtained are certainly not gender neutral. It makes a difference whether you are a man or a woman to an employer in Mongolia. Advertisements for employment that discriminate against women on grounds of appearance and age are highly visible. In the private sector the introduction of employment contracts that invalidate the rights of workers under existing legislation are becoming commonplace. Women who want employment are often obliged to sign away rights such as maternity benefit or family leave in order to secure a job in the private sector. There is no systematic monitoring of these practices. But in fact, the formal package of rights and supportive legislation coexists with corporate practices that violate them, in contradiction to the notion of corporate responsibility.

Women were and still are the child-bearers and the care workers. Services that ensured women's full and active participation were either drastically cut or privatized. User fees have a segregationist effect on poor children, boys and girls: children whose mother cannot pay are more often excluded. Women, because of their social position, were more affected by the reforms than their male counterparts and experience more obstacles to re-enter the labour market or engage in an income-generating activity.

The scale of job loss under the transition has been severe and has ended the period of job security. Such

Figure 3.4: Unemployment rate by sex, 1992-1998



Source: Compiled from NSO 1998 data

losses can be transient or a medium- or long-term state of unemployment can be a new phenomenon. It is not easy to establish a clear link between the scale of job loss and the extent of unemployment and to assess precisely the incidence of job loss among women and their current unemployment level, in the absence of systematic, sex-disaggregated data collection and dissemination.

Figure 3.4 shows the official unemployment rate for women and men. Official rates refer to those who are registered on the labour market exchange and are actively seeking work. The unemployment rate is the

proportion of the number of unemployed persons registered in the Employment Regulation Office to the economically active population. Women’s unemployment rates are higher than men’s and have remained within a range of 6 per cent to 10 per cent. However, official unemployment figures need to be treated with caution. On the one hand, there are limited benefits to being unemployed, thus leading to underestimation of job loss. On the other hand because of lack of benefits, the unemployed have to find means of survival, and usually it has been through self-employment in the informal sector and/or reliance on family and social networks and transfers. According to a 1998 survey by the Women’s Information Research Centre, lack of individual income does not mean that there is no household income. Only 0.4 per cent of households declared that they had no source of income at all. Almost all households had some form of income and engaged in income-generating activities (WIRC 1998). This means that many of those registered as unemployed also work in the informal sector. In the transition period the lines between employed/unemployed, registered workers and unregistered workers are blurred. The sets of unemployed workers and self-employed workers overlap to some extent, quite likely because informal sector work may not be considered "proper" employment, but instead a temporary income-generating or income-supplementing coping strategy in the short term.

It is likely that the factors leading to an underestimation of the unemployed using registered unemployment data are more important than factors which may lead to an overestimation, at least as far as self-employment in the informal sector is concerned. Other data sets show higher levels of unemployment. The 1998 Living Standard Measurement Survey indicates an average unemployment rate of 15 per cent, rising to between 30 per cent and 51 per cent in some areas and for some social groups, such as the urban very poor (UNDP/NSO 1999).

Surveys conducted by NGOs, as well as case studies reported in different documents, indicate a much higher rate of unemployed among the female population. Women are predominant in many sectors that were privatized, closed down or downsized for rationalization motives, but such surveys had no

Box 2: A Former Veterinarian

Ms. Ts is in her mid 30s and lives with her husband and three children in Ulziit soum of Middle Gobi *aimag*. Unemployed since the privatization of the veterinary services seven years ago (see Chapter 2, Box 2), she has contracted a voluntary disaster relief job helping families affected by *dzud*. Her husband is currently away, attending a course at the Management Academy.

Though herders are in desperate need of veterinarian services, they cannot afford to pay for privatized care. So Ms. Ts is trying hard to find some other way to gain an income. For a while she tried to use her own oven to bake bread for sale. But she found that most people could not afford to buy bread and the *soum* market was too small to continue this business. Then she tried using her sewing machine to sew clothes (*deel*) and boots (*gatal*) for the local market. But she had to stop because she developed eye-sight problems.

Ms. Ts has two sons and a daughter. She is worried about increasing abuse and alcoholism in families, especially among young men. She wants her own daughter to be a medical doctor.

Source: Based on an interview conducted as part of UN Disaster Management Relief Mission, May 2000

access to official data concerning the total number of jobs lost during the transition by gender. A precise analysis of the gender composition of job loss and unemployment is also complicated by missing data and uneven disaggregation by sex. However, many factors point to the higher incidence of job loss for women. Women were the first to be laid off upon closure or restructuring of the processing (light) industries, service and trade, those traditional industries where they were predominant. Another example is that after disintegration of government-owned agricultural farms and privatization of their livestock and machinery, more than 20,000 trained women lost their jobs (see Box 2).

Legislation which is ostensibly about reproductive rights, but which is a legacy of a pronatalist policy approach targeting women as bearers of children, can in a different economic climate, be used to discriminate against women, specifically older women, and violate their employment rights. And in this case, it can also be used to facilitate their exit from employment. 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 per cent of all "retired" women of working age, about 20,000 women aged 35-55, were pensioned off because of the number of their children. In the absence of adequate state entitlements to accompany such "social care," the clear presumption is that there is a breadwinner father.

The closing down of state enterprises has impacted not only women's access to secure jobs and social benefits, such as maternity leave, but many other services that were delivered through the work place. Child payments, for instance, were held back from the ex-husband's salary in state enterprise and transferred to the mother who had custody of the child. The dismantling of state enterprises and/or their privatization took this mechanism apart, without providing any alternative.

Women's income

An estimation of women's income levels and how they compare to men's is particularly difficult because

Table 3.2: Average monthly income by household head employment, 1997

Where household head works	Rural		
	Family size	% of total households	Monthly income per capita, tug
State establishment	5.4	1.3	27286.5
Cooperatives	4.9	3.2	15633.8
Company	5.6	13.6	17973.0
Government units	5.2	25.5	17769.9
State proprietorship	5.7	2.3	22616.5
Private herder	5.7	25.9	16711.9
Non profit institutions	5.0	0.3	13708.1
Retired	4.6	10.8	17197.0
Unemployed	5.1	13.9	13933.9
Other	5.5	3.2	11437.0

Source: NSO 1998.

whatever data sources exist tend not to be comparable, cannot be added together and are unevenly if at all disaggregated by sex. While the National Statistical Office has been conducting Household Income and Expenditure Surveys since 1996, the data is not disaggregated by sex. It estimates foodstuff consumption through different sources such as purchase in and out of the house, own production for own use, as well as foodstuff obtained as gifts.

The highest income-earning households are those whose heads of households are employed in state establishments, who constitute only 1.3 per cent of households. The number of income earners and source of income are not available and the accuracy of this differential is not clear. The extent to which income recorded from state sources is more likely to be closer to actual income than in other sectors, because it is more regulated, is not known. Table 3.2 indicates that

Table 3.3: Gender income disparities, 1997
(% of men and women according to income category)

Monthly income	Self employed	
	Male	Female
Low (1-20,000 tug)	58.8	69.4
Middle (20,001-60,000 tug)	36.4	25.9
High (60,001<)	4.8	4.6

Source: UNDP/NSO 1999

about 40 per cent of household heads are employed in the private sector, while about 30 per cent are employed in the public sector. Private sector incomes are somewhat less than in the state sector. In the Living Standards Measurement Survey conducted in 1998, those employed in government management were the highest category among the non-poor. Despite women's concentration in the public sector, there are no statistics on their individual income aggregated under household income in the data in the Statistical Yearbook Series.

Looking at income disaggregated by sex among the self-employed, Table 3.3 shows that the proportion of women in the lower income categories is higher than it is for men. A study in 1999 by USAID (2000) does not disaggregate value-added per male or female employee or per female- and male-owned businesses.

A survey on vulnerable groups income generation projects by the Women's Information Research Centre (WIRC 1997a) showed the same income disparities between men and women in the informal-unregistered employment sector. In addition, the survey explored perceptions of the relative contribution of women to household income. Gender responses to the question of who contributed the higher income to the household showed a clear difference of opinion. Almost 50 per cent of men as opposed to 36 per cent of women stated that it was they who earned most in the family. The fairly high percentage of women who were the principal wage earners in families seemed to be a phenomenon of the transition period whereby men who had changed employment or lost employment had either a lower income than they had previously in the former regime.

Whatever way the women earn their income, they are important contributors to family income, partly because two incomes have become essential for a basic standard of living for a family. Full-time employment for the head of household does not ensure that the family will stay above the poverty line. Though the traditional perception of males as the main bread-winners remains unchanged in many ways, the reality is changing. According to the WIRC 1998 survey on women's economic status, 36.0 per cent of women are generating a significant part of the family income: 33.1 per cent reported earning the major part of it, and 25.6 per cent

an amount equal to their husband's.

The meaning of disparities in individual income earned by women and men and in their relative contribution to household income, has to be interpreted with information about whether such income is pooled or what extent if any is retained individually, as well as who makes decisions over how to use the income. On this matter, there is very little information. In particular, when provisioning for different goods and services is now the responsibility of individuals women and men in households rather than the state, how this responsibility is shared becomes important. Do financial and spending decisions become the subject of divergences and conflict or matters of cooperative decision-making, particularly when living standards are falling and new goods and services become available?

Low income employment and self-employment

Having a job is not an insurance against poverty, the labour cost has also to be considered and women are here still at a disadvantage relatively to men. Poor people are concentrated in agriculture and services sectors (for urban areas) and in manufacturing, construction, education and health sectors in rural areas. Services, education and health are sectors where women hold an important share of jobs with low remuneration.

"Women most often work as junior and middle auxiliary positions and are concentrated in the lower income sectors of public and private sector Another evidence of gender discrimination is the concentration of women in the low paid jobs. Women occupy lower positions in the job hierarchy and men occupied more prestigious jobs that offer higher pay. As women occupy lower positions in the job hierarchy their salaries are correspondingly lower" (USAID 2000).

The USAID (2000) survey on the urban informal sector does not disaggregate income, or value-added data by sex. The one service category which is almost exclusively women's, however, is home-cooked meals and it is also the one in which value-added per business and per employee is the lowest. Overall, considering the sectors where women's labour force is dominant as well as their particular position in the hierarchy, women are more likely than men to join the ranks of poor and very poor. Women's share of

income is likely to be much lower than men's, at the aggregate level.

Women and poverty

That most Mongolian women and men have to some extent or other become exposed over the decade to sharply falling living standards can be deduced from the available macroeconomic data. Poverty has emerged as a new phenomenon that is measured and is an object of policy concern and programme intervention. One measure of the extent and meaning of poverty is the Living Standard Measurement Survey (LSMS). A study was conducted in 1995, which is not strictly comparable to the 1998 data.

The 1998 Living Standard Measurement Survey (UNDP/NSO 1999) points out that 36 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line in spite of an improvement in the macroeconomic situation. While the number of poor has not decreased significantly since the 1995 survey, the poverty is deeper and more severe than in the previous years. In 1998, "poverty depth (P1) ranges from 9.8 per cent to 13.9 per cent and poverty severity (P2) increased by 0.8 to 2.9. These imply that there has been an increase in the gap between average consumption expenditure of the poor and the poverty line and demonstrate that purchasing power of the poor in urban and rural areas to buy basic needs is falling. The average consumption expenditure of the poor is 10 per cent below the poverty line. This expresses that the number of poor is increasing and self-sustainability, to obtain basic essentials, is worsening" (UNDP/NSO 1999).

If the regional disparities are partly documented, the emerging social polarization receives less attention. The social disparity in Mongolia is most often understood in terms of "poor" and "non-poor" but the combination of various indicators suggests that women are particularly well represented in the first category.

The 1998 Living Standard Measurement Survey supplements the income/consumption measure of poverty, which is used to identify the poverty line and establish the scale of poverty with a wider set of indicators to capture other dimensions of poverty. Not all of them are sex-disaggregated. In particular, the unit of analysis is the household, and gender is analysed in terms of a distinction between male- and female-head-

ed households. The possibility of differential poverty between women and men in male-headed households cannot be explored and the implicit or explicit assumption is that household income and resources, claims and obligations are equally distributed.

The wider set of indicators includes access to electricity and safe water, nutrition, birth weight, as well as access to health and educational services. Some of these indicators have been used in preceding sections on health and education. These indicators together with data on own production for own consumption (discussed more fully under women and the rural economy below) give an indirect measure of the burden of women's time and energy in producing unpaid goods and services. Time and energy depletion is another dimension of poverty, which is strongly gendered.

For the period 1993-1998, the number of women heads of household increased by 44 per cent, from 37,813 to 54,530. According to the 1998 data, 47.1 per cent of urban female-headed households and 36.1 per cent of rural female-headed households are poor.

Female-headed households belong to one of the most vulnerable poverty group of society. 11,329 female-headed households have 5 and over children; 20,825, 3-5 children; 22,376 up to three children out of a total 54,530 female headed households. In 1999, in the capital Ulaanbaatar 29,000 households live under poverty line, of which 11,464 are female-headed households. In Orkhon *aimag*, female-headed households constitute 47.8 per cent of all families living under extreme poverty (UNDP/NSO 1999).

The poorer the household, the higher the proportion of female-headed households. (This is consistent with the income data presented in the earlier section). These proportions are much higher than the

Table 3.4: Female-headed households, 1995-1998

Year	Total number of households	Female-headed households	
		Number	% of total households
1995	514,100	44,077	8.6
1997	531,100	51,732	9.7
1998	535,300	54,530	10.2

Source: Compiled from *Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1998*

Table 3.5: Share of poor households, by gender of household head, %

	Female headed	Male headed
Very poor	24.6	75.4
Poor	18.3	81.7
Not poor (L)	11.6	88.4
Not poor (M)	13.5	86.5
Not poor (U)	12.7	87.3

Source: UNDP/NSO 1999: 27, Table 9

proportion of female-headed households as total households nationally (10% in 1998 according to NSO data). This disparity is even sharper in urban areas, where female-headed households are 33.9 per cent of the very poor. The average share of female-headed households in urban households is 19.4 per cent. Part of this poverty is due to the lower number of employed per household among female-headed households, not all of which are poor. While 57.6 per cent of female-headed households are not poor nationally, 72.4 per cent of male-headed households are not poor.

The reasons for the greater slide into poverty of female-headed households and the rising trend of female-headed households have barely been researched and are an issue for serious concern. While there is concern over domestic violence against women and alcoholism, which mainly affects men, as well as concern over family disintegration, the links with the rise in female-headed households and their much higher incidence of poverty is little known. The fact that female-headed households tend to have fewer income earners per household point to a set of reasons. The official divorce rate has not increased over the period, but this may underestimate the number of separations and/or desertion of husbands because not all unions and marriages are registered and not all separations lead to divorce. The range of livelihood options open to women who are sole income earners are more severely limited than men's, and their income-earning power is lower than men's. In rural areas, there are some indications that single female-headed households have not received their full entitlement of livestock as a result of privatization. The migration of young women and men from the rural areas also severely reduces the labour available for livestock rearing (see Chapter 2, Box 1).

Women in the urban economy private sector

Private sector development is a new element in the economic life of the transition period. The gradual devolution of social property to individuals by the state had a considerable impact on all aspects of people's lives and affected citizenship rights, property rights and women's rights in both the public and private sectors, creating a new class structure. The registration of legal ownership of assets in the head of household's name permits that person to conduct business, trade and acquire loans without the consent of his spouse. This can place family assets at risk in the case of unwise business transactions and over-extended financial credit. On the other hand, women need the consent of heads of households (usually husbands) to offer assets as a guarantee for loan or credit. Where the (male) head of household is also seeking loans for private enterprise, women's claims tend to take lower priority, according to press reports.

The divestment of state assets through vouchers and cash auctions appears to have benefited men mostly, although sex-disaggregated data is not available to measure the extent of this phenomenon. Women have thus started the transition process with a much lower endowment of physical assets than men and have thus been less able to accumulate capital and to compete in markets on the same terms than men.

In the Economic Status of Women in Transition survey (WIRC 1998), women were 45.2 per cent of those whose principal occupation was herding. The amount of livestock and equipment a household was entitled to was based on the number of family members and status in the herding collective. Again, assets have mostly been registered in the names of male heads of households and there is some evidence that single women herders received less than their entitlement in the distribution of assets resulting from privatization. As a result, female-headed families with young children are likely to have small, often unviable, herds and to fall into the lowest band of rural poor. While the number of women herders in male-headed households have helped to increase the size of the herd divested to them, women in these households have effectively reverted to unpaid family workers in household-based livestock production.

The unequal access of women to property under

privatization has had an impact on their ability to set up businesses, either through own funding or the use of assets as collateral for mobilizing credit. The banking and credit sector in Mongolia faces difficult problems. "The banking system is nearly insolvent....Not one of more than 700 firms surveyed in Ulaanbaatar in 1997 used commercial banks in any way—not for credits nor for deposits" (UNDP 2000b). Part of the reason for the near insolvency of the banking sector is the large volume of loans extended. The link of this credit to the purchase of state assets through auctions is not clear but these loans, to the extent that have been attributed to men mostly, because property is registered in men's name, would still give them an initial advantage in the accumulation of capital. New large private businesses have also since grown in mining, textiles, information technology, among others. There are many pointers to the gender biases operating in the fostering of this private sector. The administrative decisions regarding the disposal of these state assets, involve decision-making strata in the political and economic arenas, where women are not present. Access to tangible resources in markets—material, physical assets and credit—is dependent on access to intangible resources, information and social and political networks that affect capacity to negotiate the purchase of state enterprises. In this process, women are disadvantaged.

Under these conditions, the expectation can only be that business start-ups by women in medium and large enterprises would be much lower than men's. Many different sources support this assessment. There is no data on women's ownership of large enterprises. The Employers Association Survey conducted among 482 small and medium enterprises (employing between 1 and 21 people) reported that only one third of entrepreneurs were female. The proportion of women was higher in very small companies of 1-5 people (38 per cent of small and medium enterprises) but decreased with companies of progressively larger size. Within small and medium enterprises the share of women entrepreneurs ranged from 20 per cent in industry to 25 per cent in trade and 35 per cent in the service sector as a whole. Other surveys also peg the share of women's businesses at less than a third. The WIRC 1998 survey in Ulaanbaatar and *aimags* found

that 26.2 per cent of private enterprise owners were women.

These surveys have explored the role of access to credit, in particular micro-credit schemes, in women's activity as entrepreneurs. Their access to credit has been less than men's. Reasons appear to be the disparity in formal asset ownership by males and females, lack of sufficient "women-friendly" loan schemes and insufficient knowledge about them. Access to loan schemes is improving slowly (for example, as part of Mongolia's Poverty Alleviation Programme) but there is growing realization that access to loans is not enough by itself. Information, education, advice and local support on how to use and repay them as part of know-how for operating in a market economy are needed, especially for poorer women.

The informal sector

While the dynamics which led to the creation of the formal private sector are not inclusive of women, those that have stimulated the informal sector are different. Women have become very active in that sector, which has grown very rapidly in urban areas.

The informal sector in Mongolia is not a parallel, underground economy. Many of the businesses are registered taxpayers. The sector is subject to the Income Tax Law of Citizens Who Individually Engage in Business Activities Whose Income Cannot Be Determined Every Time. This law covers 32 primarily small-scale activities, which are usually family-based and under-counted in official statistics. In view of the dynamism and scale of this sector, efforts have been made to estimate the size of the value-added of the sector to supplement national income statistics, which do not capture it (USAID 2000). Estimates based on recent research suggest that this sector can add at least 30-38 per cent to reported GDP and employs about 60,283 nationally. The chief characteristic of the sector is that it is made up of microenterprises, made up of one-person businesses.

The sector has been classified into 5 major sub-sectors:

- Retail trade: Kiosks, counters, containers
- Financial services: Pawnshops, money changers
- Transport: Taxis, trucks, minibuses, garages

Table 3.6: The urban informal sector

Sector	Share of value-added (%)	Share of employment (%)	Value-added per employee UB (000 tug)	Women's share of employment (%)
Retail trade	61.99	50.02	2175.2	69
Financial services	1.07	1.24	1228.6	77
Transport	28.3	32.6	1716.95	2
Services	7.91	14.65	1069.99	70
Manufacture	0.72	1.5	1191.78	62
Total	100	100	1999.44	54

Source: Compiled from USAID 2000

Services: Cobblers, canteens, barbers, games, chemists, home-cooked meals

Manufacturing: Baked goods, soft drinks.

The gender polarization within the services sector is striking. Women are the majority of microentrepreneurs except, significantly, in transport. Informal taxis are equally split between full-time and part-time drivers. Men are the overwhelming majority of taxi businesses, which have the most capital requirement for entry. Men's ability to generate funds to purchase cars and/or to claim use of family cars for generating income is a measure of the disparities in access to assets and income even in a sector where women predominate. If they do predominate in that sector it is precisely because the cost of entry and to stay in business are low.

At the other end of the spectrum, ready-made meals are exclusively a women's activity. The category of ready-made meals was not included in the original design of the survey. When it emerged from the calculation of value-added that retail trade purchased ready-made meals from women operating from their own kitchens, this category was included. Even then, women have only partially been excluded. This sector, which accounts for 3.13 per cent of total value-added, reveals clearly the coping strategies of women. They have transformed meal preparation for own consumption within the household, an activity within the so-called "production boundary" by the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993, but not included as an SNA activity, into a marketed economic activity, pure-

ly under pressure to generate income, and in response to demand from urban consumers who may not have the time, the money, the facilities to prepare meals.

In contrast to the low financial or physical capital entry costs (with the exception of transport), the sector is rich in human capabilities: 25.19 per cent of informal sector entrepreneurs had a university education and 74 per cent had an education level above ten years of secondary school (the data is not disaggregated by sex). Whether the returns are commensurate to their skills is a moot question, but in any event such a high level of human resources can create opportunities for further development.

The other set of reasons why women are more active in the informal sector is to do with the fewer transaction costs. It is easier to obtain licences, and there are fewer problems with corruption and government pressure. This might be indicative of a situation in which in addition to not having many tangible financial resources, women tend not to have nor want to develop the intangible resources, networks, contacts, information to engage in business and deal with the procedures and norms associated with a formal business environment.

This sector has developed without access to formal credit channels. In fact, a comparison with the formal sector shows that nationally pawnshops generate more than twice the business of commercial banks. While there is no breakdown by sex, family and personal loans emerge as the overwhelming source of credit (around 80%) for informal sector businesses, whereas bank loans account for less than 1 per cent. There is no information on who the clients of women who have set up as financial intermediaries in the informal sector are, but the data suggests that the clients are not in the informal sector. They seem likely to be private customers. This recently available survey data has been very unevenly and patchily disaggregated by sex. Are women involved in money changing as much as pawnbroking, for instance? The research raises a whole host of fascinating questions about women's involvement in this business and how this is linked to other economic sectors, such as cross-border trade, which involves currency exchange with an

inconvertible currency such as the Chinese yuan.

Since the study is mainly geared to estimating how much the informal sector can add to GDP, at a point in time, it does not generate information about the ease of exit from the sector, and the fluctuating nature of income, which is usually a feature of informal activity. The degree of risk which such livelihoods represent on a sustained basis is likely to be considerable, owing to the conditions under which the informal sector is able to have lower costs and charge lower prices. The sector is dynamic because its prices are competitive. Prices are competitive because costs are lower. Costs are lower because there is lower personal income tax and self-employed people can choose whether they pay social insurance. "Among Ulaanbaatar counter traders, 72 per cent do not pay social insurance and only 46.7 per cent pay for health insurance" (USAID 2000:17). The trade-off that the self-employed have to make even in cities where there is consumer demand is clear. Present earning is at the cost of future livelihood security, social and health protection. The extent to which the self-employed women and men in the sector overlap with formal sector employment and have other sources of income is not clear.

Women in the rural economy private sector

One of the most dramatic impacts of the transition has been the switch back to the livestock economy at the household level. This is the sector in which broad dimensions of poverty and insecurity as well as increasing inequalities among herders are most manifest. Privatization of herds has had the most important ramifications because of its scale and because of the social, economic and environmental interactions in the short, medium and long term. The number of herder households increased by 171 per cent between 1989 and 1998 and the number of herders by 206 per cent during the same period. Herder households now constitute 35.9 per cent of total households (NSO 1998). The number of herders per herder household increased from 1.96 in 1989 to 2.21 in 1998. Private livestock rose by 357 per cent, while the goat herd increased by 117

per cent since 1989. The surge in the number of herder households indicates that there has been an entry into herding by retrenched workers. "The percentage of the labour force in agriculture has *increased* steadily since 1990 from 33 per cent to 49 per cent in 1998" (UNDP 2000b).

Nomadic households are units of both the productive and reproductive economies.² Households are differentiated with rights and responsibilities divided by gender. Traditional nomadic herding life reflects clear distinctions between men's and women's work domains, but men and women tend to help each other in their own sphere of responsibilities, and boys and girls are also involved in this mix of cooperation and specialization. Moreover, seasonal work such as shearing, combing and hay-making are undertaken in conjunction with relatives and neighbours. The care of animals, for example, is also shared, with the larger cattle, horses, camels taken out to pasture and attended by men and the smaller animals, such as sheep and goats, cared for by women. Women and girls process dairy products such as milk curds, cream, butter and cheese for both home consumption and for sale in the urban centres. The provisioning for basic goods and services such as materials for housing, domestic fuel, transport, textile, clothing and foodstuffs is obtained through livestock processing and by-products.

Privatization has affected this organization of the livestock-based household economy in two ways. On the one hand, it is blurring some distinctions between men's and women's work as women and boys take on men's tasks. On the other, some traditional work divisions are often strongly adhered to although the volume of productive work (both paid and unpaid) has increased and these tasks continue to be women's responsibility. In effect, both the flexibility in some areas (where women and boys take on men's tasks) and the rigidity in others (where women's tasks and obligations remain theirs alone despite an increase in the workload) have combined to intensify women's work. Changes in herd composition, from single species to mixed species in order to maximize self-

² Productive work refers to both marketed and non-marketed production, included in the System of National Accounts as part of GDP. Most non-marketed productive work is not recorded in GDP, because it is unpaid and lumped together under unpaid women's work. Reproductive work includes those other unpaid activities that mostly women do, which reproduce the capacity to produce and are not included in the national accounts, i.e., unpaid care work as well as meal preparation and housework.

sufficiency and minimize risk, have increased the demand for labour to manage them. Women and children (especially boys) have taken on some of this additional work, previously the domain of men. The increase in milk production from expanded herds has produced more work in processing milk-products, traditionally women's work in the *ger*.

While herding skills and techniques are a crucial factor for the wealth of a household, which is much dependent on its male members, the labour available on the female side is an equally crucial factor for herd growth. There is a clear limit to the number of animals a woman can milk and how much milk she can process. Because these daily routine jobs are the exclusive responsibility of women, their labour is in fact the first limitation to herd expansion (Bruun and Odgaard 1996: 84). Additional milk production and processing does not necessarily generate increased cash income, because of poor access to markets and the fact that milk products are low value goods, unlike cashmere.

There are many indications of an emerging informal labour market for women, men and boys in the livestock sector, particularly in periods of peak labour needs. One is the increasing concentration of the herd among households with larger herds, beyond their ability to look after them with family labour alone. On the other end of the scale is the higher concentration of herders (over 75% with a herd size below subsistence and with the need to find supplementary income sources).

In addition to increased need for labour for herding, increased labour is needed to compensate for the reduction in local services and products, formerly provided by the state and available for purchase or as payment in kind. This has required more self-provisioning in families. For women, it has involved making more household food items such as bread, and a return to traditional crafts, making clothes, boots and felt for tents.

Productive and reproductive work have increased for herder women, lengthening the (already long) working day more than for men. Their labour appears to be over-utilized, though no systematic time-use data is available as yet. There is, however, a variety of indirect evidence. For example, herding women participating in a non-formal education project in the Gobi *aimags* reported lack of time for learning as a problem.

Listening to the early morning radio programme was not possible because they had to milk animals; some women said the men and children in the family listened for them and took notes for them, rather than doing the milking for them (Robinson and Solongo 1999).

The 1998 Living Standards Measurement Survey shows that for rural households as a whole, own consumption, which relies on self-provisioning, accounts for 51.5 per cent of total source of livelihood. This amount reflects the food processing, textile, candle making, housing textile, footwear, fuel processing activities of women in *ger* households from livestock and livestock by-products. For the urban groups, by contrast, this own production is a very small share. On the other hand these households receive gifts in all income quintiles ranging from 11.6 per cent to 17.2 per cent. A substantial proportion of these gifts come from rural sources: meat, milk, eggs. In exchange, urban relatives and friends typically provide flour and non-food items. This customary, widely practiced transfer or informal barter between urban and rural households has not been documented.

There is no comparable data for the period before the transition. That the share of own production has increased since the transition can be inferred from the fall in production in imports as well as the rise in the cost of living leading to a lower ability to purchase goods and the decline of meso-level state services outlined in the earlier part of the chapter. The scale of the category own consumption in rural areas gives a measure of the intensification of women-intensive "own production."

Herders' responses to the impact of the transition have been to increase the herd size to cope for the need to find extra income and to diversify the herd in relation to market opportunities. In the first instance, herder families aim to be self-sufficient but they need to sell part of their produce on the market to raise cash income to provide for various family needs. It seems that most bartering is done by men but women also trade on a scale and in patterns that are difficult to discern with the existing information.

Cash income came from the sale of livestock and animal by products and overall 93.5 per cent of herders traded in goods such as wool, down, animal skins,

cattle, meat, milk and dairy products. These goods are sold for cash or still bartered with intermediaries, usually middlemen, for flour, candles, matches, rice, sugar, tobacco, and salt. The main problems for herders in marketing their produce and raising their revenue are the question of transport, distance from the market, lack of market information and dependence on a small network of middlemen, and consequently the ability to bargain over price.

Another disadvantage for herding communities has been the breakdown of the service industries and most especially the dairy industry in many rural areas. The opportunity to sell dairy produce thus also depends on the geographic location of the herding community. The differences in access to markets have amplified the disparities between the main rural provinces. Milk and dairy products, being perishable, are far more difficult to transport to areas where purchasing power exists. Only a small percentage of herders were engaged in trading these goods in the southern and eastern regions. Conversely, the central regions account for 33.7 per cent of sold milk and dairy products due to a thriving local market and access to regional urban markets. Without doubt, herder families needed to engage in the cash economy far more in the transition period with the rise in user charges in schools and in particularly boarding schools expenses, which concern mostly herders, as well as health.

Women and the cashmere commodity chain

With the rising pressure to generate income, women in particular have responded to the emerging market opportunities. One of the fundamental changes in herding has been the diversification of herds through the increase in or introduction of cashmere goats. This change has been principally driven by women and, in southern regions, it is a major source of income for female herders (see Box 3).

The remarkable business acumen of Ms R.D, with a rapidly expanding formal business characterized by modern business strategy and management practices, represents only part of the situation confronting most women in the cashmere commodity chain. In fact, the scale and nature of women's involvement are quite different further up the commodity chain. It is estimated that goats have increased from 5 million in 1990 to 11

million in 1999. The ratio of sheep to goats has reached 1:1 compared to 3:1 at the beginning of the decade, indicating the switch to goats, traditionally a woman's livestock in the household division of labour. The sheer volume of growth has many ramifications for all levels of the economy and for the sustainability of the natural resource base. This increase in herd size is in response to both demand and supply factors.

Mongolia is now the world's second largest producer of cashmere after China, and cashmere is a fast-growing export. Mongolia's competitive advantage is that it is a "low cost" producer. This advantage exists because extensive pasture land is needed and the processing of "raw" cashmere is very labour-intensive. Raw cashmere is indeed a misnomer, because the quantity and quality supplied depends on a production process stretching from the management of the quality of the pasture, water, supplies, breeding and the processing of the hair into "raw cashmere." Mongolia's competitiveness rests on the fact that vast supplies of pasture land and the intensive labour required for rearing goats and processing hair is

Box 3: A diversified business enterprise

Ms R. D. has developed a diversified business base in the Gobi-Altai, in an area located close to the main road linking all the western *aimags* to Ulanbaatar. Since graduating from Arvanghai Pedagogical College, she worked as a teacher for 17 years. In 1994, she started in business by trading cross-border with China in cashmere, wool, meat, hides and skins produced from her parents' livestock. She accumulated enough capital to start her own business and secured a loan from the *aimag* government in 1995. She set up a small sewing shop that made clothing and other textile products. She then branched into a related activity, furniture, to diversify her business and reduce risk. Wool is used to make mattresses which are sold in the furniture division. The company also opened a marketing centre to consolidate the links between the furniture and textile parts of the business. She bought the former state-owned vegetable and tree plantation, which she has reorganized to grow and sell trees to the Ministry of Agriculture, which replants them in a scheme to fight desertification. She has also opened up a hotel and is developing wholesale and retail trade and consumer services.

Ms R.D. aims to become the western regional leader in producing high quality, low cost foodstuffs and beverages, to be a significant supplier to domestic cashmere and other livestock raw material processors as well as a direct exporter of raw materials to neighbouring countries and to establish the first local non-bank financial institution, such as a credit union or a savings and loan cooperative.

Source: Gobi Business News, July-August 2000, number 4

available at low cost.

It takes a woman between 15 and 90 minutes to comb a goat. To comb a kilo of pure Mongolian breed cashmere would take between 1 and 4 hours, on the assumption that a goat from this breed yields 250 grams a year. The hair then has to be cleaned, sorted and graded by colour and packed. Raw cashmere is sold in rural markets at a price ranging from 13\$US to 30\$US a kilo. A women's sweater weighing 750 grams can fetch over 500\$US in New York. The value-added of the commodity is earned much further downstream from the moment the "raw" cashmere is sold to intermediaries.

As a result of pressures to generate income and opportunities to earn income through the sale of cashmere, the use of pasture land and women's labour has intensified considerably. Apart from year-round activities to rear the herd, spring is the time of peak activity. If combing has to be concentrated over one month, a herd size of about 100 goats would on average require about three hours a day of combing alone for women. (In fact 85 per cent of herders have a herd size below 100, not all of which are cashmere goats—barely enough to live on). This peak activity in spring coincides with other peak spring time activity related to livestock management and domestic work for women.

The marketing and processing of raw cashmere

While women are heavily engaged in production and processing of raw cashmere, their share of marketing, their employment and business activities in factories downstream and the control over the income generated is less well-known. Marketing seems to be a male-oriented activity, although more women have been trading in their own right. Livestock trading was an activity controlled by the state before privatization and the sole remaining state producer of cashmere, Gobi Cashmere, is now due for privatization. With privatization and liberalization, sellers have diversified into other markets, most notably in the cross-border trade with China, where cashmere is exchanged for cash. The extent to which such a market opportunity has increased women's entry into marketing is not clear, nor are the implications of their acquisition of yuan, a non-convertible currency through this process, as well as their disposal through informal sector financial

intermediaries. The scale of the cross-border trade with China has led to a Chinese import ban, which has eased the pressure on the price of raw cashmere, which is nevertheless in strong demand locally.

There are now some 30 organizations processing cashmere at one stage or other and they are producing below capacity. Many raw cashmere producers however continue to sell to or barter with intermediaries. Without access to price information in different markets, other market institutions and infrastructure, and indeed policy channels, the terms of trade would be the least favourable to the isolated rural producer, who may not be able to bargain for higher prices. Under these conditions, the returns from cashmere trading, which rests on a product base of natural resources and essentially women's labour are not likely to be appropriated by women producers. To the extent that they are sellers down the commodity chain, emerging markets have opened up a space for entering other spheres of economic activity and potentially for better control over household decisions over allocation of resources.

The sustainability of cashmere production and of the livestock sector

Issues concerning the sustainability of cashmere production—an important source of livelihood for women in many rural regions—and of the livestock sector generally currently centre around whether it can still be assumed that pasture is a cheap renewable resource, one will continue to sustain Mongolia's competitiveness in the livestock sector. In fact, women and men herders, responding to a combination of policy measures and market forces during the transition have intensified pressure on the natural resource base. Experts in natural resource management are concerned that, with the sheer scale of livestock expansion, the carrying capacity of pasture land has been reached and that *dzud* type disasters (with high livestock death and disease) are aggravated by human activity.

While the herd size has increased, acreage under pasture has actually decreased. In addition to longer term trends such as rising temperatures, which are already leading to increasing desertification and loss of species diversity, overgrazing is an important factor in the degradation of pasture land. The increase in herd size has also increased water needs at a time when

wells that used to be managed under the previous regime have been allowed to deteriorate. As a result, pasture land is not used due to lack of water. Goats have the most negative environmental impacts among livestock, contributing more to topsoil erosion, overgrazing of prime grass than other domestic species. While livestock has been privatized, pasture land is not, and this is already emerging as an issue for debate and advocacy. There is no effective system of pasture land management for sustainable use, with the collapse or erosion of state regulation of the agricultural and livestock sector at the meso level. The maintenance of wells has eroded, mechanisms such as livestock insurance have nearly disappeared, with only 0.1 per cent of livestock insured. The infrastructure to manage irrigation, the institutional regulatory mechanisms to manage pasture land cannot be generated at an individual herder level. Herders pay a per head livestock tax after the first 150 head. This tax is at the moment a revenue-raising measure which sustains the local budget. There is a proposed pasture land-use fee as part of a draft land payment law. The proceeds it is argued could be earmarked for pasture land restoration, but this is no consensus as yet on this issue.

Another impact of the policy of leaving private herders to cope with the economic costs and opportunities of transition is that herders, many of whom are new and inexperienced, have allowed the pure cashmere herd to cross-breed. The cross-bred Gobi-Gurvan Saikhan, although sturdier, yields more wool (cashgora) but at a much lower price. For women, this means lower value-added and much more combing per goat, a further intensification of time and energy use in processing.

Current prescriptions for sustaining livestock combine natural resource management and productivity increases through increasing quality of the hair, and thus of raw cashmere. None of these measures for product development, market know-how, increasing productivity rather than herd size, and thus maintaining export competitiveness can be effectively developed without the active involvement of women as the direct producers, yet their presence and voice in this arena are not discernible.

The sustainability of herd expansion has recently been put in question by the severity of the *dzud*

disaster, which seems to have been amplified by the overgrazing of pasture land, the increase in herd size in affected areas and the dependence of herders on a sole source of livelihood for multiple needs. The issue of its sustainability in terms of women's labour, and of boys' labour has not yet been an issue of policy concern. Yet the two phenomena are intricately interlinked for resource management and human development issues within a rights-based framework.

Conclusions

The chapter shows the complex ways in which women's position in the economy has been transformed by the transition and indeed how gender relations at all levels have influenced its course. While both women and men have lost employment and rights in the shrinking state sector, women have been affected more and in different ways than men. They are disadvantaged in the formal sector because of their care-giving obligations, having lost state entitlements that enabled them to take up paid employment. In the labour market, they are subject to discrimination as actual and potential child-bearers and higher educational qualifications do not make them more competitive than men. The gender norms that designate men as heads of household and the power relationships and mechanisms surrounding the allocation of resources have deprived them of assets disposed of by the state. This has had a cumulative impact on their ability to start, sustain and expand businesses in the formal medium- and large-scale sector.

Unlike men, women have been less sponsored by privatization measures. In urban areas in particular, they have responded to the onslaught on their livelihood and living standards by setting-up informal sector businesses in the service sector, taking advantage of the opportunities opened up by import liberalization and the gap left by the collapse of state services. The informalization of these activities has left them exposed to the risks of the market, against which they lack the means to protect themselves in the longer term.

In the rural sector, herd expansion through asset disposal has been seen as a social safety net during the transition. The increase in herder activity due to increasing herd size is accounted for and reflected in

output, income and employment figures, which treat herder households as part of the rural private sector. But women are less recognized in their own right as herders and tend to be considered as unpaid family labour because of the conflation of households as production units and as social units, with a designated head. The extent to which such economic activity, a considerable part of agricultural economic production and income can be seen as a social safety net is arguable. The term is usually used for expenditures, transfers, or subsidies, which compensate for inability to generate income from the market and as protection from severe income and consumption poverty. In fact state provided transfers are a small proportion of livelihood sources.

Part of the reason that there is no proactive policy targeting women's economic activity, is the prevailing stance of seeing them as a socially vulnerable groups, victims of the economic change. It is clear that public expenditure reduction have had drastic and differential impacts on women and men and different groups of women and men. But the magnitude of this impact is not known and there is no mechanism to trace effect of macroeconomic policy changes. There is no corresponding mechanism to trace the sources and the impacts of the state's taxation and revenue generation policy.

The reduction in public expenditure as well as privatization have transferred costs to the unpaid, own production and domestic sector of the economy, where women predominate. The costs, unmeasured—perhaps an invisible economic safety net—are borne by rural women who work to produce the goods that families cannot afford in the market and the state no longer produces. It is a situation which is in contradiction to the commitments made throughout the 1990s to uphold their economic and social rights.

How to uphold economic rights and how to shape the economic policies and institutions towards sustainable and equitable development is the crucial challenge for women's economic empowerment in Mongolia.

Chapter 4: Women's Political Participation

In traditional nomadic society, women were excluded from the formal political system and their sphere of influence in decision-making was circumscribed within the household. The contemporary perception of the position of women in decision-making in traditional Mongolian society is very much influenced by popular narratives of the lives of queens as influential consorts of important rulers.

The 1921 revolution brought sweeping changes in women's political status, ending their formal subordination to men and granting them citizenship rights. Mongolia was organized as a one-party state, with strong political and economic links to and under the patronage of the Soviet Union. The principles of authority and hierarchy within the formal structures of power, decision-making and administration prevailed. Membership in the party was a necessary route to becoming a candidate and to being elected to national or local political office. The party and state administrative machinery was centrally organized, with a system of top-down control from the capital city to the *aimags* and *soums*. The latter functioned as local extensions of state power and were primarily responsible for providing public services.

The Constitution guaranteed equal rights to all citizens irrespective of origin, religious belief and sex and the state introduced egalitarian measures in line with the socialist principles of universal equality. In 1926 the legal framework guaranteeing free participation of women in politics and in the labour market was established. In addition, Mongolia became party to important international human rights treaties including:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1924, Mongolian women were given an equal right to vote and to be elected. In 1924, the Mongolian Women's Federation was founded as part of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. Funded by the state, it provided the mechanism for women's participation in the formal political system. Since men and women had not been considered equal in the political sphere before 1921, party policy was that women's participation had to be positively encouraged. A quota system was established to ensure 25 per cent parliamentary representation by women. As a result, women were elected to local government (30% in 1931), and to the Baga Khural, the country's highest legislative body at the time. Women were appointed ministers of state and heads of government departments.

Despite party sponsorship, women's representation was limited and power in decision-making was not really shared between men and women. The political structure remained male-dominated. The revolution had not been a process of profound social transformation and did not challenge either the underlying norms and structures of gender inequality or the tensions and conflicts in gender relations in Mongolian society. Women were considered as a group that needed special protection and consideration but not as an important driving force for political development and

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

progress. Explicit rules and mechanisms governed the terms of access of women to the public sphere. They defined prohibited occupations for women, in what are in fact strategic sectors of the economy and included specific measures to promote women's employment but at the same time make this conditional on their reproductive obligations. A quota of 25 per cent, rather than 50 per cent, which would have been consistent with the ethos of equal rights, is an expression of party policy toward women, despite their emphasis on universal literacy and education and their encouragement of women to take up professional posts.

When the democratic reform process started in 1990, Mongolian women were a highly educated mass, but burdened with double or triple duties and were unassertive "passive" subjects with regard to state policy-making. The democratization process and the 1992 Constitution reaffirmed the equal rights of male and female citizens to civil and political activities. This process took place in a context of economic collapse and of the weakening of the political and administrative links with the dissolved Soviet Union. However, the bureaucracy, the rules, mechanisms and structures remain an important force as far as decision-making and policy implementation is concerned. The party has undergone a process of internal reform and the institu-

tions of both state and party have been particularly involved in shaping the transition. The nature of the involvement of party women in the shift from a one-party state to a multiparty democracy is not, however, well documented. Nor is women's influence over the process of transition, especially in relation to how and what political structures and organs were created and negotiated among the established centres of political and administrative power.

The process of reform was undertaken by existing state and party actors but in a context shaped by new actors and meso-level institutions outside the formal political system. The democratization process has involved both the transformation of old structures and the emergence of new institutions and organizations. It has been accompanied by vigorous political debate, free expression and participation as well as an active private press. Over 20 different political parties have been created, which contest elections and shape the policy agenda. NGOs previously associated with and controlled by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party grew more autonomous, and in 1997, all NGOs became formally autonomous from both government and political parties.

Women have played an active part in the democratization process and have been particularly dynamic in the growth of civil society and the voluntary sector as well as in the media. Women's NGOs have been active in framing and scrutinizing the laws guaranteeing civil, political rights and prohibiting discrimination against women, using CEDAW widely as the framework in drafting new laws and amending existing ones.

In the course of these changes, the quota system for women's representation was abandoned. The emphasis was put on enacting laws that specify the institutional framework and govern the functions of parliament. A constitutional court has been established to safeguard the constitution, which enshrines the principle of separation of powers of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The Great Hural is the highest organ of the state and the supreme legislative power. Parliament approves the state budget and

Table 4.1: Women in political decision-making, 1997

	Total	Women
President of Mongolia	1	0
Speaker of Parliament	1	0
Deputy Speaker	1	0
Prime Minister	1	0
Members of Parliament	76	8
Cabinet Members	9	1
State Secretaries	9	0
Head of the Presidential Office	1	0
National Security Council	1	0
Governors (<i>aimag, soum, city, district</i>)	373	9
Ambassadors	28	0
Chairpersons of Local <i>Hurals</i>	22	0

Source: WIRC 1997b

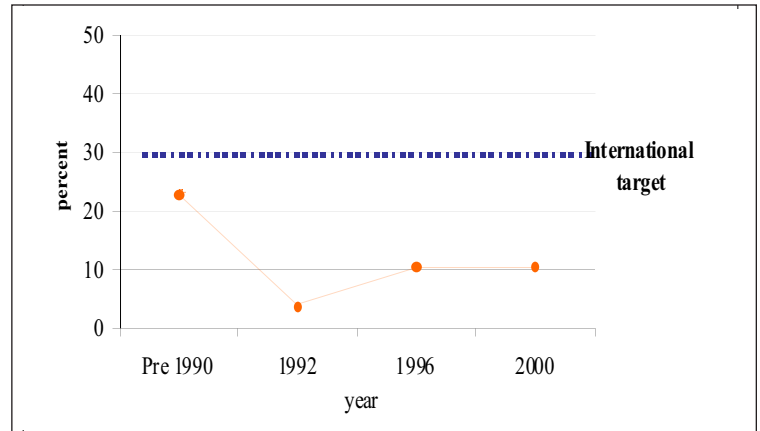
determines the legal basis for local self-governing authorities. While the powers of Parliament are qualified by those of the President, the Cabinet and the Constitutional Court, its representative functions and thus responsiveness and accountability to the electorate are not clearly specified. There are few mechanisms to ensure close channels of communication between the electorate and their parliamentary representatives. Moreover, there are few institutional mechanisms to strengthen the oversight functions of government, to ensure participation and accountability within the new governance structures.

The political reform also concerns the local levels of government. To preserve the link between central and local levels of administration, the Prime Minister continues to appoint *aimag* governors, who in turn appoint *soum* governors. But in addition, local *hurals* of citizens' representatives are now elected under the multiparty system. These bodies nominate gubernatorial candidates for approval by the Prime Minister, who can however override the local *hurals'* choice. In terms of fiscal decision-making, local revenues are raised from economic entities and organizations operating at local levels, from individual herder households to major industrial corporations, but the central government has the right to determine whether and which entities' taxes accrue to the central rather than the local budget. On the other hand, when *aimags* have revenue shortfalls, central governments allocate subsidies, tied to specific purposes, thus limiting the extent to which local bodies can control local budgetary allocations.¹

Women's political and decision-making representation

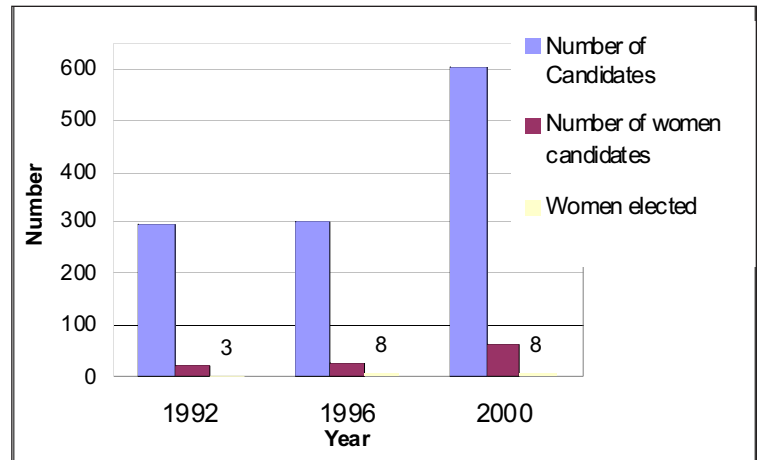
Women's political empowerment has many dimensions. The political arena encompasses the electoral process and machinery, recruitment into the legislature as well as the exercise of decision-making power within the legislative, and the executive themselves. The

Figure 4.1: Women's share of seats in Parliament



Source: Compiled from GCSD 2000b

Figure 4.2: Women candidates for Parliament



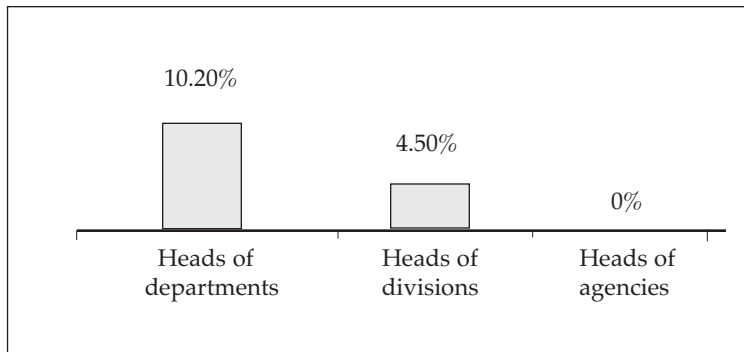
Source: Compiled from GCSD 2000b

international target for women's representation in the legislature is 30 per cent.

Women's share of parliamentary seats fell sharply after the transition, from 23 per cent to 3.9 per cent in the 1992 election, and rose to 10.5 per cent in the election of 1996, maintaining the same share in 2000. While this dimension of gender equality shows a clear regress, an examination of some related data shows a more complex picture. First, the number of women candidates has nearly tripled since 1992 (Figure 4.2), although their election chances have worsened. While 13 per cent of women candidates were elected in 1992, and 28 per cent in 1996, only 12 per cent were elected in 2000.

¹ Only four out of the 21 *aimags* are self-financing currently.

Figure 4.3: Women executive officers in central governing bodies, 1997



Source: Compiled from GCSD 2000b

A snapshot of women in political decision-making in 1997, reveals that the low representation of women is even worse across decision-making organs and structures in the executive (Table 4.1).

In the higher levels of administration, women have an equally low profile, although the process for achieving these positions is different. With the number of women currently at middle levels of management, the trend is for a gradual increase in women’s share over time, unless there are strong gender biases and /or discrimination in promotion in public administration and the state sector (Figure 4.3).

In the judiciary, 70 per cent of all provincial judges and 50 per cent of all city judges are women, even when women have a lower retirement age than men. Higher level positions in the Supreme Court are, however, dominated by men.

What is to be done?

The transition decade has been and continues to be a learning experience for women engaged in the political sphere, engaging the women’s movement in a continuing debate. Many facets of women’s disempowerment in politics have been explored, along with the reasons that explain this complex situation and strategies to address it. Three main strands have been identified: the political dynamics since the transition, the deep-seated barriers to women’s participation embedded in socio-cultural and economic factors and issues of women’s agency and self-empowerment.

The relative importance of these factors has been a continuous subject for debate and for determining strategies for women’s empowerment in the political sphere. Such debates are conducted mostly by NGOs and by parliamentary women’s caucuses that have been created across party lines. In fact, the intersections between NGOs and political parties and between individual candidates and NGOs and the media are numerous.

One of the earliest NGOs, the Liberal Women’s Brain Pool (LEOS), created in 1992, has focused on promoting women’s political rights and participation in parliament and decision-making. They conducted a survey among over 70 middle and top level managers in nine ministries, to discover the reasons for women’s marginal occupancy of decision-making positions. Among managers:

- 34.1 per cent said women were marginalized because of their sex;
- 24.3 per cent said women were marginalized because of their reproductive duties;
- 19.5 per cent said women were marginalized because of their household burden and limited time for self-development;
- 12.2 per cent said women were marginalized because they had lower skills.

The answers show that deep-seated social constructions of gender identity and of women’s place in society are considered to be very important. Apart from the barriers to do with women’s obligations and how women and perceived and treated, there is a sense that the reluctance women have to enter politics are to do with their own self-worth and definition of what they can and cannot do.

Strategies for change

The small share of women candidates and women elected in 1992 has focused attention on the reasons for this phenomenon as well as what to do to change it. Strategies centred on assessing the role of the multi-

party system and introducing quotas for parliamentary representation. There was a greater focus on how the multiparty system is being shaped and how party machineries in a market-driven economy function to capture power, define party programmes and set the policy agenda, as well as how the parties are organized, recruit members and select candidates.

A roundtable meeting of women NGOs entitled "The Election System and Women's Participation" was held in November 1995, at which it was suggested that election social psychology was driven primarily by economic and political elites rather than by the general public or ordinary electors. The nomination and election of women has more to do with the mechanisms of the political system rather than the construction of gender stereotypes or electors' psychology. Men and women, and women particularly, are not seriously concerned about the electoral system and of the impact it will have on their daily lives. There is a tendency for women candidates and women's organizations to limit their activities within some fractions of political parties, and not analyse deeply how these systems or fractions target different social groups.

With regard to the quota, the first coalition of women NGOs before the 1996 election proposed reintroducing the quota as the best way to increase women's representation in political decision-making. The proposal focused on instituting a quota system for political parties since the party top decision-makers are usually the ones who decide the selection and nomination processes for potential candidates. At the same time, the National Programme for the Advancement of Women (which was adopted after the first National Forum of Women NGOs, "Women in Social Development," in 1996) set a target of at least 20 per cent in the representation of women in central and local state and government top decision-making positions, both elected and appointed, by the year 2000.

The coalition of women NGOs established before the 2000 election issued an appeal to the political parties and voters to encourage more women in the selection and nomination process. While between 1996 and 1990, the number of women who presented themselves

as candidates more than doubled, they came from a small base and were not enough to make an impact, not least because the number of women elected remained the same. Neither the quota, which is still controversial within the women's movement, nor the target, which has been accepted by all, has been achieved.

The aftermath of the 2000 election has sharpened views that the focus should be on getting more women candidates selected by party machineries. The analysis is that the latest election experiences show that the citizens vote more for the party rather than for candidates. Who is elected is not so much a matter of the candidate's education, experience or political will. Judging by this, it seems that the best strategy is to work with political parties in order to promote more women in political decision-making positions. For example, if the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) had nominated a maximum number of women for the 2000 parliamentary election, the public would have supported a maximum number of women to seats in Parliament. This would enable women's caucuses or fractions attached to the political parties to play an important role in increasing women representation in political life.

The gendered nature of party politics

An examination of what is needed to achieve the target for women's representation through substantially increasing the number of women candidates, is illuminating for an understanding of women's situation. How is increasing women's selection as candidates within all parties likely to win elections and within constituencies which are safe seats for these parties, rather than marginal ones?

The first issue concerns the reason so few women are selected in the first place, presumably because they are women and how women's issues and women's place in the public sphere is perceived. The analysis of the programs and platforms of political parties and individual candidates running for the 2000 election mainly focused on improving the social safety schemes for women and increasing various benefits for them.

These platforms and programmes lacked concrete methods and strategies to implement the promised activities. There was no understanding of the women's empowerment as an issue of rights, nor of the importance of women's voice or contributions in shaping the overall policy agenda. This definition and treatment of women's issues in party programmes begs the question of why this is the case and how to address it in order to increase women's presence in political parties and their leverage over party programmes.

Irrespective of the issue of women politicians' leverage for a gender-sensitive agenda, there still remains the question of how to increase the selection of women within the recruitment and selection process. Here the same patterns obtain as were analysed in the chapters concerning social and economic status. If the electorate does not vote according to candidates but parties, there is still the problem that the party machineries select the candidates. The gender biases in the processes and criteria for selection are pertinent.

The channels for recruitment into the party are youth organizations, and colleges and universities. While women are an overwhelming majority in higher education, the barriers or opportunities to their recruitment are less known. The most important avenue for preparing candidates with the knowledge and competencies for political activity is the Political Academy, which few women attend. Yet the degree of educational attainment in the profile of the candidate cannot be the sole criterion. How a candidate is selected depends on his or her sponsorship or patronage by political networks and/or his or her own resources. Women's exposure to these networks is much lower than men's, in ways that are very under-researched.

The state and party bureaucracy networks prior to the transition were not an enabling environment for women to translate their education and profession into political achievement. How these have evolved since the transition is pertinent to the issue of whether the environment of democratic pluralism will open spaces for women to become political actors. In the transition to democracy, women have lost out on their political entitlements, in much the same way that they lost out in the privatization process. What difference has a

democratic environment of freedom of speech and participation made? To assess this it is important to consider that the political environment is increasingly shaped by a market-driven economy, where considerable financial resources are needed to run for office and where economic centres of power can play a key role in shaping decisions and in promoting and influencing political actors. Here the economic conditions facing women and the assessment of their political worth by those holding the levers of power and access to power become important. Women's vibrant and proactive involvement in some 40 women NGOs is celebrated and has strong roots in their educational attainment and commitment and engagement with public issues. But this dynamism and public spirit is in sharp contrast to their continuing low profile in formal instances of politics and decision-making, and in ways which are strongly connected with their economic and social situation.

Women's involvement in political decision-making is limited by the way gender relations and perceptions of gender identity permeate traditional political culture, in particular among the party machineries who act as gate-keepers for entry into politics. But even if these barriers could be eliminated through effective advocacy about women's considerable weight in Mongolian society and economy, which would affirm and legitimize their political status, there still remains the question of how to recruit women in sufficient numbers. This would require a concerted effort to remove the barriers to participation in political activity for women or to encourage women least disadvantaged by them, barriers which stem from lack of self-confidence and courage to stand as a candidate. Such barriers include, to begin with, unpaid work and other obligations in the domestic sector and inadequate financial and social resources to engage in market-driven politics.

Women's activism and policy mandates: The National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW)

The National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) is not institutionalized within gov-

ernment, is not adequately resourced and is barely implemented. The inability to mobilize budgetary resources for the NPAW or to institutionalize it is another measure of the disempowerment of women in Mongolia. The concern over the lack of resources for implementing the NPAW is part of the wider question of who participates in fiscal decision-making and how decision-making is made.

Women's position at the institutional or meso level is uneven and contradictory, which affects their ability to influence decision-making in a way that yields concrete results. Many meso-level institutions intersect with formal decision-making instances in complex and subtle ways to set the agenda about which decisions will be taken as well as to influence their outcomes. NGOs that are active on the political front have not managed to participate significantly in moulding the structures and institutions that have been forged in the decision-making sphere, nor in shaping the direction of policy within these institutions. In fact, agency and responsibility for women's issues seems to have been transferred out of formal political and decision-making structures and into less formal institutions of civil society. The interplay and tension between these two spheres is manifest both in the drawing up of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, and in the difficulties of its implementation.

The women's movement as well as gender advocates within the state machineries have been proactive in organizing around agendas for women's advancement. A driving force has been the success of Mongolian women in connecting with the global agendas that have been forged by women's movements worldwide under the aegis of the UN System. Although the endorsement of global agendas and commitments, as a top-down process, was characteristic of the socialist era, the process has been different since the transition. The decade of the transition has coincided with the UN Conferences of the 1990s, and has witnessed the engagement of both women's NGOs and advocates within government, with the support of UN agencies and bilateral organizations present in

Mongolia. As a result of their concerted efforts, the Government of Mongolia formally adopted the National Programme for the Advancement of Women in March 1996 by Government Resolution No.145. This resolution states that it is imperative to assess the status of women in the juncture of the transition process, define its policy and guidelines for action on the basis of national consensus and ensure the full implementation of the programme in line with the commitment to the advancement of women undertaken at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The National Programme identified eleven critical areas of concern and provided strategic objectives and actions for 1996-2020 for each. The critical areas are:

- A. Women and Economic Development
- B. Women and Poverty
- C. The Status of Rural Women
- D. Women and Education
- E. Women and Reproductive Health
- F. Women and the Family
- G. Women in Power and Decision-Making
- H. Violence Against Women and Human Rights
- I. National Machinery for Advancement of Women
- J. Women and the Mass Media
- K. Women and Environment

The objectives and benchmarks laid out in the National Programme cover the following periods corresponding to the stages of Mongolia's National Development Plan:

- 1996-2000: *During this period, national surveys and analysis of the status of women and gender equality will be undertaken. The information collected will provide the basis for developing a systematic policy to ensure equal rights of women and men and to improve the status of women within the context of the market economy. Policy will focus on reducing unemployment and relative*

poverty, eliminating extreme poverty, restoring levels of education and health achieved prior to transition and laying the foundations for further development.

- 2001-2010: *The objective during this period will be to ensure sustainable economic development to create a favourable environment for ensuring women's access to lifelong education, their full participation in political and economic life, including decision-making, the reduction of the burden of domestic work, recognition of the value of unremunerated labour, and the provision of social security.*
- 2010-2020: *During this period, conditions for economic self-reliance, sustainable growth and human development will be established, and the equal participation of women and men in political, economic, social and family shares will be achieved with women enabled to play a full and active role in the development process.*

The Programme also states that resources must be mobilized at national and local levels of government through the expansion of international cooperation, both multilateral and bilateral, and with the participation of the private sector.

In 1996, the National Council on Women's Issues was established as the agency responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NPAW. The Minister for Health and Social Welfare is the head of the National Council on Women's Issues. Experts of the Human Development Division of the Ministry's Strategic Management and Planning Department are in charge of women's affairs and there are focal points for women's issues in the 21 *aimags* and city district governors' offices at the local level. Women's issues have been reflected in the portfolio of the Standing Committee of the Great Hural.

The successful implementation of the National Programme requires strong commitment and political will on the part of the government and all of its agencies as well as active participation of community-based organizations, especially NGOs, economic entities and individuals. However, the National Symposium on the

Implementation of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women, held in June 1999, pointed out that due to the unworkable national machinery and financial constraints the objectives of the first phase of the National Programme have not completely materialized.

In the executive, the lack of progress in raising the profile of the NPAW and in institutionalizing its implementation remains a critical issue to address. The structure, function, location and composition of the NPAW continues to be pertinent to the need to make government accountable for commitments to women's economic, social and political rights. One of the major difficulties in institutionalizing the NPAW is the practice of making large-scale changes in the machinery of government each time a different party comes to power in elections. This tends to make structures and mechanisms rather short-lived and precarious, as is the case with the women's machinery.

The question of political will is crucial, however, and is directly related to the failure in institutionalizing the implementation of NPAW. If there was cross-party consensus in promoting the agenda of gender equality and women's advancement, particularly under a rights-based approach, institutionalizing it within the decision-making and administrative machinery would survive successive governments. This then raises the question of how parties assess the importance of the NPAW and of mainstreaming it in the legislative agenda, which has already been outlined. The analysis of the situation as regards governance issues in the legislature reveals that competing parties have yet to develop leadership over a legislative agenda even over mainstream issues. The difficulty of mobilizing support over the passage of draft bills such as the one on domestic violence is one such example. In addition, Parliament's oversight function over the conduct of government, its accountability and ability to implement the laws it passes is limited and not clearly articulated either in principle or in practice (UNDP 2000b).

Another question is the composition of the national women's machinery, particularly as regards the participation of NGOs. That issue always has to be

settled by an incumbent government. Where NGOs are identified with political parties or factions, then the debate the issues and the policy options tend to become polarized along party lines and can become enmeshed with the confrontational or adversarial politics of a multiparty system. On the other hand, NGO-wide caucuses and women's caucuses can cut across party lines to set a common agenda and develop consensus on strategies and implement a common plan of action. The pitfall here is that women's caucuses can be seen as threatening by an overwhelmingly male political establishment on the one hand and that women's issues continue to be set apart from the mainstream of the political agenda on the other.

Focusing on the target of getting women into Parliament has also to take into account the fact that the centres of power, agenda-setting and decision-making are not really located in the legislature but more in the executive. And this only up to the extent to which under globalization and an increasingly market-driven economy, real power continues to reside in the state political organs. This means that closer attention needs to be paid to how to combine state leverage in raising corporate responsibility towards gender equality with more direct focus on the corporations and private-sector institutions.

The weakness of the legislature as a power and decision-making point is compounded by another area of concern, namely, the weak link between the electorate and Parliament, at both central and local levels of decision-making. This weakness is manifested in the absence of effective representation and articulation of the interests of grass-roots voters and accountability towards the electorate. This situation renders the strategy of focusing on women's representation in Parliament one of widening access into a political elite.

Linked to the issue of representation of women in Parliament is the issue of how the agenda for gender equality is represented in the political arena and institutionalized in formal decision-making instances. What women can do once they are in Parliament will depend on the transformation of other decision-making structures and instances. Getting more women

selected as candidates has to be accompanied by a redefinition of how women's issues are presented in party programmes and manifestos and carried over into legislative mandates. It in turn means empowering women in the political arena to make governments accountable for this agenda, by putting in place the mechanisms and procedures to mainstream a gender approach on the basis of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women.

Conclusions

Women have made considerable progress in getting the government to adopt the NPAW. NGOs and women's caucuses have been actively involved in two elections, 1996 and 2000, mobilizing on the issue of a formal quota and on the need for greater selection of women candidates. It is through and around this creative engagement that an understanding of the complex and new dynamics of the multiparty system in a market economy and the wider gender dynamics and relations of power involved is being shaped and continually challenged.

The learning experience of two elections has sharpened the strategic focus on the party machinery and on targeting the selection of candidates. It provides a useful entry point to refine the understanding of the gender dynamics and relations of power involved in transforming the process to increase the selection of women candidates and promote the political empowerment of women.

The electoral experience also provides an entry point for conceptualizing and developing strategies for transforming the political arena and making it responsive and accountable to the NPAW. This requires taking into account the exclusion arising from regional and income inequalities as well as gender inequalities. It is an entry point that needs to integrate coherently the dimensions of citizens' rights and open up spaces for participation and for the accountability of politicians towards the electorate and of the executive towards Parliament. The efforts of women NGOs to enhance voter education and legal, human and civic rights, particularly at the local level, are initiatives that

can have greater leverage as part of this wider strategy. Promoting the election of women in local *hurals* has to be set in a context of the relationship between the local *hurals* and the central government. Ensuring that the election makes a difference to rural women's lives and livelihoods needs to involve the wider policy agenda of approaches to decentralization and its fiscal, legal and institutional implications.

Much groundwork remains to be done to understand the operation of gender dynamics in the political system and to formulate strategies to reach realistic and desired targets for gender equality and women's empowerment across all of the critical areas of concern in the NPAW.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter pulls together the conclusions contained in the overview in Chapter 1 and at the end of each chapter, which reflect the contributions of a wide group of NGOs and state actors. It focuses specifically on the recommendations that came from workshops convened to discuss the results of the situation analysis. These workshops are part of the participatory process engaged throughout the situation analysis. It provided the space to collectively appraise the entire span of the analysis and generate new ideas and recommendations for future action to promote women's empowerment in Mongolia.

Two cross-cutting conclusions arise from the analysis and discussion. The first concerns data. The design, collection, analysis and dissemination of data and statistics, by both government and NGOs, suffers from incomplete disaggregation by sex and other pertinent variables, such as age, residence and income. As a result, it is of uneven quality, reliability and coverage. There are also major gaps in data and missing data. There is a dearth of gender-sensitive research on the new phenomena impinging on the situation of women and official statistics do not reflect the societal changes brought about by policy change. Specifically, the targets set under the NPAW for the period 1996-2000 to undertake the research and information necessary to implement policies for gender equality have not been met.

The second overall conclusion concerns the capacity to undertake gender analysis at a level that meets the complex challenges posed by the transition for women's empowerment and gender equality. There is little or no gender analysis in the design, collection and analysis stage of most policy-based research in Mongolia. There is inadequate capacity to disaggregate

data meaningfully and to use the information to raise understanding about gender relations and influence policy processes. There is inadequate gender analysis underpinning current economic and social sector strategies being developed. This weakness in gender mainstreaming across economic, political and social sectors goes beyond technical and substantive skills. It is a weakness in the capacity to use the knowledge generated to advocate, negotiate and influence policy processes.

Recommendations

A national gender information system should be set up with the capacity to produce sex-disaggregated data along with gender aware design, collection, analysis and dissemination of the data.

- One of the means to do this could be through the institution of a **user-producer nexus for statistics and gender information**, which could be based around the data needed for the implementation of the NPAW and Common Country Assessment of the UN Development Assistance Framework. This nexus, which would tighten the links between users and producers would be mainly at the technical level, bringing together, statisticians, researchers, gender specialists and other specialists in mainstream areas, such as economists, sociologists.
- Associated with this nexus would be a **policy nexus**, made up of those who are in effect another level of users of data as well as the prime movers for generating this data. The information required for policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation would include the development, interpretation and use of indicators for policy monitoring and evaluation and for

assessing progress in meeting benchmarks and targets.

A core group of gender experts should be assembled that combines contextual knowledge with strong analytical skills and mainstreaming know-how. This core group would be able to facilitate high-level policy and social dialogue, strategic review exercises and be able to develop skills in advocacy, negotiation and reaching consensus.

- It is critical to develop an **on-the job, hands-on and results-oriented approach** to competence building, which focuses explicitly on building the capacity to implement the NPAW. The outcomes would be both increased competence and gender-sensitive interventions and programmes.
- An important resource for enhancing high-level gender expertise is the creation of an **e-list of gender information resources**, which would provide access to gender information databases and promote information and knowledge networking. This could develop further the briefing kit produced by UNDP.

A rights-based approach to women's empowerment and gender equality

The situation analysis was conducted using a rights-based framework and assessed the situation of women during the transition from that perspective. The Constitution of 1992 embraces both economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights and the linking of human rights to human development is increasingly part of the discourse as well as of the agenda for national development and the basis for development cooperation. An intrinsic part of a rights framework is the concomitant obligations and responsibilities of the parties who have contracted to it to defend, uphold and promote these rights.

While there has been greater consolidation of civic and political rights, in particular concerning freedom of expression and participation, the dominant policy approach in the transition has not been rights-based in the economic and social arenas. There is little

sign of the commitments made to explicitly take into account economic and social rights when engaging in economic and political restructuring. The main policy stance in the initial period has been to engage in shock therapy in response to an already severe economic crisis. The dominant approach to economic management so far still seems to be the pursuit of macroeconomic stabilization, liberalization and market-led economic growth. There is no discernible economic and social rights commitment and practice, beyond a social safety nets approach for vulnerable groups.

The drastic societal changes since the transition reveal the inadequacy of this position. The situation analysis exposes how most social groups, vast numbers of women and men have been drawn into greater poverty, insecurity and emerging and intensifying inequalities.

The relatively egalitarian character of Mongolian society is giving way to increasing inequalities based on age, gender, income and region of residence. The changing policy regime has created many sources of inequality among women, based on income, residence and employment status. These sources of inequality are compounded when rural women are concerned, because of their isolation, remoteness and exclusion. These inequalities have reduced access to education, health and contributed to a deterioration in health and education status and social protection. There have been high social costs of transition and an erosion of social justice.

Recommendations

- Interventions focusing on issues of women's empowerment and gender equality need to avoid a social safety net and vulnerable group approach.
- A systematic and explicit rights-based agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality should be adopted as part of a human rights base for integrated development in Mongolia, as articulated in the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA).
- Specifically, the CEDAW reporting process should provide the framework for strengthening government actions as part of its commitment under

CEDAW to improve the status of women and to involve NGOs in the process.

- A comprehensive approach to mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment should be implemented, focused on the 40 indicators identified in the CCA to track and monitor progress in well-being and empowerment and to promote accountability for upholding and promoting rights. It is important to be able to define and interpret the indicators from a gender-aware and rights-based perspective.

Social reform, social relations and social justice

The economic crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, compounded by the shock therapy of transition has had devastating effects on the livelihoods and well-being of women, men, girls and boys, as income, production and employment fell. The analysis of social issues has highlighted the complex, disturbing and damaging ramifications of a sharp decline in public expenditure in the social sector and also the lack of mechanisms and indicators to track the highly differentiated outcomes for women and men, girls and boys. The introduction of user charges for basic social services, and in health and education have intensified the negative impacts on health, education and created and sharpened inequalities, tensions and insecurity.

The deterioration in social justice is more severe for women. Traditional gender relations and norms about women's domestic and caring work and men's status as heads of households and breadwinners have not only survived the transition but in fact been reinforced and affirmed more vigorously, to women's disadvantage. 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.

Health

During the transition, women have lost entitlements to healthcare and lost jobs as health professionals. The maintenance of physical and psychological health status has become more precarious, more dependent on their economic situation and subject to their exposure to male violence. The impact is particularly severe in relation to reproductive health, where the toll in women's lives and morbidity has been high, to an extent not reflected in official statistics. 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.

Women's nutritional status has deteriorated, as they lose the right to public healthcare and are unable to afford market-based services. Women bear an increasing burden as healthcare, particularly for the poor, has become more dependent on women's domestic unpaid caring work. Thus where men's physical health and psychological well-being have been affected, women have also suffered, because of their caring work in families. The gender dimensions of the impact of increasing stress on health—revealed in alcohol abuse and domestic violence, increasing stress levels in crowded urban settlements—are disturbing. Unpaid care by women, household provisioning of basic social services, is not recognized as a key dimension of a comprehensive social policy framework.

Education and women's empowerment

There is a reverse gender gap in education, which increases at higher levels. This phenomenon is complex and requires a fine-grained gender analysis that goes beyond targeting women and men separately and focuses more on the problem of men's schooling. The transition has had a sharp impact on enrolment rates for girls and boys, eroding the gains of the socialist period. Male enrolment rates have declined more sharply than female rates, particularly at higher grades. This is due to increased drop-out rates,

especially for boys.

The underlying cause of increased school drop-outs 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. Educational opportunity has become dependent on parents' ability and willingness to pay. The growing disparities among both girls and boys in access to education is due to intensifying income and regional inequalities as poor urban and rural parents, particularly herders, are unable to afford the financial costs. 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. Boys from herder households particularly have dropped out of school, owing to the increased need for unpaid family labour as the workload in the family-based economy has intensified.

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.

Despite the existence of a reverse gender gap, the economic and financial returns to women from education may be lower given women's position in the occupational and decision-making hierarchy in formal employment and the cluster of indicators which point to a much lower share of income for women. The relationship between achievements in education and pay, position and prospects for promotion and advancement in employment and business appear tenuous.

Education is regarded as an important lever in empowering women and in raising their social status beyond the traditional gender-based attributes, such as bearing numerous children. Yet the scope for education to lead to women's empowerment is far from clear. The critical issues concern the ability of women to generate and exercise choices in interpersonal gender relations

and affirm their rights and position in the public sphere.

The reverse gender gap in education particularly at the tertiary level carries potentially negative impacts for women's social, intellectual and emotional relationships with men. In a context of worsening violence against women, particularly at the domestic level, falling fertility and rising education among young women may lead them to assert their autonomy and separateness from men in a society where motherhood and marriage are still highly valued. A critical issue for the women's movement is to find a way to address this issue in a way that supports transformation in gender relations rather than in a way that reinforces norms and perceptions about the relative position of women and men.

Recommendations

- The unpaid time spent in interpersonal and inter-generational health care of family members as well as voluntary community care should be accounted for and taken up as part of a comprehensive social development framework.
- Time-use statistics should be refined to develop a differentiated picture of women's care work, and used to develop national measures of unpaid and domestic and care work, as a basis for conducting economic and social policy evaluations.
- Participatory assessments and other mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the impacts of public expenditure changes and the introduction of user fees should be developed and adopted.
- Gender analysis frameworks to analyse interactions between the productive and reproductive/care sectors at the macro level should be adapted for Mongolia and used to train people to undertake such interventions, targeting social workers in particular.
- Gender awareness and gender analysis training must target family and gender relations in the household and address the causes and manifestations of gender conflict. Such training should consider the cooperative-conflict dimensions in house-

holds and focus on gender relationships, rather than on differences between women and men.

- The negative representations of women in the media and stereotypes about gender identity must be addressed and positive empowering representations encouraged through training and sensitization of journalists.

Violence against women

- The draft law on domestic violence must be submitted for enactment. Steps need to be taken to put in place the institutional mechanisms and strengthen the capacity for effective implementation of the law throughout the judicial system.
- A human rights approach should be the basis for training on violence against women.
- More shelters should be provided for victims of gender violence, together with legal and psychological counselling.

Health

- A gender-aware health sector policy review should be undertaken that takes into account rural and urban differences in health access and status.
- Maternal and infant mortality rates should be targeted as key indicators of the depletion of human capabilities, of human security and survival.
- The quality and reliability of health statistics and health related indicators must be improved, particularly as regards abortion.
- The stress dimensions of health and well-being should be emphasized and skills in counselling and programmes of stress management developed.
- Women, who are responsible for household nutrition and work in food processing in the formal and informal sectors should be educated and informed on food safety and hygiene norms and standards. The institutional and regulatory framework for setting norms, standards and for inspection must be reviewed and strengthened.

Education

- Education policy must be evaluated with a goal of

reducing educational inequalities based on gender, income, parents, occupation and residence. A policy goal might be to ensure that the gender gap be contained to a maximum of 10 per cent, while ensuring progress to a target of 95-100 per cent enrolment.

- Fiscal measures should be taken to attain this target, such as tax exemption to private educational establishments to increase access to market-based provision.
- Measures should also be developed to minimize the disparities among students in the school environment that result from income inequalities.
- Gender-sensitive research and regular data collection on labour markets should be conducted to trace the links between educational attainment and employment, occupation and earning, and the results fed into the policy review process.

Economic empowerment

The chapter on women and the economy shows the complex ways in which women's economic position has been transformed by the transition and indeed how gender relations at all levels have influenced its course. The gendered nature of the economy has been made visible, along with the social content of economic policy regimes.

The striking feature of economic restructuring in the transition is the de-industrialization of the country (especially in manufacturing) and the rising share of the primary sector, extractive industries and agriculture, and more recently, of trade, transport and services, with import liberalization. The second striking structural feature is the deregulation of the economy—or the emergence of another form of regulation—and the concomitant growth of the private informal sector. Dynamism in the informal sector, which women have entered in large numbers, has not offset the shrinking of the formal state sector, from which women have been retrenched in greater numbers.

While both women and men have lost employment and rights in the shrinking state sector, women have been affected to a greater extent and differently

than men. They are disadvantaged in the formal sector because of their caring obligations, having lost state entitlements which enabled them to take up paid employment. In the employment market, they are subject to discrimination as actual and potential child-bearers and higher educational qualifications alone do not make them more competitive than men in employers' assessments. The gender norms that designate men as heads of household and the power relationships surrounding the allocation of resources have deprived them of assets disposed of by the state. This has had a cumulative impact on their ability to start, sustain and expand businesses in the formal medium- and large-scale sectors.

Unlike men, women have not benefited from privatization measures. In urban areas in particular, they have responded to the onslaught on their livelihood and living standards by setting-up informal sector businesses in the service sector, taking advantage of the opportunities opened up by import liberalization and the gap left by the collapse of state services. The informal nature of these activities has left them exposed to the risks of the market, to greater income and health insecurity, against which they do not have the means to protect themselves in the longer term.

Women heads of households have experienced relatively higher levels of poverty than male heads of households and the number as well as the proportion of female-headed households has increased rapidly since the transition. But there is no data on the relative poverty of women within male-headed households, as the assumption is that household income and assets are equally shared. The analysis of the gender division of labour, assets, resources in households and the fragmented data that exist on occupational hierarchies in the formal sector does indicate disparities between women and men.

In the rural sector, the herd expansion through asset disposal has been seen as a social safety net during the transition. The increase in herder activity due to increasing herd size is reflected in output, income and employment figures, which treat herder households as part of the rural private sector. But women are less rec-

ognized in their own right as herders and tend to be considered as unpaid family labour because of the conflation of households as both production units and social units, with a designated male head. The extent to which such economic activity, a considerable part of agricultural economic production and income, can be seen as a social safety net is arguable. The term is usually used for expenditures, transfers, or subsidies, which compensate for inability to generate income from the market and as protection from severe income and consumption poverty. In fact, state-provided transfers are a small proportion of livelihood sources. The transition has been less from state to market institutions and more from state to private households, based on unpaid family labour, essentially women and boys.

Part of the reason why there is no proactive policy targeting women's economic activity, is the prevailing view of women as a socially vulnerable group, victims of the economic change. There is no explicit recognition of women as economic agents, whose economic behaviour and performance are not symmetric to men because of the different structures of threats and constraints which they face and opportunities they can take up at the micro and meso levels, and in response to macroeconomic policies.

However, as the case of cashmere production shows, women have responded to market opportunities and a severe deterioration in livelihood by increasing production of tradeable goods and engaging in cross-border trade. Apart from increased market risk and insecurity, this activity has left them exposed to emerging environmental insecurity. The scale and nature of their involvement in the livestock economy have important implications for the sustainable use and economic development of the livestock sector and the rural economic base, which is largely based on natural resources.

An indication of the deterioration of the economic base and social and economic infrastructure in rural areas is the extent of urban migration, induced by the sharpening economic disparities between urban and rural regions. It is clear that despite the shift towards agriculture. It is clear that public expenditure cuts have

had drastic and differential impacts on women and men and different groups of women and men. But the magnitude of this impact is not known and there is no mechanism to trace the effects of macroeconomic policy changes. There is no corresponding mechanism to trace the sources and the impacts of the state's taxation and revenue generation policy on women and men's economic options and well-being. These issues of budgetary allocation and processes are central to the issue of the relationship between central government and local levels and have a bearing on the emerging economic disparities among regions in Mongolia and between urban and rural areas.

How to uphold economic rights and how to shape the economic policies and institutions towards sustainable and equitable development is the crucial challenge for women's economic empowerment in Mongolia.

Recommendations

- Mechanisms should be developed to trace the differential outcomes and impacts of macroeconomic policy changes on women and men, specifically regarding the sources and the impacts of the state's taxation and revenue generation policy.
- In line with efforts to improve macroeconomic policy through better measurement of the informal sector in the System of National Accounts, the unpaid household sector of both domestic work and care work must be included in national accounts as a satellite account. Work can then be developed to create links between the unpaid labour account and any satellite environment account which could be constructed to integrate economic and natural resource management
- Household surveys using gender analyses of households should be integrated into microeconomic sex-disaggregated data bases for conducting policy-oriented research and analysis. This is essential in view of the increasing importance of households as the location for economic activity, herder households and the urban informal sector that uses household premises and equipment as factors of production, in

patterns which are different for women and men.

- The work done on the informal sector for inclusion in national accounts should be extended to analyse the differential situation and prospects of women and men in this sector. This should examine how the sector's institutional and regulatory framework can promote sustainable livelihoods along with economic and social rights.
- A comprehensive rural sector review, integrating both economic and social dimensions, should be undertaken to identify specific interventions tailored to that sector.

A key focus would be to address the poverty of rural women's from a rights-based perspective. This needs to make visible the considerable paid and unpaid economic activity of women as economic agents. This approach should be considered as strategic for altering the dominant view of women as mothers and vulnerable beings in the social sector. The factors contributing to the disturbing rise in the number and proportion of female-headed households living in severe poverty have to be studied urgently and action taken to address this serious problem.

A programme for women's empowerment in cashmere production

An entry point for policy and programme intervention for women's empowerment should be to focus on the economic activity of women in an important export earning sector such as cashmere. This requires research on the entire process of production of cashmere from the pasture to raw cashmere to markets to the export of cashmere products, in the context of globalization. This should bring out not only the marketed activity but also the link with natural resources, unpaid caring and domestic work and the processes leading to poverty, including time and energy poverty. The research should examine the context within which cashmere is produced and marketed, in terms of rural policy budgetary allocation and outcomes and the availability of social and economic infrastructure and services. The goal would be to develop strategies for networking

and collective empowerment to overcome the isolation and exclusion of rural women.

The political arena

The chapter on the political arena highlighted the tensions, opportunities and weaknesses of the political system as regards democratic participation in policy processes, from the electorate, to political parties through parliament to the government and the state administration. It touched on how this relationship is played out between the central and local levels of decision-making. The other main focus is on the gender biases which create barriers to women's political empowerment in these policy processes.

The situation of women in the political arena over the last decade is a dispiriting picture of reduced presence in parliament with the removal of a quota on women's representation and a missed NPAW target for women's share in parliament at 20% in 2000. This points on the one hand to the nature of the political machinery, the recruitment and selection of candidates for political parties, and on the other to the gender biases in the political system and wider economic, social and cultural processes.

Since the transition, a multiparty system has emerged as the link between the electorate and parliamentary representation and the legislature and executive. The system is evolving in a market-driven economy, with multiple bases of economic power and decision-making as well as financial resources needed to participate in elections. There are interactions between the political system and the private sector through the process of disposal of state assets and the policy measures to privatize and liberalize the economy

There is a link between the entry of women into parliament and the treatment of women's issues by the political parties, who relegate women's issues to the social sphere and conceptualize women as a vulnerable group in need of protection. One pervasive issue is women's perception of how society views women in the public arena and their own sense of self worth. Women feel they are discriminated against as women, and their legitimacy as political leaders is not recog-

nized. These factors inhibit their ability to exercise their rights to become candidates and their capability to function as decision-makers

The NGOs and women's caucuses were proactively involved in the elections of 1996 and 2000, mobilizing around the re-introduction of a formal quota and the increased selection of women candidates. It is through such creative engagement that an understanding of the complex and new dynamics of the multiparty system in a market economy and the wider gender dynamics and relations of power involved is being shaped and challenged.

The uneven nature of the political and governance-related reforms compound the gender biases that permeate the political culture and system. While there has been much emphasis on establishing the legal framework and legislature, its representative and oversight functions are weak, which limits the mainstreaming of gender programmes into the legislative agenda. Even where laws have been passed and a rights framework established, the capacity for effective implementation has lagged behind.

The adoption of the NPAW represents some progress in advancing the status of women. But the institutional machinery is still not functional, in large part because of the lack of budget resources to put it in place and to implement the NPAW. The capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming by women advocates and within state mechanisms has yet to be generated. The inability to mobilize resources for the NPAW is another measure of the disempowerment of women in decision-making, and part of a more general concern about who participates in fiscal decision-making.

There is still much groundwork needed to distil the understanding of the gender dynamics in the political system to formulate strategies to reach realistic targets for gender equality and women's empowerment across the critical areas of concern in the NPAW. To date, women and the national women's machinery have been unable to mobilize effectively to promote and uphold rights and to influence the processes and outcomes of the transition.

Recommendations

The experience of two elections has sharpened the strategic focus on the party machinery and the selection of candidates. It is a useful entry point to understand the gender dynamics and relations of power involved in transforming the process to increase the selection of women candidates and promote the political empowerment of women. In future, mobilization around issues should be combined with measures to encourage women to participate and to increase women's chances of selection as candidates. In particular, women's advocates should undertake the following:

- Mobilize around realistic benchmarks and targets for women's share of representation, first to 20 per cent and thereafter to 40 per cent;
- Target political parties and the candidate selection process and sensitize party decision-makers to include women in candidates' lists;
- Conduct research on the structure and functioning of political parties and the gender dynamics which disadvantage women;
- Encourage women's recruitment and promotion in party machineries at all levels;
- Enhance the profile of women candidates in the media and create a roster of high profile women candidates;
- Expand leadership training for women as well as capacity-building in presentation, advocacy and negotiation skills;
- Develop measures to increase women's participation in local elections. To make a difference to rural women's lives and livelihoods, local elections should involve the wider policy agenda of decentralization and its fiscal, legal and institutional dimensions.
- Conduct voter education as part of a strategy to transform the political arena and make it responsive to the NPAW, taking into account the problems of regional and income inequalities as well as gender inequalities.

A voter education strategy must integrate the dimensions of citizens' rights and open up spaces for participation and for the accountability of politicians towards the electorate and of the executive towards parliament. The efforts of women NGOs to enhance voter education about legal, human and civic rights, particularly at local level are initiatives which can have greater leverage, when part of this wider strategy.

Finally, and most critically, the National Programme for the Advancement of Women should be reviewed, paying particular attention to resolving the question of the structure, function, composition and location of the institutional machinery for its implementation. Objectives should be reviewed and realizable benchmarks and targets set, along with the indicators needed. This should be a participatory process, facilitated in a manner to encourage rigour and effectiveness. The exercise can be conducted as a strategic planning and review exercise, using the situation analysis and its recommendations.

Annex: Goals and Methodology

The issues of gender equality and women's empowerment are complex and wide-ranging. There is a considerable literature on these issues, but there are also gaps and weaknesses in the research and data. The Situation Analysis study and the production of the report were designed to collect available information and distil critical issues, to promote debate and reflection by women's groups and other actors in the state and development agencies. The participatory process of knowledge production and awareness-raising was itself a valuable contribution to women's empowerment, in terms of the capability to articulate experiences, locate the forces that shape them and develop creative strategies for transforming the conditions that govern them.

Specifically, the analysis is intended to generate an overview of the current status of women in Mongolian society and facilitate a participatory review of the National Programme for the Advancement of Women (NPAW). This programme, adopted in March 1996, some six years after the start of the transition process, explicitly addresses the advancement of women within the context of the transition.

The conceptual and analytical framework

The situation analysis was conducted using a *rights-based framework* and tools of gender analysis that explicitly consider the various sectors and levels of economy and society. The rights-based approach is consistent with the NPAW objectives. It looks at the set of human rights instruments and UN Conference agreements that Mongolia is party to or has made commitments towards. It examines the impact of the transition on women's status in the light of these instruments and agreements. This will assist the NPAW review that will follow this study in assessing the extent to which broad targets defined in the NPAW up to 2020 have been met and can realistically be met. It is

from a commonly agreed basis of targets and indicators to measure and monitor progress that the NPAW can be effectively implemented. A rights based approach entails state accountability to promote and protect the rights. They open a space for women's agency, and for women to act to claim these rights.

The *gender analysis framework* addresses the levels and sectors of the economy and society and the interactions among them. The levels are the macro level of policy and performance indicators; the micro level of individual economic actors in households; and the meso level of institutions and organizations that coordinate economic and social activity, allocate resources and mediate between the policy level and the individual at the micro level. The sectors are the public sector, the private sector, including the formal and informal sectors, the NGO and voluntary sector and the domestic sector.

A gender perspective takes into account the commonality of women's experiences but also differences among women as well as between women and men. These differences can be based on age, income, education, region, ethnicity, nationality or religion and their consideration allows for a more fine-grained analysis as well as one which can be mainstreamed into socio-economic analysis.

The macro level, from a gender-aware perspective, is seen as consisting of the economic monetary aggregates of the paid productive sector of the economy, accounted for in the System of National Accounts, of which Gross Domestic Product is the lead indicator. It also includes the unpaid sector of reproduction, the unpaid activities that serve to reproduce the capacity to produce, concretely the reproduction of human beings on a daily and generational basis, in the form of interpersonal caring work, performed mostly by women. Such work, which is time- and human energy-intensive is unrecognized and unaccounted for. A

major aspect of the analysis is the interaction between the two sectors. This framework considers vertical aspects of power and hierarchies, in identifying the policy and institutional dimension as sites where gender inequalities are created and sustained and which condition the options open to micro-level actors.

This framework has clear affinities with the framework developed in UNIFEM's *Progress of World's Women 2000* (UNIFEM 2000), which delineates the different sectors of work and the interactions among them and where the domestic sector is the sector where unpaid reproductive or caring work is undertaken. In this Report, the terms reproductive and domestic are used interchangeably.

The production of the report: process and methodology

This report was prepared with the assistance of two consultants, one national and one international. The international consultant prepared the framework for the situational analysis. The national consultant conducted the initial analysis, together with staff members of the Gender Centre for Sustainable Development, experts from major sectors of the national economy and key partners.

Extensive use has been made of the National Statistical Office publications and surveys, especially the Living Standards Measurement Survey 1998. Sector reviews, plans and policy documents were consulted together with surveys and publications of women's and other NGOs. Time constraints limited use of academic publications. Unfortunately, the preliminary results of the Time Use Study and the Participatory Livelihood Assessment Study were not yet available for incorporation into the study.

In addition, the process was participatory and iterative. It involved discussions about the current critical issues with a range of women, in the NGO sector, either individually or in focus group discussions, and with decision-makers at all levels through individual semi-structured interviews. These discussions were held both in Ulaanbaatar and in rural *aimags* and *soums* as well as nomadic *ger* households. A first draft was then produced which distilled the critical issues generated so far in the process. These issues were encapsulated in a power-point presentation at a workshop to

discuss and validate the findings and generate recommendations concerning the situation of women, the NPAW and its implementation.

The Report was finalized after a national workshop conducted in July 2000, followed by discussions to clarify the outcome and delineate future directions. Participants concluded that the findings and analysis should create the basis for future assessments of women's status and future interventions in charting, reviewing and monitoring an agenda for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality in Mongolia.

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Women in Mongolia

Mapping Progress under Transition

Women in Mongolia: Mapping Progress under Transition is a report on the experiences of the women of Mongolia in the context of the political and economic transformation of their country. It identifies critical issues affecting women from the perspective of their overall empowerment and prospects for achieving gender equality in the context of the changes taking place in Mongolian society. It looks at impacts of the transformation over the last decade on women's economic, social and political status, highlights the commensurate changes in gender relations and women's participation and influence in these transition processes, and provides recommendations towards advancing gender equality.

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