

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Whenever the question of women's equality, women's right ad women's liberty is raised, then new aspects of feminism came to the forefront. The term Feminism was firstly used in Western world basically from 1970 to 1980. Three types of feminism was identified as – Liberal, Radical and Socialist feminism. Liberal feminism focuses on eliminating gender inequality. According to liberal feminism society consists of individual who are equal, and therefore all people must have equal rights. There is a clear division between the role of state and individual freedom. Radical feminism seeks to redress the power balance between men and women. Radical feminism considers the social structure against women and radical feminism aims to challenge and to overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and what they see as male oppression of women. Socialist feminism theory is the gist of Marx and Engels' view about feminine ferment. Marx believed that in a society two classes always exist – the exploiter and the exploited. Women come under the exploited class because they do not any resource of production. The capitalist societies are fundamentally male dominated society and in such a setting women are always treated as unpaid labour.

Actually socialist feminism connects the oppression of women to Marxist idea about exploitation, oppression and labour. Besides, in the end of 20th and in the beginning of 21st century, some of other types of feminism were also being observed, i.e. Cultural Feminism, Black Feminism, Colonial Feminism and Islamic Feminism. So far as Central Asian women are concerned, they were influenced by socialist and Islamic feminism mainly. Islamic feminism is a new concept that favours women's rights, their progress and to free them from exploitation, but they never talk about the change in social structure, dominance of males and women equality. The role of various feminist movements (socialist, Islamic and liberal) was also influencing the position of Central Asian women in different times in different situations.

The status of Central Asian women transformed according to a variety of times, ruling regimes and governments. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are two important states in this region and these special effects also governed the position of women in these states. During the Russian Empire, the condition of women was certainly worse

in social, political and economic terms. Both these societies are different from each other in several ways and by nature. However, women in both these societies were also facing the common evil of *Kalym*, *Paranja*, polygamy and bride kidnapping etc. The Kazakh women being a nomad society was a little in liberal condition than the Uzbek counterpart. But decisively women in both societies were living the life of beasts where they have not any rights regarding property and divorce; additionally, the condition of widows was also pathetic. In Pre-USSR period Central Asian women didn't have any share in economy; they were completely engaged in domestic labour for which they were even not paid a single penny. The political participation was an entirely a distant dream for them.

The Soviet era proved to be the golden period for Central Asian women. The government completely banned all the ill-practices which were against women. Their education level was enhanced from 2% to 99% during this time. The economic participation of women was extensively encouraged and to increase women's involvement in external affairs (outside home) they were given some additional facilities (to ease them from domestic and family responsibilities) like crèche, kindergartens, child care centre, community kitchen etc. Various kinds of leave provisions were launched to facilitate the working environment for women. These efforts of the Soviet government made possible for the Kazakh and Uzbek women to record their presence in all spheres of life. She was able to defeat some of the social evils and a positive change could be observed in her approach towards life.

Women and men were treated equally in constitutional laws. Women were also given the right to divorce, the right to equal inheritance of property, the right to education without discrimination, the right to vote, the right to be witness in court on equal basis as men and right to hold public offices. According to article 122, in the USSR, women enjoyed equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, culture, social and political life. This is ensured by granting women equal rights with men to work, remuneration of labour, leisure and rest, social insurance and education.

The Soviet government acknowledged that Central Asian women were in an exploitative situation. The patriarchal form of society and the tradition of Islamic practices were holding back women's progress in these societies. Women were given equal rights to men in all affairs by the Soviet administration and in this way

somehow it reduced the ill-effects of patriarchy. Religion was forcibly banned from public spheres with all its conventional practices and this was the beginning of a new era in some manner.

In this period women was associated with social, political and economic life, feeling freed from her confinement. The Zhenotedel (Women's Department of Communist party) was set up to draw women into public life. During the meetings organized by the Zhenotedel in villages and cities women were imported skills with sewing, trade, reading and writing. This was a mode that gave women a public awakening and provided a platform where women shared their social problems. Further, Women's and children's health was given a special preference during this period.

All expected mothers were placed under medical supervision from the very first months of pregnancy. As a rule all women gave birth in maternity homes where professional staff was easily available. A large number of research institutes of mother and child care were established. Actually, it was the first attempt when women's health was given any consideration and first experience for women when some special attention was offered to them as citizens at government level.

The changing status of Central Asian women from Pre-USSR period to USSR period was extremely constructive. At the same time it is also a fact that even after these phenomenal changes women have not achieved parity with men. The 'double burden', wage gap and their number among top positions (which was very nominal) were some of the challenges women still faced in the Soviet period. Despite of these, this was certainly a new dawn for women in these societies. During the USSR period, Kazakh and Uzbek women had positively benefitted in social, political and economic fields.

Since 1991, after the disintegration of Soviet Union again a great change has been noticed in the position of Kazakh and Uzbek women which is again very complicated to analyse and conclude whether it is negative or positive. Now both these states are under different government systems and independence has provided an occasion to evoke traditions and religion for the masses. If both these states are comparatively analysed then Uzbekistan has been much affected by traditional and

religious resurgences. Some of the ill practice like early marriage, polygamy and *Paranja* was again visible. Besides, it seems that the Uzbek women herself approved such changes in her life. Such changes reduced women's involvement in skilled working force and higher education in Uzbekistan. On the other hand, the Kazakh society was much influenced by European culture and it could save itself from the negativity of religion and tradition to some extent except some complaints of polygamy and bride-kidnapping in Kazakhstan.

It is true that today, the involvement of women in political sphere and in political party activity as well as in decision making authority is not high in Kazakhstan. For example, 12% of the members of the parliament are women and only one woman is minister. In local governmental bodies, the percentage of women's participation is a little bit higher but nowhere does it exceed 20%. Kazakhstan holds the rank of 74 among over 140 countries in the level of women's participation in national parliament. The Kazakh constitutional laws and governmental policies do not allow any quota for women concerning their political participation.

On the other hand, there is a 30% quota for women in political parties to encourage their participation in decision making in Uzbekistan. As a result, women's strength was recorded 22% in the lower house in 2009. Under the Uzbek law, women must constitute at least 30% of those nominated by parties as candidates for parliamentary elections. In December 2009 parliamentary election 33% candidates were women. It is only the government support and policies that improved women's political participation in decision making in Uzbekistan and they have a far better position in this regard than in Kazakhstan. Undoubtedly, political participation is an important milestone in women empowerment.

So far as the women rights and gender equality is concerned, Kazakh government however supported a range of legislative efforts ensuring that gender equality was formally written in Kazakh constitution, government policies and legal structures. A council that is known as National Commission for Women Affairs and Family Demographic Policy was formed to ensure gender equality. The government of Kazakhstan has also associated the accomplishment of gender equality with its goal of entering into the world community as an equal partner. It has signed about 60-70 International agreements, including the key declarations related to gender.

The Kazakh legislation base in reference to women equality is still not much stronger. The Soviet Labour Code provided women social assurance (Maternity leave, Government day care institutions and child-care leave etc.) and gave a special security to women. There is a considerable gap between the provision of equality for men and women declared by the constitution and its implementation in practice and the government itself is aware of these key gaps in legislation and practice. The implementation of gender equality policy approach is inadequate and the governmental stand seems faulty. In some areas, there still exists a lack in protecting rights, promoting them to executive positions and proper equality between men and women. Although Article 1 of the national constitution particularly prohibits discrimination, it does not contain any definition of discrimination.

So far as the legal rights are concerned, it seems that Uzbek women are in a better and stronger position than Kazakh women, especially in the matter of labour law. The Uzbek Labour Law expansively provides facility of social security and social insurance to women in the country. The Kazakh women are at par with Uzbek in Constitutional and Criminal Code. Uzbekistan has also agreed to all human rights treaties including CEDAW. Though, there is the active role of Human Right Commission, Ombudsman, National Action Plans and other institutional frameworks for improving women position in Uzbekistan even then they do not have enough budget.

But within the families the situation is really severe; the revival of traditional standards and religious rigidness, and more restrictions on women and girls are being imposed. Because of these problems, the existing institutions and machinery are unable to accomplish their desired objectives and work. On the other hand in Kazakhstan, whatever the available set up, they are more successful and doing well in empowering women's position, though the measures established for women's equality in the Soviet times are now to some extent getting blurred in both these states. In Kazakhstan Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a serious problem and reflects the lack of equality between men and women. The definition of GBV is wider than only violence against women or violence that occurs only within the home i.e. domestic violence. It can entail rape, date-rape, sexual harassment, and such violence that even

leads to homicide. The occurrence of GBV in Kazakhstan is difficult to measure as it has been neither well defined nor well recorded by either the police or hospitals.

Since 1999, a division on women's protection from violence has operated within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They have branches throughout the country which are supposed to offer legal assistance and to analyse data on the issues. The recent signing of the new "Prevention of Domestic Violence" law calls for more accurate record keeping of the incidence of domestic violence. Despite of all these arrangements, in 2004–2005 among young women aged 17 to 29, 29% reported having experienced violence at work or at school and women accounted for 91% of the victims of a violent crime, and 65% of those were sexual assaults.

In 2008, crisis centres around the country counted a total of 21,679 calls made to hotlines, of which 28% reported acts of physical violence against women. ADB (2006) and UNDP (2005) reported that in some aspects gender inequality have exacerbated since independence. The practice of gender inequalities is rising among the young generation in the southern region of Kazakhstan because it is close Uzbek border and, especially in the rural regions masses are influenced with traditional and patriarchal norms.

Although domestic violence is still largely a forbidden subject in Uzbekistan, the government however has also committed to pass a Domestic Violence Law. Therefore, there should be political willpower to enhance support for promoting domestic violence prevention and protection activities that currently exist, e.g., the shelter in Bukhara. The health programmes may provide an entry point by establishing protocols for domestic violence screening for patients. The forms of women trafficking and violence against women are very serious problems and needs a concern on the part of the government. In this matter the existing laws are not enough to curb these threats. A number of suicide stories are reported, which occurred out of domestic violence in Uzbekistan. Such situations are even more alarming in both these states as compared to the Soviet times.

In economic terms, Uzbekistan is a state centralised economy and it has not much resource to implement all the women favoured policies. On the other hand, Kazakhstan economic condition is comparatively very sound because of its natural

resources (oil, gas and uranium etc.). After independence, Kazakhstan introduced open and market economy which has been discussed in fourth chapter. The market economy provided an infinite prospect to Kazakh women to grow. They are an important part of Kazakhstan economic life, but their contribution differs from those of men. They are noticeable everywhere in offices and marketplaces, reflecting a relatively high rate, though it is deteriorating in terms of labour force participation now. The 80% participation of women in the early 1990s is at present only 66.7% share as compared to 76.1% for men. The high degree of horizontal sex-segmentation in the work force ensures that their contribution to GDP is lower than men's.

Despite the presence of a few women in key positions as leaders of business, women in general are estimated to hold only 3% of management positions. In Kazakhstan, women are most visible in education and health care, where they hold 74% and 80% of jobs; yet women's salaries are 86% and 82% of men's earnings, respectively. In 2003, women's average wages were estimated to be 67.6% of men's. In 2008, the gap between men and women was approximately 32.4% in average wage. Women are minimally represented in the higher paying jobs in the mining and petroleum industries which account for 35% of the national GDP. Not only are there legal prohibitions for women against operating heavy machinery, but few women study the subjects in university that would qualify them for these positions in engineering and industrial management.

Women's proportion is also rising in the much lower paying agricultural sector in Kazakhstan. They are legally entitled to land on equal terms as men according to the Land Code of 2003, but in practice social attitudes limit their ability to manage their own farms. The legislation also restricts the allocation of land only to individuals with special agricultural knowledge or qualifications, or practical agricultural experience. Additionally, a small number of rural women who are farmers have had adequate training in agriculture or agri-business that would entitle them to accessing their rights to participate in farm management. Thus, despite being a sizeable alternative of agricultural workers, women face significant barriers in moving from farm worker to be farm manager or owner.

Women comprise a slight majority of all self-employed workers i.e. 51% at the national level. In rural areas, 64% of women are reported as self-employed,

primarily in agriculture. This work offers no pension or benefits, and typically returns only a low level of compensation. The predominance of women in the agricultural sector and in self-employment or informal employment explains much of the overall high levels of poverty among women; in 2006, women were estimated to account for 60% of the poor. All the above statistics show that Kazakh women are facing dire consequences in conventional employment and now she has to deal with the present market economy system to improve her position. Though gender disparity and lack of government support are enhancing women's difficulties, at the same time, the unlimited opportunities in the new context confer them at least a platform to strive for better life in Kazakhstan. As a result, a positive shift can be noticed in women's position after 2000 and all credit for this change goes to the market economy system and efforts made by Kazakh women. But such shift is again giving rise to new problems like migration.

Further, to enhance women's position in Kazakhstan, the government has to implement gender equality policies in a proper manner. The channels of communication have to strengthen so that the women can know and get benefited from the programmes and schemes run for women. Women should be facilitated with family care and social assistance to increase their efficiency at workplace. The promotion of linkages to other local micro credit programmes would boost women's ability to start and maintain their enterprises. On the other hand, Uzbek women are fully supported by the government system. She is accessing social security (day care schools, maternity leaves etc.) which was launched by the previous Soviet system.

Uzbekistan is experiencing the negative effects of migration to Russia and Kazakhstan, both for those who leave and those who stay at home. While it is generally considered an acceptable option for men to seek employment abroad, it is less so for women. Even when jobs are available at home, the daily rate for labour in Kazakhstan can be as high as ten times of what it is in Uzbekistan. However, legally migration is permitted but the number is limited. Both men and women eager to migrate for work are often suspiciously exposed to being trafficked. Meanwhile, those family members who remain at home face other challenges such as being in a separated family, dependent on payment, and vulnerable to risk of the migrating spouse starting a new life abroad. When migrants do return home they may bring

health problems that compromise their future earning potential and worsen family relations, such as when the migrants have suffered dangerous working or living conditions, experienced abuse related to being trafficked, or become infected with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Women are left behind when husbands migrate and take on new roles, including earning money. Moreover, the lack of agricultural and non-agricultural employment opportunities in rural areas is driving a growing number of women to seek temporary, informal, and often exploitative employment in the cities. Thus, there is a need of both an opportunity to work and to develop their entrepreneurship capacity and to assist them in starting income-generation projects. Financing is still an essential barrier to small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, especially for potential and existing women entrepreneurs. The government has to expand agri-business programmes to strengthen Uzbek women from the economic point of view. The quality and quantity of agri-business training centre and technical assistance need to be improved. The funding of small scale business, banking reform activities and development of consumer products should be ensured.

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. The equality between women and men exists when both sexes are able to share equal distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. Yet despite many international agreements related to women's rights, progress on gender equality is uneven. Women in Central Asia, especially the two countries studied are still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate. They have less access to medical care, property, credit, training and jobs. They are also far less likely than men to be politically active and far more likely to become victims of domestic violence.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Key Aspects of the National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan¹

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

Women's Health

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

Women's Education

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

¹ This list was prepared with the assistance of Ms. Mehkri Khudayberdiyeva, Gender Specialist, ADB Uzbekistan Resident Mission.

qualified women professionals, assess women's access to information technologies, etc.

Women and Ecology

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

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

Women's Economic Status and Employment

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

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

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

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

Women's Rights and Opportunity to Participate in Decision Making

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

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

Girls' Rights

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

Discrimination and Violence against Women

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

- (i) Upgrade administrative and criminal codes with the aim of strengthening punishment for violence against women, whether in the home or workplace, including prostitution and compelling women through drug addiction; and
- (ii) Strengthen women's rights in marriage and divorce, including the division of property, and moral and material indemnity in case of divorce on the husband's

initiative, in the Marriage and Family Code to raise women's status within the family and in decisions regarding the education of children.

Women in the Mass Media

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

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

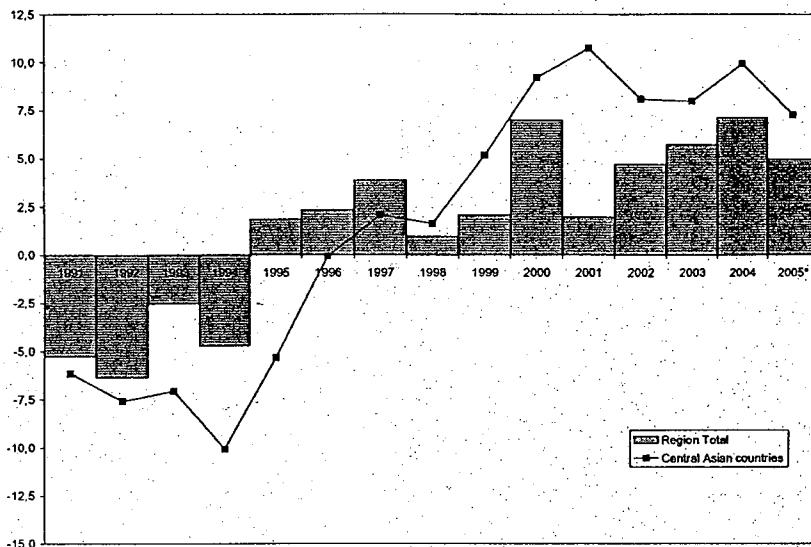
Women's NGOs

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

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

Appendix 2.

National Millennium Development Goals: A framework for action in Central Asia:
 Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
 Real GDP growth in Central Asian countries (in per cent)



Source: Author's estimations based on IMF, World Economic Outlook 2005 data

Goal 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in Central Asia

- By the end of the 1990s, an estimated 23 million people (over 40% of Central Asia's population) lived on less than PPP \$4.30 a day; 10 million experienced extreme deprivation (living on less than PPP \$2.15 a day).
- Tajikistan reduced the share of those living on less than PPP \$2.15 per day from 91% to 74% during 1999 – 2003.
- The percentage of the population classified as living below the subsistence minimum in Kazakhstan dropped from 39 to 24% during 1999 – 2002, and declined further since (to 16.1% in 2004).
- Per-capita GDPs reported by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are on par with some African countries' per-capita income levels.

Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education in Central Asia

- All Central Asian countries institutionalized universal primary school education enrolment during the Soviet period. While this standard has been maintained in many Central Asian countries, in some it has not.

- In Tajikistan, primary school attendance dropped to 88% in 2003, with larger declines occurring in rural areas—affecting girls more than boys.
- Kyrgyzstan also reported declines in primary school enrolment (albeit not as steep); increasing enrolment trends have been noted in recent years.
- Sharp reductions in funding for public education, combined with growing numbers of young people, have also put unprecedented pressures on access to quality post-secondary education institutions in Central Asia.
- Turkmenistan experienced a sharp contraction in university attendance during the 1990s (down to 4% of the population in 2000) and introduced changes (e.g., reducing the length of compulsory primary education) that drew sharp criticism from international observers.

Goal 3: Promoting gender equality and empowering women in Central Asia

- Gender inequality is a major concern in Central Asia, one that manifests itself in education, labour markets, and elsewhere. Even in countries where women have strong educational backgrounds (e.g., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), this does not necessarily translate into equal incomes or opportunities in the workplace.
- Women in Central Asia are concentrated in rural and public service employment, where wages are one fourth to one eighth the levels paid for industrial work.
- Women's relative wages have declined during the last 10 years: whereas women in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan earned up to three quarters of men's wages during 1996–1998, by 2001 they had fallen to 58 and 65% respectively.
- Combined with large declines in the real value of state-funded social benefits (on which women rely particularly heavily), falling wages have accelerated the feminization of poverty in a number of Central Asian countries. Single-mother families (which, on average, contain four children in Tajikistan) remain particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Goal 4: Reducing child mortality in Central Asia

- The Central Asian countries have the dubious distinction of being the only states in the Commonwealth of Independent States (along with Azerbaijan) to record infant mortality rates above 50 deaths per every 1,000 births.

- All the Central Asian countries (with the partial exception of Tajikistan) are more or less on track to reach the infant and child mortality goals set out in their national MDG reports.

Goal 5: Improving maternal health

- In contrast to Central Asia's infant and child mortality, most Central Asian countries reported significant improvements in maternal mortality trends after 1990; by three quarters in Turkmenistan, half in Tajikistan, and one third in Kyrgyzstan.
- Only Kazakhstan reported reversals in maternal mortality during this period. On the other hand, these levels remain among the highest in the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- Indicators in Central Asia are more favourable than in other CIS countries: around three times as many women in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan use modern contraceptive methods as do women in the Caucasus.
- Survey data indicate that more than one third of Central Asians do not use modern contraceptives, the availability of which in poorer, rural areas is significantly lower.
- The numbers of abortions in Central Asia (under 1.5 times in a lifetime) are significantly lower than in the rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which can be perhaps explained by the greater influence of tradition and religion.
- The more secular Central Asian states with larger Russian minorities (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) report abortion rates that are nearly twice those of their more homogeneous and traditional neighbours, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- In Uzbekistan, the abortion rate has reported a steady decline ever since independence to 99.4 induced abortions per 1,000 live births in 2003.

Goal 6: Combating HIV/ AIDS, TB and other diseases in Central Asia

- HIV/ AIDS and TB are recognized as a prime health threat, as are such diseases as malaria, typhoid, and brucellosis.

- The numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS seem to be relatively low in Central Asia at or under 0.1% of the general population. UNAIDS estimates place this figure at less than 30,000; national reporting indicates less than 6,000, with most of the reported cases in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
- The spread of HIV in Central Asia seems to be closely linked to intravenous drug use, much of which is associated with the burgeoning heroin trade coming out of Afghanistan.
- Malaria has become particularly problematic along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan: 30,000 new cases were recorded in Tajikistan in 1997 alone. Although the incidence subsequently declined (to around 6,000 in 2002), the total number of people living with malaria in Tajikistan is estimated at 300,000 to 400,000.

Goal 7: Ensuring environmental sustainability in Central Asia

- Domestic sources of running water are not available to at least 10% of households in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and to over a quarter of the residents of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
- The situation is critical in rural areas in Tajikistan, where nearly three quarters of the population do not have access to running water in their dwellings. At least a quarter of the population in all five countries lacks access to proper sanitation facilities.
- The Central Asian countries' are the global leaders in carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan are among the seven dirtiest countries in the world in this respect (along with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, North Korea and Mongolia).

Appendix 3.

Mahbuba Ergasheva, UZBEKISTAN

Expert Group Meeting on Regional Implementation and Monitoring of the Beijing Platform of Action and the Outcome of the third Special Session of the General Assembly relating to Women 2002 (2-4 December 2002 Bangkok)

Gaining of the Independence have created an opportunities for women to participate in all transformations in Uzbekistan. At the same time the problems of development and creation of conditions for the realization of women's potential and their interest is becoming key issue in Uzbekistan. In this connection the government of Uzbekistan have made an important step for the improvement of the women's status in the country. For example, adoption of the presidential decree in March 1995 titled: Enhancing Women's Role in the State and Social Development of Uzbekistan. This political structure designed to encourage women's participation in public life. Another decree "Strengthening government support of the families with children", Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers titled, "State program for 1998 on ensuring the family interests" and announcement of the 1999 as a "Year of Women", announcement of the year 2000 as a "Year of Maternity and child." This move was designed to draw attention to gender issues that adversely affect women's ability to participate in society.

In 1997, the Women's Committee developed and adopted the National Platform for Action. The twin objectives of the national Action Plan are improving women's status in Uzbekistan and enhance their role in society. It is hoped that the objectives and targets of the National Action Plan are achieved by the year 2005. Of the 12 areas of concern detailed in the Beijing Action Platform (1995), the nine key priority areas were selected as the focus of the Uzbekistan National Action Plan.

Uzbekistan represented its initial report on the implementation of the "*Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women*" on January 25-30, 2001. It was accepted as a satisfactory with 47 recommendations and more than 40 concerns.

Problems in the field of Gender Equality

Despite of the government efforts in raising women's status women's participation in political structure of Uzbekistan has fallen during transition period. Notably, a presidential decree: Enhancing Women's Role in the State and Social Development of Uzbekistan established the position of Deputy Prime Minister of Women's Affairs, responsible for monitoring and enhancing women's participation in society. This decree set in place a formal political structure designed to encourage women's participation in public life. Similar positions at the deputy governor level were concurrently established for women at three administrative levels of government, that is, at the provincial, regional and city level (365 Deputy Governors within the country in executive bodies of the government). Despite of these efforts of government the women's participation in high political decision making remained low. Out of 250 seats women occupy 23; it constitutes 9.2% in Parliament.

Since Uzbekistan is currently in transition to a market economy, it is experiencing a rapid development of our private sector and denationalization of many factories and plants. Although the privatization process has opened new opportunities for men who occupied previously high administrative positions, it has presented challenges for the women. Women have to choose between work and home. They are either forced to participate in informal sector of economy. Women 45-50 years of age often find it impossible to re-enter the labour market. If they succeed they have been channelled into marginal, low-paying, low status sectors. Moreover, some efforts to solve women's problems from the top and encourage women to resume their maternal roles have become common for mass media and government officers of Uzbekistan. Radio and TV also encourage this by giving historical explanations for women's naturalistic positions, which basically translates as a women's place in the home.

Both before and since independence, women have received generous benefits and maternity leave, but now this is problematic for their professional careers. Women have three years maternity leave with the assurance that they keep their jobs. Women receive 70% of their salaries for 18 months. However, this creates a challenge for them during their three year stay at home, as women lose their professional skills. We are becoming more competitive where professionalism is very important. Women are currently finding that when they return, after three years maternity leave, they

have lost their professional skills which means they lose also their job positions. In the transition to the market economy, many women are finding that their rights are no longer enforced, and that companies discriminate against women and especially mothers. In most cases, employers in the private sector try not to hire women of child-bearing age, because of frequent maternity leave with the ensured salary for a year and a half as well their job position. Privatized factories and plants are often unable to pay their assurance therefore giving more job positions to men. In addition, discrimination in salaries within private sector, a woman earns 20-30% less than a man with similar experience and qualifications. These and many other factors came women to be involved in the informal sector of the economy and increase unemployment among them. Women in Uzbekistan are also very dependent economically on the family because they are mostly involved in the health care or educational systems. Both systems pay poorly. This situation has placed women in awkward positions and subsequently they have become passive and have accepted subordinate positions in their families voluntarily. They cannot see solutions of their economically dependent situations.

The current labour legislation grants working women a number of benefits that make employers reluctant to employ them except for certain female type jobs. It is not surprising then that although women comprise 42% of the labour force, they account for 63% of the registered unemployed. Also, current legislation prohibits discrimination against women in recruitment and employment for the managerial position but in reality often the preference will be given to the male candidate.

The third and an important issue is the violence against women in family. First of all it is psychological violence, which a young woman practices in the husbands' family, from his side as well as his relatives. Conducted interview with young families showed that, in most cases decisions for young bride in law about the work place, quantity of children, family expenditures will be accepted by mother in law or by husband. Due to the high conflict situations in young families there are suicide cases among women at the age 17 – 28 years old. In order to prevent such cases it is necessary to have accessible network of crisis centres throughout of the country. The numbers of non-government crisis centres are working mainly in large cities in the country which is not enough of course.

Measures taken for Gender Equality

Uzbekistan has introduced a number of legislative changes and legal reforms designed to guarantee the interests and status of women. In general, women in Uzbekistan are accorded equal rights with men and enjoy a number of special provisions that acknowledge and protect the position of women. According to the Constitution of Uzbekistan, all citizens enjoy equal rights and freedoms irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, personal or social status (article 18). Article 46 guarantees equality of rights for men and women. However, in practice many women are not served well by these laws because of poor implementation and lack of compliance. In order to ensure the equal opportunities for women and men in decision making it is planned to make some changes into the ministries and authorities, creation of the state program for the support and training women leaders.

As I mentioned earlier that Uzbekistan has adopted the National Platform of Action. Unfortunately, the National Platform of Action does not pay enough attention to the problem of violence. There is not statistical data on violence against women and monitoring such crimes in Uzbekistan, except Ministry of Internal affairs which are closed for public. As well as out of 67 ratified International legal Acts only 10 have been translated into Uzbek language in particular Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

Family and labour codes are often the systems of law most directly bearing on women's status. The Family Code adopted in 1998 regulates marital and family relations, property rights and disputes. According to the Family Code, spouses enjoy equal rights. Polygamy is illegal and only civil marriage is recognized as legal. But according to the Criminal Code can be considered as a fact, when a man will have two or more women in one household. But if wives live separately it is not accepted as polygamy. Two issues not directly addressed in the Family Code are discrimination against women on the basis of their family status and prohibition of violence against women. The Family Code however does contradict with the provisions outlined in the CEDAW where the marriage is set at 18. Another area of concern is how the Family Code allows young women to marry at 17 and even at 16 in some exceptions.

Social changes in the life of Uzbek people also create initiative for women intellectuals to promote women's rights. The growth of women's NGO's is one of the most positive achievements in terms of women's political participation in Uzbekistan. Currently, there are more than 200 registered NGO's in Uzbekistan. Many non-governmental organizations raise issues on human rights, combating violence against women in their activities. Also, almost all women's NGO's in Uzbekistan are in the initial state of formation. Most of them are having the lack of funding and achievements of some women's NGO are explained by the support of international foundations. The present legislation on NGO adopted in 1998 does not provide a favourable environment for the fruitful activity of women's NGO. Therefore, women's NGO's are not protected by the government legally as well as materially. Despite of obstacles women's groups are able to render services to their clients and take an active part in economic, social and political transformations in the country.

The Main Obstacles of Women's NGO's in Uzbekistan

- Shortage of knowledge on NGO development within NGO itself and government structures;
- Shortage of information about NGO activity and their role in formation of the civil society;
- Weak management of NGO's and in confidence of their own power;
- Absence of solidarity among NGO's;
- Weak legal literacy of Women's NGOs as well as government structures;
- Absence of favourable environment for NGO development and unequal access to the opportunities;
- Presence of an extra guardianship on NGO's.