

STATUS OF WOMEN IN KYRGYZSTAN, 1991-2001

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Status of Women in Kyrgyzstan, 1991-2001" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full of any other degree or diploma of any other University.

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Dedicated to my parents
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and
my elder brother
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CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian Republic, which gained its independence following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. The country is bordered to the north by Kazakhstan, to the west by Uzbekistan, to the south by Tajikistan and to the east by China. It is the second smallest Republic of the five Central Asian states; it has an area of 199,900 square km. Bishkek is the capital, which is located close to the northern border.¹ It is very mountainous country of great natural beauty, thus its population is concentrated in river valleys and along lakesides. The average population density is 25 people per km square. Kyrgyzstan is a multiethnic society. The main ethnic groups are Kyrgyz (67.4%), Uzbek (14.2%) and Russian (10.3%), while the remaining 8.1% include a large number of smaller minority groups.² Although officially, Kyrgyzstan is the secular state but Sunni Islam is the predominant in this region, followed by the Russian Orthodox faith. The country consists of 7 oblasts³ and the capital, every oblast includes rayon⁴ and towns subject to the oblast.

Kyrgyzstan has a great legal base for building gender equality, but there are still many forms of discrimination in reality. Statistically, three forth of all working places are taken by women. In spite of this, in average women are doing the same kind of work as men but they earn only 65% of what men earn every month in addition, most of women have a little paid job.⁵ Presentation of women is not enough in public and political life. In new Kyrgyz parliament there are no women or only a few women take official high rank positions. The index of the fact that women are more and more discriminated is the statistical growth of violence towards women.⁶ The society of Kyrgyzstan is tolerant to this violence. In Kyrgyzstan up to three

¹ Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al. (2005), "Health Care Systems in Transition", *European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 7 (2): 1.

² National Statistical Committee, Kyrgyz Republic (2004), *Demographic yearbook of the Kyrgyz Republic (1999–2003)*, Bishkek. Cited in Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al. (2005), *Health Care Systems in Transition, European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 7 (2): 1.

³ Oblast (province) is the largest administrative and territorial unit in the Kyrgyz Republic relating to regional territorial division.

⁴ Rayon (district) is the next basic administrative and territorial unit of the Kyrgyz Republic after the ayyl.

⁵ Accessed on 12 March 2012 UR: <http://www.mtnforum.org/sites/default/files/pub/1051.pdf>.

⁶ Jamila, Seftaoui (2009), *"Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region, a Compilation of Good Practices"*, Vienna.

thousand women are suffering from gender problems, they ask Crisis centres for help annually. Roughly, 50% of these women are out in the open to domestic violence.⁷

Gender is also a social construct like race and ethnicity. It clearly defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of women and men. Sex is the natural biological differences between females and males; this is gender which creates discrimination between two sexes. On the basis of social norms that define appropriate behaviours for women and men and determine the social, economic, and political power gap between the sexes. Although the specific nature and degree of these differing norms vary across societies and across time. At the opening of the twenty-first century men and boys are still favoured, they have more access than women and girls to the capabilities, resources, and opportunities that are important for the enjoyment of social, economic, and political power and well-being.⁸

1.1 Status of Kyrgyz Women

The status of women has recently become worldwide significance. The importance of the role of women was recognized by the UN by declaring 1975 as the International Women's Year and 1975-85 as the UN Decade for women. Approximately in all societies, traditional practices, customs and the overall constraints of a patriarchal system determines the position of women in the family and in the community. The Human Development report, 1994 observed that women still constitute about two thirds of the world's illiterates, hold fewer than half the jobs in the market and are paid half as much as men for work of equal value, despite advances in labour force participation, education and health. Women make up only about 10% of the world's parliamentarians and less than 4% cabinet ministers, this report shows that no one society are women secure or treated equally.⁹ The Human Development report, 1995 indicated that human development if not engendered is endangered when

⁷ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2010), *Violence Against Women In The Russian Federation*, Alternative Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 46th session, July 2010 Examination of the 6th and 7th reports submitted by the Russian Federation With the support of the International Federation for Human Rights.

⁸ Grown, Caren et al. (2005), "UN Millennium Project Task force on education and Gender equality: Taking Action: achieving gender equality and empowering women", London: Sterling Va.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme (1995), *Human Development Report 1994 New Dimensions of Human Security*, UNDP Publication: Delhi, p.31.

development excludes women from full participation it denies its benefits to women and it functions for less effectively.¹⁰

In the Kyrgyz communities gender problems do exist, which have become more acute as the result of the difficult economic times and also the shift in social values. The situation of women is particularly difficult, in that they are expected to do the housework, raise the children, care for the elderly, as well as earn a living. Although such expectations were also true in the Soviet period, participants explained that there were many more social and institutional supports in place, such as day-care programs, regular salaries, benefits for each child, and free health and educational services.¹¹

Kyrgyz Republic were characterized by the processes of dynamic developments establishment of new statehood, development of market economic relations, revival of national identity of peoples of the republic, freedom of public consciousness, including in relation to women since last two decades of their independence. The Platform for Actions adopted by the Fourth UN World Women's Conference held in Beijing (1995) and recognized by the world community as the program of human rights for women, became a fundamental program document. On the basis of Beijing Platform for Actions, Kyrgyzstan began structuring the national strategy on development and use of potential of women of the republic. Most countries have made at least some socio-economic progress benefitting women, but the gender stratification of the world continues in a universal way. The world remains unequal along sex lines in education, income, health care, and much else. Conceivably the most shimmering disparity is that men monopolize politics in almost all countries.¹²

Women have been always treated unequal in every society and central Asian republics in general and Kyrgyzstan specially is not an exception as status of women in this region is also unequal to men. Mostly status of women is determined by the

¹⁰ Rood Rowsky, Mary (1991), "Women and development: a survey of the literature", in ISIS International women Information's and communication service (ed.) *women in development: A resource guide for Organization and Action*, Intermediate technology publication.

¹¹ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000-01*, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic: Bishkek, p.9.

¹² United Nations Development Programme (1995), *Human Development Report*, Oxford University Press: New York.

traditions. Traditionally, home is the work place of women; they are expected from childhood to old age to care of family members. Women are also not enjoying the independency and self dependency due to their dependency on male. Before marriage a girl has to under her parents and brother, after marriage her dependency moves to her husband and later on it goes to her son. It means in the journey of life, women never ever feel freedom.

Growing social differences and inequalities echo trends for stratification in Kyrgyz society. Due to these inequalities and differences all ethnic-cultural and gender factors are obviously make important. Thus, status of women in Kyrgyzstan Republic is necessary to study and it is essential to give adequate focus upon it. Within the study of the status of women scholar would like to discuss the education, health, economic and political activities of women. Furthermore, I would like to assess the government policies besides national, international donors as well as national and international NGO's.

Women are important for the development and modernization of society. In the developed countries they have shown their capability, eligibility and strengthen. Whereas in the most of the developing and underdeveloped countries they are underrepresented in all spheres like social, economic, cultural, political at all level viz. local, regional, national and international means local level to global level women have not equal representation. The challenges of developing individual, society and state traditionally are the complex social administrative, political and economic aspects while in the present or modern time as Amritya Sen said that *“The process of development should be viewed as a process of expanding the opportunities of individuals, and not as an increase in material or economic wellbeing or satisfaction. In final terms, development is an issue of freedom”*.

Although Gender problems do exist, but they are not clearly worded as problems. They lived in the tradition inherited from the older generations and believed that women's role in the family is secondary. Many women have nothing

against this and raise their daughters in this tradition believing that a daughter is but a guest in the family *chykkan kyz chiiden tyshkary*.¹³

Difference between two sexes is natural but it is a hierarchy which is socially constructed that put men at top or upper and women at bottom or lower strata means Gender is defined as the social meaning given to biological sex differences, it is an ideological and cultural construct but it is also reproduced within the realm of material practices, in turn, it influences the outcomes of such practices, it affect the distribution of resources, wealth, work, decision making, political power, the enjoyments of rights and entitlements within the family as well as public life. In spite of variations across cultures and over time, gender relations throughout the world require asymmetry of power between men and women as a pervasive trait, thus gender is a social stratified, and in this sense it is similar to other stratifies such as race, class, ethnicity and age.

Women have to face Gender-based violence whether it is domestic or other type. It is an issue of human rights, public health, as well as gender issue. It is the most unfair and omnipresent violation of women's human rights and an obstruction to achieving gender equality, as well as promoting development and peace. World-wide, it is estimated that one out of three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, raped or otherwise physically abused. Violence affects women in all societies, regardless of culture, region, ethnicity, religion and economic status. The causes for violence against women are a complex combination of cultural, legal, economic and political factors, yet it is a generally accepted view that violence against women is the result of patriarchal ideology, values, and norms, unbalanced power relations, as well as strict divisions of labour, socialization processes, and cultural customs and traditions. Poverty and low socio-economic development further exacerbate the problem. In the Asian and the Pacific region, strictly defined gender roles, discrimination and gender inequality result in an environment rife with violence against women.¹⁴

¹³ *chykkan kyz chiiden tyshkary* means a married daughter belongs to a different family and her problems must be resolved in that family.

¹⁴ UNESCAP (2003), *Involving Men in Eliminating Violence against Women: Examples of Good Practices*, as a background document for UNESCAP's sub regional training workshop on Elimination of Violence against Women in Partnership with Men, 2-5 December, 2003, New Delhi: India.

1.1.1 Status in Soviet Period

The revolutionary leaders, predestined the establishment of the new soviet status in October, 1917 promised radical social change to bring full equality of men and women in social, economic and political life. Their efforts were to draw women in new economic and political roles to redefine the relationship between the family and the large socially and alert the deep rooted cultural values, attitudes and behaviour that represent the first and most for reaching attempt ever undertaken to alter the status and role of women. This was in sharp contrast to the tsarist period, where the society was largely traditional in which male had an important role to play political and social power was essentially absolute and hierarchical the tsar was the affectionate father (batiuska) to his subjects, master to his serfs, and the father lead of the household.¹⁵ During soviet period the status of women has plausible been a subject of particular pride in the family and the women achieved significant advancement in the areas such as housing agricultural, civil rights and living standards, education, legal rights, access to employment and profession and equal pay for equal work is some of the indicators where women made substantial progress sine revolution of 1917.¹⁶

The communist party set up a special women's Department (The Zzhenotdel) to give exposure to the freedom of divorce of women and to observe the apprehension of women's rights and newly achieved freedoms. In its operation it changed patriarchal attitude at all levels of society. It organizes special literary classes for women, encouraged them to take part in education and technical training programmes and informed them of their important role in the newly founded voluntary, social and political organizations that was being set up in the workplace towns and villages. It remained active till 1920s. In the late 1920s the Zzhenotdel under the leadership of Aleksandra Artyukhina, spearheaded the campaigns for the promotion of Muslim women in central Asia.¹⁷ During the first decade of soviet rule, the government played an active role and took decisions to improve the socio-economic status of the women. The entry of women into productive employment outside the household was viewed as essential for the liberation of women. A resolution at the party congress in 1924

¹⁵ Susan, Morrissey (2003), "patriarchy on trail: Suicide", *Discipline and Governance in economic transition* 43(9): 34-46.

¹⁶ Atkinson, D. et al (1978), *Women in Russia*, New York: Harvester press.

¹⁷ Llic, Melanie ed. (2001), *Women in Stalin Era*, New York: Palgrave.

insisted that “*the preservation of female labour power in industry is of political significance*” and directed party organs to take opportunities.¹⁸

It would be wrong to describe the life of Kyrgyz women as a continuous disgrace and to represent them as only victims. The nomadic way of life was encouraging to relative freedom of Kyrgyz women, who as distinct from the settled peoples never covered their faces and were freer to express their opinions. Marriages of children or joint purchases of property were impossible without consent of wife. In general, the sphere of women’s rights was enormously broader than that of women in Europe. Soviet rule also contributed very much to the development of Kyrgyz women. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz Government has been in the vanguard of gender legislation in Central Asia. The Soviet trial to transform the status of women in society turned out to be of crucial importance for women in Kyrgyzstan.

The status of women was one of main ace cards of Soviet propaganda against capitalism. Nevertheless in broad-spectrum, the Soviet regime, did not manage to triumph over the durability of patriarchal relations. Exploitation of women was in fact extended into another sphere: exploitation in the family was supplemented by exploitation in the wage labour economy.

1.1.2 Status in Post-Soviet Period

In present time, chiefly in the earliest years of independence of Kyrgyzstan, women have played more high-flying roles than elsewhere in Central Asia. Since 1991 women have occupied the positions of state procurator (the top law enforcement official in the national government), minister of education, ambassador to the United States and Canada, and minister of foreign affairs. Women have also excelled in banking and business and the editor of Central Asia's most independent newspaper, Respublika, is a woman. Roza Otunbayeva, who was minister of foreign affairs in 1996, has been mentioned frequently as a successor to Akayev.

The situation faced now-a-days by women in Kyrgyzstan is ambiguous and prejudiced by various factors. A concept of modern Kyrgyz women is formed based on the following three factors: (1) secularized Islamic tradition; (2) traditional value system of the Kyrgyz, historically a nomadic nation where women played an

¹⁸ Atkinson, D. et al. (1978), *Women in Russia*, New York: Harvester Press.

important role both on a household and on a community level and; (3) Soviet heritage of gender equality promotion.¹⁹

The independence proclaimed in 1991 did not lead to equality in gender relations in the Kyrgyz Republic. On the contrary, the actual status of women in society deteriorated. In practice, women are unprotected and not safe from violence neither at family nor at work in public institutions. The transition to market relations is resulting in deterioration of the economic situation. This aggravates exploitation of women, who have become in many cases the main breadwinners of their families. The collapse of the social safety net and the decline in public health services has led to a sharp deterioration of women's health and to growth of maternal and child mortality.

Democratization means the elimination of quotas for women in elective organs, meaning that women lost even formal representation in the power structures. The transfer to a contract system of employment and the loss of state control over the personnel policy of employers has undermined the security of women in the labour and employment market. Women's unemployment is growing. The huge level of violence against women is now coming to light. The tradition of kidnapping brides, a practice degrading and humiliating to women has been revived and is becoming more widespread. The return to the ideals of the past, perceived as the revival of patriarchal and Islamic customs, is a real threat that diminishes the status of women in the Kyrgyz society.

In 1996, the State Commission on Family, Women and Youth Affairs was established under the Kyrgyz Government to provide institutional support for promotion of women's interests. According to its mandate, the Commission implemented the state policy on women's development, developed and implemented state and national programs on gender in relation to family, women and youth. The State Commission coordinated these efforts with the sectoral ministries, administrative structures, local governments, civil society organizations including political parties, non-governmental organizations, as well as international organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic.

¹⁹ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek.

The President of the Kyrgyz Republic declared the year 1996 as the Year of Women. State support, institutional reforms and strengthening of the legal framework to promote women's policy resulted in creation of active public environment for development, adoption and implementation of the Ayalzat²⁰ which included priorities of the Beijing Platform for Actions and was aimed at improvement of women's status in the republic. Women's problems were discussed during the same year at parliamentary sessions and were reflected in other national programs, such as Bilim, Cadres of XXI Century, Madaniyat, Manas, Araket, Emgek, On prevention of AIDS and STD in the Kyrgyz Republic for 1996-2000.

In 1997, Special committees on family, women and youth affairs were established through the State Commission's efforts, within the Legislative Assembly and People's Representatives Assembly of Jogorku Kenesh.²¹ The State Commission was also represented at the Oblast level by Women's Initiative or Ayalzat Centers. The activities of these Centres focused on co-ordination of Youth, Family and Women's issues among local agencies, field support for women's NGOs, communities, women-entrepreneurs and farmers. Additional Centres have been established at Rayon and Village level.

A major achievement in development of the institutional mechanism was the establishment of the State Commission for Family, Women, and Youth Affairs under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for implementation of the National Program Ayalzat. Possessing relatively limited human and financial resources it succeeded in coordination of actions of government structures and mobilization forces of the women's non-governmental sector for fulfilment of the adopted program objectives. Vertical structures have been created specialists on issues of family, women and youth have been appointed in oblast state administrations, and women's councils at rayon and village levels. Committees on protection of health, women, and family and youth

²⁰ Ayalzat is the Kyrgyzstan's national plan of action, which was established with the support of UNDP. It covers the period 1996-2000, reflects the priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action and it was aimed at improvement of women's status in the republic. The main elements of this programme were approved in the decree of 6 March 1996 of the President of Kyrgyzstan. It was prepared by the State Commission for the Family, Women and Youth attached to the Government of Kyrgyzstan, which is the republic-wide executive organ responsible for implementing State policy on the family, women and young people.

²¹ Jogorku Kenesh is the national parliament and the highest legislative organ of power in the Kyrgyz Republic composed of two Assemblies viz. the Legislative Assembly (60 deputies), and People's Representatives Assembly (45 deputies).

affairs started functioning in both chambers of the Jogorku Kenesh (lower house is Myyzam Chygaru Palatasy and El Okuldor Palatasy is upper house) of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In July 1998, the National Council on Gender Policy under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic was established to boost the work of the State Commission, perk up government commitment to promoting women's advancement and to introduce the gender approach in policy and programming. It comprised representatives of state bodies and non-governmental organizations. In addition to shaping national policies on gender mainstreaming, the National Council has determined its functions as follows monitoring of the gender mainstreaming process within organs working under the three powers of state:

- Providing expert advice and promoting best practices on gender mainstreaming within these organs,
- Coordination of gender related policies and strategies of target organizations, including ministries, commissions and agencies and,
- Enhancing coordination with NGOs and other organizations on gender issues.

In February 2001, this structure was renewed into the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development Issues under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic with the Secretariat within the President's Administration being its working body. In 2001, new national machinery National Council for Women, Family and Gender Development under the President of the Kyrgyzstan was established under the initiative of the Kyrgyz President and replaced the former one. Gender Equality contributes to human development it repents opportunities for women and better access to education, health, employment and politics the improvement of the status of women requires a change in the altitudes and roles of both men and women.

1.2 International and National Efforts for Gender Empowerment

During 1991 to 2001 in Kyrgyz Republic, continuous process of improvement of the national legislation and its reshuffle in fulfilment with international legal norms was underway. About 30 universal documents on human rights have been ratified. It allowed for a significant progress in the sphere of ensuring the rights of women of the republic and provided them with an access to international human right defending systems. An achievement in this area is a gender experts' examination of legislation

and development of a number of new draft laws on gender equality. Human Rights watch world report 2002 says that one of the greatest challenges of government in 2001 was to make respect-for women’s rights a more permanent and central part of the international human rights agenda.

All the Central Asian Republics have signed the Conventions on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action²² and aim at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The ratification for the CEDAW²³ and the Beijing Platform for Action has made mandatory to government to facilitate women’s empowerment and equality. Along with other states that joined the Beijing Platform of Action, Kyrgyzstan take responsibility of the development and empowerment of women in all areas of the state life, particularly, in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres, guaranteeing this empowerment by relative legislation.

At present there is a sufficient legal basis where human rights and freedoms are recognized regardless the gender factor.²⁴ All Central Asian Republics signed the CCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and CESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) which are related to social, economic, political and cultural fortify the women.

Table No. 1.1

International Covenanting on Socio-Economic, Civil, Political, Culture Rights

C.A. Republics	Year of Signing the CCPR	Year of Signing the CESCR
Kazakhstan	02.Dec.2003	02.Dec.2000
Kyrgyzstan	07.Oct.1994	07.Jan.1995
Tajikistan	04.April.1999	04.April.1999
Turkmenistan	01.Aug.1997	01.Aug.1997
Uzbekistan	28.Dec.1995	28.Dec.1995

Sources: 1. www.unhcr.ch/html/menu, 2. www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/cescr.htm

²² The Beijing Declaration was adopted in 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women; participating Governments expressed their commitment “to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity”.

²³ The convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN on 18 December 1979, which is also known as ‘The Treaty for the Rights of women’.

²⁴ UNDP (2002), *National Human development report-2002: Human development in mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic*, UNDP: Bishkek.

By the signing of these covenants, the Central Asian Republics are obliged to respect and protect these rights. The following table, which is made by two sources shows the year of signing of CCPR as well as CESCRC by the Central Asian Republics. Table number 1.1 shows that Kyrgyzstan Republic was the first among all the five Central Asian Republics, who signed first on both the CCPR and the CESCRC. Article 3 of CCPR says that, “*The State parties to the present covenant undertake to ensure the equal rights to men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present covenant*”.²⁵

The first World Conference on the status of women, was convened at Mexico city in 1975, which was also declared as International Women’s Year, observed to remind the international community that discrimination against women continued to be a persistent problem in much of the world.²⁶ The second World Conference on the status of women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The third World Conference on the status of women was convened in Nairobi in 1985, which is also known as the “birth of global feminism”.²⁷ The fourth world conference on women in 1995 for achieving the advancement and empowerment of women, the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted by the governments in it. The mission statement of the Beijing Platform for Action says: “Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people entered sustainable development.”²⁸ The Beijing Platform for Action identified the twelve critical areas of priority which are following-

- The continual and increasing burden of poverty on women.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training.
- Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services.

²⁵ Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 3 January 1976 in accordance with Article 27. This covenant is monitored by the committee on economic, social, and cultural Rights (online: Web) www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm cited in the Kumar, Ritu Ranjan (2005), *Political Empowerment of women in Central Asia 1991-2000*, M.Phil Dess. JNU, New Delhi.

²⁶ United Nations Public Information “Women 2000” Encounter, Vol. 3(5): 90, New Delhi.

²⁷ Ibid, p.90.

²⁸ Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women, UN (A/Conference.177/20), [Online: Web] Accessed 26 March 2012, URL: <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/offla--20.en>.

- Violence against women.
- The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women including those living under foreign occupation.
- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels.
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women.
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, particularly in the media.
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment.
- Persistent discriminations against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

The CEDAW calls for government to remove all discriminatory barriers against women in all fields in particular the political, social, economic and cultural fields. All the Central Asian Republics have signed and ratified the CEDAW. The following table shows the years in which they signed-

Table No. 1.2
Year of Confirmation of the CEDAW

Central Asian Republics	Year of Confirmation by the CARs
Kazakhstan	1998
Kyrgyzstan	1997
Tajikistan	1993
Turkmenistan	1997
Uzbekistan	1995

Source: *Human Development Report 2004.*

National Action Plan has been adopted by the countries that have signed and ratifies the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), to meet the requirements of the CEDAW. Here we discuss only Kyrgyzstan's National Action Plan. It was adopted to carry out the decisions of the Fourth World Conference on women held in Beijing in 1995. CEDAW, in its

preamble accepts that extensive discrimination against women continues to exist. Apart from the gender discrimination, women suffer from other form of discrimination also. Gender discrimination and all other forms of discriminations, in particular racism, racial discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance continue to cause threat to women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.²⁹

The Kyrgyz Republic has ratified the following international conventions to eradicate discrimination against women: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the Convention on Maternity Protection etc.

The Millennium Declaration, as a statement of values, principles and objectives for the international agenda of the 21st Century, set time-bound and measurable goals and targets for combating discrimination against women together poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and environmental degradation. The Road Map for implementing the Declaration has been issued by the UN Secretariat, focusing on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by the year 2015. These goals are shaping the agenda for national as well as global policy development.³⁰ Among the eight MDGs, MDG 3 refers to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Nonetheless, in order to draw on human rights commitments affirmed in the Declaration, it is necessary to engender every MDG goal and to seek gender equality in all MDG outcomes. Gender equality should be considered as an essential cross-cutting element for achievement of all MDGs. The Millennium Declaration in rightly recognizing that the goal of gender equality is not only important in its own right, but is essential to reaching all goals.³¹

²⁹ Report of the Ad hoc Committee of the whole of the twenty their special session of the General Assembly; supplement No.3 (A/S-23/10/Rev.1) UN, New York2000, P.16.

³⁰ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2007), *Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Asia-Pacific: Linking the Millennium Development Goals with the CEDAW and Beijing Indicators*, Gender and Development Discussion Paper Series No. 20, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok: Thailand, p.4.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.5.

Table No. 1.4

Millennium Commitments to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

United Nations Declaration Resolutions	MDGs, Targets and Indicators
<p>To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.</p>	<p>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</p> <p>Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</p> <p>10. Ratio of literate women to men (15-24 years)</p> <p>11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</p> <p>12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments</p>
<p>To ensure that, by [the year 2015], girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.</p>	<p>Goal 3, Target 4, Indicator 9 (above)</p>
<p>By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters...</p>	<p>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</p> <p>Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>16. Maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</p>
<p>To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement [CEDAW].</p>	<p>No goals, targets, or indicators</p>

Source: *Asian Development Bank, 2006*

The United Nations has been at the forefront of protecting women’s rights and efforts women empowerment. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), commonly referred to as the “international bill of rights of women”, covers a vast range of women’s economic, political, social, cultural and civil rights, and has been ratified by 174 member countries. Unfortunately, only 56 Countries have ratified the Optional Protocols to the

Convention, which include inquiry, communication and investigation procedures. The Beijing Platform for Action categorizes violence against women as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, and calls on all governments to place priority on initiatives to eliminate all forms of violence against women.³²

Along with other states that joined the Beijing Platform of Action, Kyrgyzstan took on responsibility of the development and empowerment of women in all areas of the state life, particularly, in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres, guaranteeing this empowerment by relative legislation. At present there already exists a sufficient legal basis where human rights and freedoms are recognized regardless the gender factor.³³ The traditional myth about inferiority of women, who are allegedly good for nothing but doing housework and serving men, children, and the elderly, is very popular among men of Central Asia.

The rights and opportunities of women are given particular attention in the framework of the Strategy of Sustainable Human Development³⁴ in Kyrgyzstan. The health and social status of women are directly related to maternity and health of children. Women account for the majority of the population in the country, thus there is a great need to create the environment which would encourage the active participation of women in the political, social, and spiritual life of the country.

1.3 National Agenda for Women Progress

Ayalzat national programme is the Kyrgyzstan's national plan of action. On 13th May 1996, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted resolution No.212 on the status of women in Kyrgyzstan and measures to assist them in the transition period. On 12 October 1996, parliamentary hearings were held on the current situation of Kyrgyz women.³⁵ Principal aim of this programme was improvement of women's situation by the year 2000. The programme creates the necessary preconditions for real equality

³² UNESCAP (2003), *Involving Men in Eliminating Violence against Women: Examples of Good Practices*, as a background document for UNESCAP's sub regional training workshop on Elimination of Violence against Women in Partnership with Men, 2-5 December, 2003, New Delhi, India.

³³ UNDP (2002), *National Human development report: Human development in mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic*, UNDP: Bishkek.

³⁴ *Sustainable Human Development (SHD)* is a development approach in which growth in human potential takes priority. It strives to integrate economic, ecological and social goals from this human perspective. As such, SHD protects the poor and the environment, supports women and works to create jobs. SHD has been formulated as a concept in annual UNDP Global Human Development Reports since 1990.

³⁵ Accessed 12 Jan 2021 URL: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>.

between men and women and reflects all 12 priorities of the Action Platform adopted in 1995 at the International Conference in Beijing.³⁶ The Ayalzat national programme has 11 sections and each section is divided into short and long-term objectives.

1. Improvement of basic legislation and legal norms

Women's rights are unquestionable human rights, which they have simply because they are human beings. However, there is no modern society in which women have the same opportunities as men. Notwithstanding the declaration of the equal rights of women, equal opportunity in Kyrgyzstan has yet to be achieved.

2. Development of an institutional mechanism for improving the status of women

The national mechanism for improving the status of women is the State Commission for the Family, Women and Youth attached to the Government of Kyrgyzstan. Its principal tasks are to elaborate and implement State policy on the family and family relations, establish national gender development programmes and implement the Ayalzat national programme.

3. Women's education and enhancement of their functional literacy

Women's education and the enhancement of their functional literacy presuppose an increase in economic and legal literacy and women's mastery of new information technologies.

4. Women's health, reduction of maternal and infant mortality

Mother and child welfare is one of the most urgent of women's issues. The number of disabled persons has increased, and diseases related to social troubles like tuberculosis, venereal disease, alcoholism, drug addiction and substance abuse are on the rise. Anaemia is fairly widespread among women, and there has been deterioration in the level of services provided to pregnant women and women in childbirth. Maternal and infant mortality is a serious problem.

5. Women and the economy, overcoming poverty

Women play a key role in the economy since they are a large source of Kyrgyzstan's labour resources. While the new economic conditions have enabled a significant number of women to find work in the private sector.

³⁶ World Bank (1999), ob.Cit. p.122.

6. Women's participation in decision-making at the political, legislative and executive levels

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

7. Creation of special support programmes for girls

Although Kyrgyzstan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is still a need to increase and adapt health education and medical services, especially programmes providing primary medical and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, and to develop quality programmes in the area of health care and education for girls.

8. Reduction of all forms of violence against women

During the transition period, violence against women has been growing. Although Kyrgyz legislation seeks to eradicate violence against women, traditions of violence persist in national stereotypes aimed at ensuring male supremacy.

9. Women and the media

During the transition period, the media have been playing an extraordinary role in society. The media are the most effective and accessible means of improving the status of women, enhancing the prestige of the family and educating young people.

10. Women and the environment

The environment has a direct impact on human health. Maternal health is a prerequisite for improving the health of children and young people and preserving the nation's gene pool.

11. Rural women

Rural women constitute a significant section of the population. During the transition era, the situation of rural women has been sharply exacerbated by such factors like unemployment and the deterioration of the health care, educational and social security systems. Rural women are therefore in need of constant attention and special support.

1.4 Constitutional Provisions for Gender Equality

The equality of human rights is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kyrgyzstan, which was adopted in 1993 and has been amended three times, recognizes and guarantees “the basic rights and liberties of human beings” and ensures everyone’s equality before the law and in court.³⁷ Kyrgyzstan is making significant efforts to improve the status of women and establish gender equality in this particularly complex and difficult time.

The rights and interests of women are protected by the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as the Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Matrimonial Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Civil Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic On State Benefits to Families with Children, On Protection of Health of People in the Kyrgyz Republic.

- Article 3 of the Constitution of the KR, discrimination on the basis of sex, confession, or ethnicity is prohibited. Observance of the gender equality is also guaranteed by Civil Code, Criminal Code, Labour Code and Family Code.³⁸
- Article 15 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic stipulates the principle of equality of the rights of men and women. It is expressed in the equal right of women and men to participate in elections and referenda, to obtain, change and keep the citizenship, to receive a series of civil, economic and political rights.³⁹
- Article 15 (3) states that no one may be discriminated against although women and men enjoy equal rights under the law, the death penalty cannot be applied on women.⁴⁰

³⁷ Nicole Watson, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (2000), “Women 2000 – An investigation into the status of women’s Right in Central and South-Eastern Europe and Newly independent states”. IHF reports, p.236, available online www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=1465.

³⁸ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek, p.10.

³⁹ Ibid, p.9.

⁴⁰ Nicole Watson, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (2000), “Women 2000 – An investigation into the status of women’s Right in Central and South-Eastern Europe and Newly independent states”. IHF reports, p.236, [Online: web] Accessed 21 March 2021, www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=1465.

- Article 16 of Section II Human Rights and Freedoms, Chapter-I Fundamental Rights and Freedoms states that, no one may be subject to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, language, disability, ethnicity, belief, age, political and other convictions, education, background, proprietary and other status as well as other circumstances. Furthermore, In the Kyrgyz Republic men and women shall have equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for their realization.
- Article 20 of Kyrgyzstan's Constitution says that Human and Civil rights and freedoms may be limited by the Constitution and laws for the purposes of protecting national security, public order, health and morale of the population as well as rights and freedoms of other persons. The introduced limitations should be commensurate to the declared objectives.
- Article 31 of Chapter II Human rights and freedoms, says that the propagation of national, ethnic, racial and religious hatred, gender as well as other social supremacy which calls to discrimination, hostility and violence shall be prohibited.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of the present study is to examine the existing and changing status of women in Kyrgyzstan and assess the impact of government policies and programmes in promoting women's role in social, political and economic activities. Much of the research on Kyrgyzstan has focused on its internal political, cultural, trade and commerce issues as well as Kyrgyz Republic's foreign relations. But very limited work has done exclusively on the status of women in Kyrgyzstan and impact of government policies and programmes in promoting women's role in social, political and economic activities.

Hence, very little literature is available in this area, so an attempt has been made in this study to examine the status of women in society, political participation and economic activities in Kyrgyzstan to fill the gap in research. It would, therefore, be a productive exercise to understand the various programmes and measure which Kyrgyz government has initiated to promote the status of women in Kyrgyzstan. Objectives of the study are following:

- To study the Status of women in Central Asia, especially Kyrgyzstan.
- To discuss education opportunities for female with compare to male.
- To assess the Kyrgyz female's health status.
- To examine economic opportunities and employment for women in Kyrgyzstan.
- To study Socio-economic empowerment of women in Kyrgyz society.
- To evaluate government policies and programmes to improve the status of Women.

1.6 Research Questions

In this research these are the following research questions-

- Is status of women simply an efficient choice for development?
- Does social, cultural and economic structure reflects in status of women?
- How social, economic and political empowerment of women help in achieving the national goal of gender equality in Kyrgyzstan?
- Why status of women is a critical issue in Kyrgyzstan despite implementing a number of programmes and policies.
- What are the major challenges in promoting gender equality in Kyrgyzstan?

1.7 Hypothesis

- Promoting gender equality has had positive impact on economic prosperity of the Kyrgyz republic.
- National policy on Gender Equality has opened the gate for Kyrgyz women to take advantage of socio-economic and political opportunities

1.8 Research Methodology

This study is based on analytical and empirical review of data and information collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include documents in the form of Central Asian Republics Government documents, treaties, agreements, signed by member states and Kyrgyzstan with international organizations as well as various governments' reports, press releases issued by the other Central Asian republics governments and Kyrgyzstan government to the issues related to status of Women.

The secondary sources of information include books, periodicals, journals, newspaper clippings, magazines and various websites (National and International) etc. is used. In addition to this, NGOs and Civil Society groups working on Gender equality related issues and their documents are also been consulted. The documents of various policy makers, researchers and non-governmental organizations, Civil Society groups to supplement the facts as well as to understand the position of Gender equality and the Central Asian Republics government's initiatives in the matter related to Gender equality in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan were consulted.

The period of the present study (1991 to 2001) starts from 1991 and has been chosen for two reasons: (a) Kyrgyzstan has become an independent country in 1991 after the disintegration from USSR and (b) in 2001, Kyrgyzstan has initiated several programme and policies including National Action Plan on Gender Equality and Matrix of Measures on its implementation with regards to women's rights. Since, then several changes have been introduced in national action plans and needs a further investigation.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

Organisation of the study is divided into six chapters:

Chapter-1-Introduction: This introductory Chapter provides a brief discussion about the situation of women in Kyrgyzstan. This chapter is also examine the various policies and programmes (public and private) related to women empowerment such as political participation, economic (labour force) activities, decision making process, educational attainment and access of health facilities.

Chapter-2-Education Programmes and Policies: The second chapter is about the detail of education of men and women of Kyrgyzstan particularly and Central Asia in general. This chapter also deals the descriptions of educational programme and policies of government and Non Governmental Organizations in Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

Chapter-3-Health Measures and Its Implication: The chapter endow with the detail of health conditions of men and women of Central Asia in broad and Kyrgyzstan mainly. This chapter also deals the descriptions of health care facilities and health

related program me and policies of government and Non Governmental Organizations in Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

Chapter-4-Economic Opportunities: In this chapter, new employment opportunities for women are dealt, potential areas of Kyrgyz women employment and know How to create new jobs for them. It also explains causes that are responsible for negligence of women in employment opportunities in entrepreneurship and industries in public and private sectors of Kyrgyzstan.

Chapter-5-Political Participation of Women: This chapter deals political participation of women in Kyrgyzstan. It also discuss the position of women in politics as well as its how to engage women in the policy decision to promote gender equality and effective role in socio-economic development.

Chapter-6-Conclusions: This chapter concludes the findings of the study and provide a wide picture of the social, economic and political status of women in Kyrgyzstan as well as education and health access of Kyrgyz Women.

CHAPTER-2

EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

AND POLICIES

2.1 Background

In Kyrgyz Republic, education is one of the key aspects of promoting gender equality broadening of women's rights and opportunities. Women education in Kyrgyzstan is ensured by the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, which declares that every citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic has the right for education, regardless of sex, religion, political convictions, national, race and language belonging. The Kyrgyz Constitution provides for compulsory universal primary education and no legal provisions discriminate against women in terms of access to general or higher education. In this region urban girls are more educated than boys, illiteracy rate of women is higher than men's, there are still traditional gender stereotypes in selection of the specialty and girls take humanities and boys take technical professions. In poor families that cannot afford school education for all children parents prefer to send to school boys, rather than girls.¹

Kyrgyzstan has a legacy of high literacy achieved in Central Asia during 70 years of Moscow's rule over the region. The role of education in the socialization of Central Asian Muslim women was important in the Soviet period. Formal education for all and mandatory work for women outside the home led to the development of a female social group within class: worker, peasant and intelligentsia. The intelligentsia encouraged education for girls that was geared to professions differentiated by gender. Unlike the third world countries the level of women education in Kyrgyzstan is not very different from men. Kyrgyz Republic ensure equal access to education, eradicate illiteracy among women, improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education, develop non-discriminatory education and training, distribute enough resources for and supervise the implementation of educational reforms, promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.²

Education imparts skills and competencies that are central to human development³ and enhanced quality of life, bringing wide-ranging benefits to both

¹ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000/01, National Synthesis Report* The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, p.119.

² Asian Development Bank (2005), *Country Gender Assessment Kyrgyz Republic: 2005*, Asian Development Bank: Philippines.

³ Human Development is the process of expanding human potential, which includes three essential elements health and longevity, knowledge and access to their sources necessary to sustain an acceptable level of life. At the same time, human development includes other components essential for

individuals and societies. Education has long been documented as a fundamental right with far-reaching consequences for human development and societal progress. Investing in girls' and women's education in particular produces exceptionally high social and economic returns. Educated women invest more in their children and contribute to the welfare of the next generation. They are more likely to participate in the labour force, allowing them to earn an income, know and claim their rights, and attain greater influence in the household and public life. Education is essential for empowering women and for finishing the gap between women and men in respect of socio-economic opportunities. It can also reduce inequalities based on gender and alter the historical legacy of disadvantage faced by women.

The right to education is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various international covenants. The importance of education for the advancement of women was highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action, in which it was identified as one of 12 critical areas of concern and affirmed as key for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Platform for Action called for eliminating discrimination in education on the basis of gender at all levels, eradicating illiteracy among women and improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education. With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the aim of eliminating gender disparities in education has been further intensified as it is essential to the Goals' achievement. Goal 3 of MDGs calls for achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, preferably by the target date of 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015. According to UNESCO, a literate person one who can, both read and write a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life with understanding and an illiterate person one who cannot both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life with understanding.

2.2 Education System in Kyrgyzstan

One alternative and broader definition of literacy, functional literacy is used in some countries, which have been already attained universal literacy, emphasizes the use of literacy. A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in

a person's well-being participation in the governance process, security, stability and human rights guarantees: all that is needed for a creative and fulfilled life and for maintaining human dignity. (UNDP, 2001)

which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development. Usually, literacy also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.⁴ According to encyclopedia any process, either formal or informal, which shapes the potential of a maturing organism, is education. Informal education results from the constant effect of environment and its strength in shaping values and habits cannot be overestimated. Formal education is a conscious effort by human society to impart the skills and modes of thought considered essential for social functioning.

The means and ends of almost all schools and schooling in the soviet republics of Central Asia were creation of the USSR. After independence, the republics of all five Central Asian countries have faced a large amount of issues and problems. These issues formerly occupied the attention of former soviet educators, who were themselves, created by the soviet model of schooling or have resulted from economic and political difficulties of the transition period.⁵

According to the data of Population census 1999 number of illiterate persons among the adults (15 years and older) was 40.1 thousand people. The share of illiterate persons among women is 2.8 times higher as compared with men. Almost 82 percent of the illiterate persons falls on the persons older than 55, the share of the illiterate persons in this age group by the population census of 1989 was 85 percent.⁶

The educational level of men and women in Kyrgyzstan does not have any significant distinctions. But in the urban zone women are more educated than men. Urban women with higher education increased by 3.3 percent and came to 17.5 percent while this number among urban men increased only by 1.7 percent and came to 15.6 percent. Specific share of urban women with specialized secondary education fell over that period by 3.8 percent and was 16.9 percent at the moment of census conducted in 1999, the decrease among the urban men was more noticeable and the

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010), *The World's Women 2010 Trends and Statistics*, United Nations: New York, p. 45.

⁵ Deyong, Alan J. (2006), "Problems and trends in education in Central Asia since 1990: the case of general secondary education in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asian Survey*, 25 (4), p.499.

⁶ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek.

share of men who graduated from secondary specialized educational institution decreased from 18.2 percent in 1989 to 10 percent in 1999.⁷

There are enough relation between education attainment and wages, health and schooling of children. Women and men often receive the same percent increase in their wage rates with advances in schooling. Because these returns decline with more schooling, the marginal returns for women will tend to surpass those for men, especially in countries where women are much less educated. The health and schooling of children are more closely related to their mother's education than fathers. More educated women work more hours in the market labour force, lengthening the tax base so potentially reducing tax distortions.⁸

There are some regional differences within Kyrgyzstan in the educational level of men and women. For instance, in southern regions the share of men with higher education is as a rule higher as compared with women, especially in the rural areas, where women get married earlier and stay at home taking care of their children and keeping the house. Strict distribution of gender roles especially in rural families is supported by cultural and religious traditions.

The most well-established stereotype is in the opinion that the family is the principal and almost the only predestination of women. Evidence from an increasing number of countries in all regions of the world demonstrates that increasing investments in women's human capital, especially education, should be a priority for countries seeking to increase both economic growth and human welfare. The case for directing educational investment to women is stronger, the greater the initial disparity in investments between women and men.⁹

2.2.1 Educational System in Soviet Era

Soviet educational system shaped the highest influence on both level education and achieving gender equality. The Soviet educational system in Kyrgyzstan had been guided from Moscow, which was playing the lead role of the SU's central government. It was constant on the basis of subsidies from the more flourishing

⁷ Ibid, p.14-15.

⁸ Schultz, T. Paul (2002), "Why governments should invest more to educate girls", *World Development*, 30 (2): 207-225.

⁹ Ibid, p.207.

Soviet republics. Soviet schools in the Kyrgyzstan were completely dominated from Moscow: curricula, staffing qualifications, texts and school organization. Teaching was teacher-centered and emphasized repetition as evidence of mastery. Students were not invited to be questioning or to apply concepts to real-life applications.¹⁰

It is believed, that during the time of Soviet period, education served an ideological and economic role to promote the goals of the Soviet state and to meet the skill needs of the centrally planned economy. Compulsory education was free and ten years in duration, after it there were specialized and vocational secondary education for one or two years. In 1943, co-education was in practice since 1918, was established in secondary schools in order to give proper attention to different requirements of their (boys and girls) vocational training, practical activities preparation for leadership and military services.

The wide government funding of education programmes for women was inherited from the Soviet past. In 1950, a number of educational institutions were created specifically for women. Literacy in Kyrgyzstan in 1989 was as high as 97 percent, a great majority of women had school education and 34 percent of women had undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The proportion of women was particularly high in the fields of education, health care, the textile and food industry, banking, and engineering. Women accounted for 13.6 percent of managers and officials.¹¹

The FSU education system included incorporated comprehensive health services for pre-school children. This permitted early uncovering and treatment of health problems, including nutritional deficiencies, and many children in kindergartens and elementary schools received free meals. In 1990, 53 percent of children in kindergartens and elementary schools received free school meals; by 1996, that figure had declined to 2.4 percent.¹²

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank (2001), Report and recommendation of the president to the board of directors on a proposed Asian Development Fund Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the second education project. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

¹¹ World Bank (1999), op.cit. p.109.

¹² United Nations Children's Fund (2000), *Societies in Transition: A Situation Analysis of the Status of Children and Women in the Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan*, UNICEF, Almaty, Kazakhstan, p.126.

Children that begin primary school with no preparation tend to face greater social and academic hurdles, and are less ready to make the learning gains in primary grades that can promote their academic success later on. Primary school teachers are also affected, as the lack of preschools often means that a larger proportion of students require lower-order skill development, demanding changes in program of study and pedagogy to lodge a changing student population. Teachers rarely have the time, funding support or materials to make such adjustments.¹³

2.2.2 Education System in Post-Soviet

From 1991, after the disintegration of Soviet Union Kyrgyzstan was one of the first countries in Central Asia which has established market-oriented education policy. According to the education policy, the Kyrgyz Republic has a multilevel education system, which includes the three main types of education programs, the main goal of which is the development of the student's abilities and talents:

- Special educational programs for preschool institutions;
- Public programs, aimed to develop general culture and intellect of a person, to create a base for successful profession acquirement and obtain a qualification;
- Professional programs, promoting professional growth and preparing qualified specialists.

After 1991, textbooks were intensively reviewed in the Kyrgyz Republic as in most countries in the FSU (former Soviet Union) although they continue to present strong gender stereotypes that may influence students and limit their aspirations falsely. While women are largely portrayed task domestic activities at home, few examples are shown of men involved in domestic activity. The result is that domestic work, including the care of children, is presented as a woman's work and inappropriate for men. This legitimizes women's double burden of work inside and outside the home, which is a limiting factor in their career prospects. Textbooks also tend to present gendered occupational choices for girls and boys, with women depicted as school teachers, while men are depicted as agriculturalists and lawyers. Future assessments and revisions of curriculum, at all levels of schooling, need to

¹³ Magno, C. et al. (2003), *Opportunities for Gender Equity in Education, a Report on Central and South Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, New York: Open Society Institute: New York, p.16.

ensure that, while setting clear national gender equity standards that promote gender equity objectives, curricula do not strengthen gender stereotypes.

For the Kyrgyz Republic, the cost of the independence and transition to market economy is significantly high rather than other Central Asian countries. There are no more subsidies from central soviet government that had previously supported in the social sectors. The end of getting subsidies and central planning support, the social system has weakened as disintegration of Soviet Union. State expenditure on social services has decreased by approximately one half. These changes have influenced education programs, staff and infrastructure.

Presently, education in KR is remained as compulsory for the first 9 years, while during the Soviet Union it was 4 years in a primary school, followed by secondary school for 5 years. After 9th grade, according to the education policy, students can leave school or continue their studies in secondary school or a technical/vocational school. At 18 years of age, students continue their further education in the university system. All these rules are regulated by the Kyrgyz law on education, adopted in April 2003. The Kyrgyzstan education system consists of five principal levels:

- Primary education
- Basic secondary education
- High school or complete secondary education
- Vocational/technical education
- Tertiary education.

2.2.2.1 Primary Education

Primary education (grades 1-4, 6-11 years old) is the first cycle of basic education. In 1991, many kindergartens closed down and preschool enrolment declined overall from approximately 40 percent to less than 10 percent after the collapse of Soviet Union and independence gained by Kyrgyzstan. The total number of pre-schools decreased from 1,696 in 1991 to 412 in 2002 and while most pre-schools were previously in rural areas, the dismantling of the rural system has seen a shift of pre-school facilities to urban areas. Costs are also beyond the reach of most Kyrgyz families. As a result of these changes, many women with children have taken on the

role of unpaid child-care providers, obviously impacting their capacity to work in formal sector employment as they are working in informal sector.

2.2.2.2 Secondary Education

Basic and Secondary Education (grades 5-9, 11-15 years old) is a second cycle of basic secondary education. Like other countries in the region, the Kyrgyz Republic has remained dedicated to maintaining its basic education system, although serious financial constraints have limited the Government's capacity to provide a sufficient level of services and infrastructure. Government statistics show that overall enrolment figures for girls and boys are almost on par in grades 5-9. In 2002, however, fewer girls than boys (97.8 percent of boys and 95.8 percent of girls) were enrolled in Grades 1-4 suggesting a decrease in girls' enrolments in recent years.¹⁴

A- Complete Secondary Education

High school or complete secondary education (grades 10-11, 15-17 years old) is represented by academies, universities, institutes, higher colleges, etc. At present two systems of higher education are functioning in Kyrgyzstan: traditional permanent 5 year education system and multilevel system, providing three levels of higher education: incomplete higher education, basic higher education (bachelor degree and specialty) and complete higher education (master degree and specialty teaching).

B- Vocational Education

Vocational education has become crucial in the Kyrgyzstan Republic in transition period as many employees of the FSU found their existing skills and qualifications inapt to the needs of the developing market economy, which demanded new skills such as foreign languages and computer literacy. The Kyrgyz Republic has not undertaken any comprehensive employer survey that could provide more detailed information on the needs and expectations of employers, from which vocational training programs could be developed. Such survey would enable better matching of skills training programs to employment demand, for both women and men. For example, World Bank statistics had drawn from the Kyrgyz Poverty Monitoring Survey shows large variations in unemployment across education levels and types.¹⁵

¹⁴ Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2003b), *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Kyrgyz Republic, National Statistical Committee: Bishkek, p.44.

¹⁵ World Bank (2000a), *Kyrgyz Poverty Monitoring Surveys Fall 1996–1998*, Mimeo. Development Research Group. Washington, DC.

Women are more sufferer, uneducated and unemployed than men, due to stereo type thinking that men are more skillful than women

2.2.2.3 Tertiary Education

In the education sector, for example, 81.9 percent of all students studying at tertiary level and almost 48 percent of all teachers at vocational training centers, secondary specialized institutions and higher education establishments are women, the ratio of women's to men's wages is only 77.9 percent largely because women comprise only 37.3 percent of all those at administration positions.¹⁶ Although it is not clear that choices of women in educational specialization are influenced by either the growing separation of the labor market or changing attitudes regarding appropriate female professions or a mixture of both. Gender segregation in courses taken by women and men at tertiary level is growing. It is clear that many women are choosing fields of study such as education (i.e., teaching) for which professional salaries are low and in which they are not fully represented at the managerial level. Girls opt for degrees in teaching (81.9 percent), services (60.7 percent), social and behavioral sciences (64.7 percent), life sciences (84.6 percent), mathematics and statistics (66.7 percent), and health care (55.6 percent), while men choose fields such as agriculture and fisheries (90.3 percent), veterinary science (78.9 percent), engineering (69.5 percent), and law (68.7 percent)¹⁷.

2.3 Challenges in Educational System

There are many challenges in education in Kyrgyzstan especially in women education. Some of them are non systematic and consequential educational policy, ineffective quality assurance system, low quality of staff and material resources, cost ineffectiveness of training of the state budget financed students, insufficient development of research at higher educational institutions. Though, there is still the commitment of the governments to guarantee free access to general education, the quality of education has decreased because of the limited capacity of the central and local governments to maintain the physical infrastructure, the increasing scarcity of teaching materials, and the departure of many skilled teaching staff. Because of budget constraints, the construction of new schools and the maintenance of school

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 73.

¹⁷ Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2003b), National Statistical Committee, *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic: National Statistical Committee, p. 43.

buildings have been limited during the last few years. The government has mainly stopped publishing and distributing textbooks without funds. It is argued that in many places, pupils have to share one book by three or four. Most of the school books are still from the Soviet era still and contain information that is currently outdated. Textbooks do not last long, illustrations are often unclear and diagrams unreadable. When textbooks are available, they are not necessarily always affordable. Basic school supplies for children are not available in all locations.

Since 1991, the MEC (the Ministry of Education and Culture) has initiated curriculum revision but this happened as an ad hoc action rather than reassessment of the overall curriculum system. One of the major changes was an attempt to give schools more freedom in designing school curriculum and making decisions based on local content. In practice, most of the schools are unable to develop and implement their own "school plans" because of financial constraints, lack of technical resources and skills and teacher shortages. As a result, many schools just continue to teach from a largely centralized curriculum and only a few private lyceums, gymnasiums, and colleges benefit from the curriculum reform.¹⁸

Most teachers move to other countries or change their qualifications to more profitable professions due to dramatically declined in teacher salaries. As a result, the worsening status of teacher as a profession has led to the increased teacher shortages, declining professional qualifications and limited opportunities for professional development. The MEC has authorized the recruitment of teachers from a number of successful secondary school graduates that obviously has led to education quality decrease in schools to solve the problems of teaching staff. While an increasing number of teachers with limited or sometimes even with no any professional qualifications are being hired, there are only few opportunities for professional development as a result of shrinking education budget.

The ADB study of the preschool education also reveals the high decrease of the meals provision to children. Thus it argues that only 2.4 percent of the pupils in kindergartens and elementary schools received school meals in 1996, compared with

¹⁸ Akmatova, Cholpon (2008), *The effects of decentralization on the provision of public education service in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Thesis, Netherlands: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Universiteit Maastricht, p.24.

53 percent in 1990. In the context of growing household poverty, the lack of school meals has contributed to a growing malnutrition problem. The Kyrgyz government has responded to the collapse of the preschool system through introducing new standards for cost recovery in preschool education. It is also argued, that the surviving preschools have started charging small fees to compensate for reduced state support and most poor families cannot afford kindergartens for their children.¹⁹

It is argued by the ADB survey (2001) that the higher secondary school enrollments (at grades 10 and 11) in the country declined from 84 percent to 69 percent of the school-age population between 1993 and 1999, and only 60 percent of all 16-year-olds were in school in 2000, compared to over 90 percent in 1991.²⁰ Statistics suggests declines in enrollment percents, although absolute enrollments have increased due to fertility and internal migration. The government's official country report for the Education for All program reports a gross enrollment ratio for primary education of 97.5 percent and a net enrollment ratio of 97.1 percent for 1998. These rates are consistent with the results of the Kyrgyz Poverty Monitoring Surveys, carried out in 1996, 1997, and 1998²¹ and the Household Budget Survey that was carried out in 2001. These surveys reported average coverage rates (corresponding to net enrollment ratios) ranging from 95.3 percent to 97.4 percent.²²

School enrolment and educational quality have deteriorated over the past decade due to the decline in income, depleted stocks of textbooks and other learning materials, an underpaid teaching force and the physical deterioration of schools. Nevertheless, the educational sector experiences several major problems: rising inequalities in access to, and declining quality of, education services; low teacher motivation, due to low salaries; and shortcomings in the delegation of responsibilities for primary and secondary schools to local bodies. For disadvantaged groups, equal distribution of resources may not be sufficient to help Kyrgyz people to reach their

¹⁹ Ibid, p.26.

²⁰ Mertaugh, M. (2004), *Education in Central Asia, with Particular Reference to the Kyrgyz Republic. From The Challenge of Education in Central Asia*, Information Age Publishing, Greenwich Connecticut.

²¹ World Bank (2001), *Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty in the 1990s in the Kyrgyz Republic*, World Bank Report No. 21721-KG, June 2001.

²² Mertaugh, M. (2004), *Education in Central Asia, with Particular Reference to the Kyrgyz Republic. From The Challenge of Education in Central Asia*, Information Age Publishing, Greenwich Connecticut, p.12-13

full potential; special interventions may be necessary. For instance, bringing young women from poor, rural areas into a university may fail to produce the preferred outcomes unless plenty physical conditions and financial resources like scholarships are provided to support them. On a larger scale, providing young women with equal access to education does not ensure their equal remuneration after graduation from educational institutions. In other words, gender-blind or gender-neutral policies may not necessarily lead to educational or social equity. Therefore, it is important to consider gender-transformative or gender-empowering approaches.²³

Although the reasons for this reduce have not been fully analyzed and need to be researched as a key priority. It may be, for example, that families, faced with the heavy or informal costs of education and responding to changes in the formal labor market where men are perceived as having greater opportunities and likelihood of employment, are making hard economic choices between the education of their sons and their daughters.

Children dropping out of school at both the primary and secondary levels are also a growing concern. Although the National Statistics Committee reports that only 1,344 children in the 7 to 17 years old age group dropped out of school in 2003-04.²⁴ Both aid providers and NGOs estimate that the figures are actually much higher, as many children are formally enrolled in school but do not attend regularly, largely for financial reasons.

Irregular attendance is also a growing problem and one that is not reflected in national statistics. Although data is lacking on this problem, it is understood that boys more often than girls, skip classes or do not attend for periods of time due to the need to contribute to family income or work at home. Other reasons for nonattendance include not having proper footwear and clothing, lack of transport and inability to pay the extra school fees that are levied on parents.²⁵

A key problem for schools is the inadequate state funding. In broad-spectrum, schools are not able to operate at all without soliciting financial contributions from

²³ Magno, C. et al. 2003, *Opportunities for Gender Equity in Education, A Report on Central and South Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, New York: Open Society Institute, New York.

²⁴ Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 2003b, National Statistical Committee. *Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic: National Statistical Committee, p. 42.

²⁵ United Nations (2002a), *The Kyrgyz Republic: Common Country Assessment*. Bishkek, p. 77.

parents and undertaking fundraising activities. A 2002 UNESCO/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) national survey on learning achievements found that state budget funding for the schools surveyed covered only half of the total costs, i.e., staff salaries and some basic services. The remainder of the operating costs including the bulk of maintenance work was provided through parents' contributions and income-generating activities undertaken by the school. Most school personnel surveyed also stated that schools were frequently affected by electricity and heating cuts (particularly in the very cold winter months), poor standard of sanitary facilities and the inadequate water supply.²⁶

2.4 Reforms in Education System

Kyrgyzstan is looking at the issues of efficiency, quality, affordability, finance and management in educational sector. It is the second poorest country in Central Asia after Tajikistan. Its financing issues are crucial to the prospects of the education sector. The quality of educational outcomes in the Kyrgyz Republic is a real concern. Where the vast majority of children are enrolled in school even though the learning environment is not favourable to high educational attainment and indications of learning achievements are declining for both boys and girls. The problem is particularly acute among the poor in rural areas and women. Limited state resources have translated into very low and often delayed teacher salaries, lack of free books and educational materials, high levels of additional costs levied on parents and the deteriorating condition of many school buildings. Consequently, many children who are officially enrolled do not attend school regularly. So reforms in education sector in Kyrgyzstan especially in women education are really important and necessary.

Education sector reform has been pursued since 1992, with the large number of the Education Law, in which following major measures were adopted,

- A new curriculum, textbooks and learning materials
- Stronger pupil assessment and teacher training
- Delegated responsibility for management and financing of primary and secondary schools to local bodies
- Upgraded and rehabilitated facilities and equipment.

²⁶ UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). 2000. *Societies in Transition: A Situation Analysis of the Status of Children and Women in the Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan.*, 2000. UNICEF, Almaty, Kazakhstan, p. 115-116.

The government has developed a concept paper for education development by 2010, providing the key policy and strategic framework for education. The disentanglement of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s presented the newly independent Republics of Central Asia with many challenges. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the two elementary needs in education zone are-

- To create functioning ministries of education with the capacity of establish education policy as well as to oversee the provision of education and to ensure its quality.
- To reorient the educational programs according the new needs emerged from the transition from a command economy to a market economy. The changes are also needed in the content and delivery of education according to global economy.

In August 1991, after gaining independence Kyrgyzstan carried out major reforms. In spite of the economic difficulties there were many changes in education and culture, began to put into practice. Currently, the reforms in education system at all stages are carried out. The Law of the KR "On Education" Program "Knowledge," Presidential Program of Akaev's "Personnel of the 21st century" program "On the accessibility of education" (Jetkinchek), as well as other official documents and concepts are the base of these reforms. Kyrgyz Government taking into account all the practices to achieve the education system of developed countries in schools, vocational schools, particularly in secondary schools on the basis of the Law "On education" which was adopted in 1992 by the Jogorku Kenesh. Government has started to prepare specialists with the requirements of time, using the latest techniques and training methods.

Education programs needed to be more flexible, more student-centric, more focused on problem solving, application and synthesis of concepts, rather than simple mastery of facts. Secondary and higher education needed to become more demand-driven rather than centrally directed. Vocational education at the secondary level needed to teach more generic skills for a few broad families of occupational specializations rather than highly specific skills for a large number of narrow occupations. Vocational education needed to give more emphasis on developing numeracy skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills (including foreign language proficiency) and teamwork skills and less to job-specific skills.

Primary, secondary and higher education needed to provide more opportunities for students and teachers to apply IT throughout the curriculum, including the use of PCs to access and share information on the Worldwide Web. Career counseling required to be developed to provide students, teachers and parents with up-to date information on the implications of education choices for better options for further education and employment opportunities. Higher education needed to be more flexible at entry, to offer easier transfer opportunities across programs and faculties. Higher education desired to provide stronger recital incentives to students and faculty. For encouragement of employers and local governments to develop their life-long learning programs for meet local and global skill requires necessary change in the legal and fiscal environment.

The independent studies of ADB, World Bank, UNICEF and other international and local organizations argued that the quality of education has declined seriously in all schools except the few urban schools that benefit from significant parental and community contributions.²⁷ The quality of school education has fallen to low levels in those communities where local governments and parents cannot afford to make essential contributions to the schools. Rural schools are in very poor condition, where parents cannot afford the rent of textbooks. This is particularly frequent above the second or third grade because families that cannot afford to rent textbooks for their children in all grades generally give priority to providing them in the earliest grades.²⁸

The shift from centrally planned to market economy brought two fundamental needs to the education systems in the Kyrgyz Republic. The first was to create functioning MEC with the capacity to establish education policy and second one was to ensure the provision of education service in a good quality. Based on the analysis it is implied that the education service in transition time still requires more efforts and contributions for its improvement.

²⁷ Akmatova, Cholpon (2008), ob.cit. p.29.

²⁸ Mertaugh, M. (2004), *Education in Central Asia, with Particular Reference to the Kyrgyz Republic, From The Challenge of Education in Central Asia*, Information Age Publishing, Greenwich Connecticut.

2.5 Government Programmes and Policies

Education has always been counted among the most important social priorities in Kyrgyzstan. The first decade of independence of Kyrgyzstan turned out to be a period of implementation of educational experiments and of time, when face difficult replacement tasks of authoritarian and centralized system to the system based on democratic principles and on pluralism of values. Many things have changed. The key guiding lines of the reforms were quality, efficiency and accessibility. Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Law “On Education” and series of the national educational programmes determined the main principles and tasks requiring decisions in education sphere:

- Securing equality in access to education;
- Renewal of the education content and education technologies;
- Improving quality;
- Enhancing effectiveness of the resource use;
- Democratization of the management in education.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence of Kyrgyzstan, the full responsibility for managing education system has been taken particularly by the government of Kyrgyz Republic and by MEC. The MEC is responsible for developing curriculum, setting national standards in educational policy, developing certification examinations, and awarding degrees. The MEC has different departments for general education, higher education, and material support. However, current political situation and education system shows that the education ministry is unstable in leadership issues. Education ministers are usually replaced whenever political pressures call for general cabinet reshuffling.

In 1992, the new law on education was adopted and it has included many changes such as private and fee-paying education, cost-sharing and cost-recovery in education. Primary education is compulsory for all Kyrgyz citizens and is free within state educational institutions. According to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on budgetary legislation, educational institutions are funded from the state budget. State budget allocations for education in turn are divided by national and local budgets. The national budget shared between various ministries and other governmental agencies. The majority part of the total consolidated budget for education is allotted by the local public authorities for primary and secondary levels. MEC is directly responsible for

the funds coming for education from the national budget. Local authorities allocate funding for primary and secondary schools, pre-school institutions and non-formal institutions. Private expenditure on education (parents, families and communities) normally occur in kind, through the maintenance of primary, secondary and pre-school institutions, catering children after hours and helping with minor repair. Funding for the education sector from the State budget has declined from 7.6 percent of GDP in 1991 to 4.5 percent of GDP in 2002.²⁹ The decline of public expenditure in the education sector is related to the decrease in the state budget itself. One concern is the disparities in public expenditures; more funds from the state budget are allocated to higher education and less to primary schools.

In transitional period Kyrgyz government faces challenges in providing education service as pure public service, the government has encouraged the private provision of education at all levels. Currently, there is an adopted system of contracted fee-paying education within public universities and specialized secondary schools in the country. Through this strategy the Kyrgyz government is creating a segregated system of private instruction within the public educational institutions. It is assumed that through the segregation the Kyrgyz government tries to keep the education system on the satisfactory level because the central budget resources existing public secondary schools barely alive.³⁰

Article 32 of The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic says about education that-

- Every citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic shall have the right to education.
- General secondary education shall be compulsory and free of charge. Every person shall have the right to get it at national educational institutions. Every person shall have the right to get free education at national educational institutions.
- The State shall provide for every person in accordance with individual aptitude accessibility to vocational, special secondary and higher education.
- Paid education for citizens at national and other educational institutions shall be allowed on the basis and in the procedure established by legislation.
- The State shall exercise control over the activity of educational institutions.

²⁹ Rysaliev, S. and Ibraeva, G. (1999), *Educational financing and budgeting in Kyrgyzstan, Working documents in the series: Financial management of education system*, International Institute for Educational planning: UNESCO.

³⁰ Akmatova, Cholpon (2008), ob.cit., p.28.

The Ayalzat national programme was prepared by the State Commission for the family, women and youth attached to the government of Kyrgyzstan, which is the republic-wide executive organ responsible for implementing State policy on the family, women and young people. The development of the sphere of education within the National Program “Ayalzat” to a certain extent ensured not only acquiring by women of basic and vocational knowledge, but also their involvement in new informational processes, adaptation to changing economic conditions of life. Gender-focused courses have been integrated in curricula of higher educational establishments. It has 11 sections and each section is divided into short and long-term objectives.³¹ Education is also at high priority in this programme and it is one section out of eleven sections, which can be seen under the following sections-

2.5.1 Development of Functional Literacy

Women's education and enhancement of their functional literacy presume an increase in economic and legal literacy and women's mastery of new information technologies. Its short and long-term objectives are-

A- Long-term Objectives

Participation of women in the implementation of State and national educational, cultural and employment programmes;

- Collection of a database on women who are actively involved in all walks of life in Kyrgyzstan as well as on scholars who are contributing to their further growth.
- Organization and carrying out scientific studies on the status of women.
- Formulation and implementation of a comprehensive programme of social support for female students and student families.
- Establishment of a fund to enable girls from low-income families to receive an education.

B- Short-term objectives

- Establishment of mobile educational and training centers for the functional training of women.

2.5.2 Right of the Child

Kyrgyzstan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is still a need to increase and get a feel for health education and medical services, especially

³¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/> accessed on 7th march 2012.

programmes on condition that primary medical and health care, together with sexual and reproductive health services and to develop quality programmes in the area of health care and education for girls. It has Long-term objectives as well as short-term objectives.

A- Long-Term Objectives

- Preparation of the Kyz bala (Girl child) programme to address the problems of girls;
- Ensuring that all girls have access to basic education;
- Adoption of measures to prevent forced marriages of school-age girls;
- Establishment of a special boarding-school for girls with venereal disease who comes from disadvantaged families;
- Separate detention facilities for female minors and adults.

B- Short-Term Objectives

- Promoting the rights of girls:
- Gender education programme for tomorrow's women;
- Support for rural girls studying in urban areas.
- Assistance to orphans and disabled children living in foster families.
- Implementation of an integrated programme of measures to provide general education for girls;
- Organization of youth clubs in educational establishments;
- Television and radio programmes for teenage girls and use of other mass media to respond to their needs;
- Prevention of juvenile delinquency among girls.

The education index that is one of the components of the HDI³², is comprises the literacy level of adults and the educational coverage of children from 7 to 25. The literacy index has been prepared from the data of the recent national Census. Starting in 1990 the literacy index is 0,987. A change in the education index occurs as a result of another component the education coverage index. Education coverage of the age

³² Human Development Index (HDI) or Human Potential Development Index (HPDI) measures the average achievements in a country, taking into account three basic tenets of human development: a long and healthy life; knowledge; a decent standard of living. A composite index, the HDI thus contains three variables: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment (adult literacy and the combined gross primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratio) and GDP per capita (PPP US\$). Income level is included in the HDI to reflect the standard of living and as a measure of potential in all other areas that are not taken into account by the other two parameters. (UNDP, 2001)

groups of 7 to 25 years old includes secondary and high school. The analysis of education coverage by altitude is mainly related to the development of secondary schooling.³³ Despite the fact that education coverage for children in the elementary school and incomplete secondary school is very high, the education coverage index for children in high school is only half as much as for earlier grades. In comparison to 1999, the index significantly decreased, especially among boys.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also expressed concern regarding the situation in Kyrgyzstan, where children were dropping out of school to provide for their families; the situation of girls was particularly alarming as *“their access to education was being curtailed by a revival of the tradition of early marriage, and a decrease in the prestige of having a formal education.”*³⁴ There are great efforts needed to eliminate illiteracy by Women’s involvement in social life and to overcome reactionary traditions at the state level.

The Ministry of Education, established in 1992 started reconstructing the course of study at the educational institutions of the country. Until 1992 Kyrgyzstan education was provided only in Kyrgyz. After that several foreign languages such as English, German and French were introduced within the curriculum. State budget expenditures for education in 2002 represented 4.5 percent of GDP, slightly lower than the 4.9 percent expended in 1998 but an increase over levels in 2000 and 2001, which saw expenditures drop to 3.5 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively.³⁵

In 2000, a State Education Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic determining the strategy of education development up to 2025 was approved. At the same time, models of the state educational professional standards of higher education were approved. At present, the education plays a central role in a process of public mentality change that is to say a scaled process of human development is realized through education. The education policy is based on the idea that education is a connecting link between all elements within the development process irrespective of

³³ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek. [Online: web] Accessed 17 march 2012 http://www.childinfo.org/files/MICS3_Kyrgyzstan_FinalReport_2005-06_Eng.pdf.

³⁴ UN doc. E/2001/22 (E/C.12/2000/21), p. 64, para. 351 as cited in Human Rights in the Administration of Justice: A Manual on Human Rights for Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers.

³⁵ Asian Development Bank, (2005), Country Gender Assessment Kyrgyz Republic: 2005, Asian Development Bank: Philippines.

poverty problems, achieving gender equality and expansion of democratic principles.³⁶ Kyrgyzstan is also a leading country on adult education in the framework of activities of the Central Asian and Kazakhstan Education Forum with functions of analysis, monitoring, and priority right on the development of the model strategic documents, decision-taking in this field at the level of Central Asian and Kazakhstan.³⁷

The availability of education in Kyrgyzstan as of in other countries of the world does not mean employment. It is directly connected as with the small number of workplaces on the whole and with the low level of necessary training and skills. International agencies are still providing money and implementing innovative programmes, which are keeping many schools afloat. Resources provided by the government for the needs of education system are insufficient and are further limited by the current economic crisis. This factor seriously affects the younger generation, which is quite a concern for Kyrgyzstan. Parents want their children to grown healthy and well-educated, employable and capable of making a career.

Education is the key for the women's future as well as national future, as it enables them to widen their horizons beyond child bearing and house hold drudgery. It is believed that educated woman is more useful than educated man because educated women can educate her family also. They also tend to late marriage and try to control birth. Enrolment of female/girls in schools is still lower than that of boys due to factors like traditional bias towards the educations of girls, poverty that parents cannot afford girls education. Education and Status of women both are closely related with each other. Education can narrow the gap between two genders and raise the Status of women.

³⁶ Ministry of education and science of the Kyrgyz Republic (2008), *National report of the Kyrgyz Republic on Adult education in the framework of preparation of the VI International Conference dedicated to Adult education (CONFINTEA VI)* Bishkek, p. 4-5.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 7.

CHAPTER-3

HEALTH MEASURES AND ITS IMPLICATION

3.1 Context

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.¹ In all regions of the world, women live longer than men. However, social, cultural and economic factors can affect the natural advantage of women compared to men. For instance, in developing countries where pregnancy and childbirth can be life-threatening, women's exposure to risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth tend to equalize life expectancies between the sexes; whereas in developed countries, the adoption of unhealthy behaviors by women, such as smoking and drinking, can also equalize life expectancy of men and women. The data reveal that, globally, non-communicable diseases are already the most important causes of death for both men and women.

It is necessary to equipping women with the required knowledge and skills to fulfill their health potential are essential to their own well-being as well as their children and families. Tackling gender inequalities in the provision of health services will enable all women and men to enjoy healthier lives and ultimately lead to greater gender equality in all areas. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest achievable standard of physical and mental health.²

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³ that relate to health is important for improving the quality of life of all people. The past decades saw considerable reductions in child mortality worldwide, which is one of the eight MDGs. Three of the eight MDGs are directly related to health. The three goals are Goal 4 reduce child mortality, Goal 5 improve maternal health and Goal 6 combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Other goals and targets are indirectly related to health like eradicates extreme poverty and hunger. Although all MDG indicators are not related to health include a gender dimension, which limits their usefulness in terms of evaluating and comparing the health of women and men or girls and boys

¹ WHO (1948), *Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization* as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19–22 June, 1946 (entered into force 7 April 1948). [Online web] Accessed on 8 March 2012, <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>.

² United Nations (1995a), *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, on 4–15 September 1995, Beijing.

³ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015.

over time and across countries. The health status of women and men is known to be different during their life courses. This can be partly explained by their biological and physical differences. In chorus, gender norms and values in a given culture, coupled with the resulting socio-economic status and behavioral choices of women and men, can also give rise to gender inequalities in health and access to health care.⁴

The health status of individuals and populations is influenced by a wide range of non-health determinants, including socio-economic, environmental and political factors. The interplay between health and other development conditions is well captured in the conceptualization of the MDGs.⁵ Health is being a public good, accrues positive benefits to society at large. Prime responsibility of governments is to ensure the provision or at least the funding of health systems. The other responsibility of governments is to protect the health of their populations includes ensuring equitable access of all too basic health care, with particular attention to the poor.⁶

The overall health of women during their reproductive years allows them to contribute to the economy, society and their families not just at this stage of their lifecycle but through the rest of their lives. Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals calls for improving maternal health by reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters and by achieving universal access to reproductive health. Each year, more than half a million women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.⁷ The population of the Kyrgyz Republic is young in view of demographics: 36% are children and adolescents, 55% are people of the able-bodied age and 9% are old people. The life expectancy for women is 72.5 and for men 65 years old. 7.6 years difference is related to the difference in mortality rate of men and women. The major reasons of a higher mortality rate of males are accidents, poisoning and injures, diseases of blood circulation system. The mortality rate less than 5 is 29.5 per 1.000 live births.⁸ The infant mortality rate is 21.2%, of which girls 17.1%, boys 25.1%. In

⁴ WHO (2005), *Health and the Millennium Development Goals*, WHO: Geneva.

⁵ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) 2007, *Millennium Development Goals Achieving the Health Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific Policies and Actions within Health Systems and Beyond*, United Nations: New York, p.1.

⁶ Ibid, p.1.

⁷ UNICEF (2008a), *State of the World's Children 2009: Maternal and Newborn Health*, UNICEF: New York.

⁸ The National Statistical Committee Kyrgyz Republic 2001 also available at: <http://www.stat.kg/Eng/New/Society.html>

the period of 1998-2002, the infant mortality rate was decreased by 19% that is related to the complex of solved problems, in particular training of medical staff. The major causes of death are disorders in the prenatal period, respiratory organ disorders, infectious and parasite diseases. A high mortality rate (37.9%) of children in the prenatal period is mostly concerned with maternal health.⁹

3.2 Historical Background of Health Services

Here we discuss the Kyrgyz health services during the Soviet period. In the beginning of the 20th century, the health care system of today's Kyrgyzstan comprised only a very small number of medical facilities, all located in cities. In 1913, there were only six hospitals (four city and two rural hospitals), nine outpatient facilities and five pharmacies. A health care system based on the "Semashko" model was developed in the Soviet Kyrgyzstan. Nikolai Semashko, the founding father of Soviet health care, announced the principles on which the Soviet health care system was to be based at the Congress of Medical-Sanitary Departments in 1918:

- government responsibility for health care;
- universal access to free health services;
- A preventive approach to diseases.

3.2.1 Health Services in Soviet Period

On the basis of these principles, the Soviet state developed a unified health system which was owned and controlled by the state. The first maternity house and children's consultation centre were opened in Frunze¹⁰, a venereal ambulatory was reorganized into a venereal dispensary, and venereal points were also opened in Tokmok and the village of Kochkor. In 1928, the first medical college was opened to train middle level health personnel. From 1935 mobile medical groups started functioning to fight tuberculosis, trachoma, syphilis and other skin and venereal diseases. In 1938, the Sanitary-Bacteriological Institute was opened. By 1940, the health care system of the country was able to offer all basic elements of health care, including clinical care, pharmacies, sanitary-epidemiological services and forensic medicine. Medical education was provided by the Kyrgyz State Medical Institute. The Kyrgyz State Medical Institute was established in 1939 and it was renamed as the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy and in 5 medical colleges in 1996.

⁹ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek.

¹⁰ Frunze was the name of Bishkek in the Soviet era.

During the Second World War, the Kyrgyz Republic was not directly affected by conflict and extended its network of health facilities. In the post-war years, hospitals were integrated with outpatient facilities and inpatient facilities for mother and child health. In the 1950s and 1960s, the main focus was on an extension of the material base of the health care system. By 1980 Kyrgyzstan had put in place an ample health care system by Soviet standards. In the late 1980s the health status of the population began to downgrade. The health care system was no longer able to respond to the health needs of the population. A package of health reforms planned for 1985–1990 was not proficient, being caught up in the political changes in the USSR. After the independence, health reforms remained on the agenda of the new state, although economic reforms were given a higher priority.

3.2.2 Health Services in Post-Soviet Period

In this section of chapter we talk about the Kyrgyz health system in the Post-Soviet period. Kyrgyzstan inherited the Soviet system of free universal health care, which in Kyrgyzstan's case generally provided sufficient numbers of doctors, nurses, and doctor's assistants, as well as medical clinics and hospitals. Now in Kyrgyzstan access of women to quality health care throughout the life cycle, strengthen preventive programs that promote women's health, undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, promote research and disseminate information on women's health, increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.

In the post-Soviet era, Kyrgyzstan's health system has suffered increasing shortages of health professionals and medicine. Kyrgyzstan must import nearly all its pharmaceuticals. The increasing role of private health services has supplemented the deteriorating state-supported system. In the early 2000s, public expenditures on health care decreased as a percentage of total expenditures and the ratio of population to number of doctors increased substantially, from 296 per doctor in 1996 to 355 per doctor in 2001. A national primary-care health system, the Manas Program, was adopted in 1996 to restructure the Soviet system that Kyrgyzstan inherited. The number of people participating in this program has expanded gradually, and province-level family medicine training centers now retrain medical personnel. A mandatory medical insurance fund was established in 1997.¹¹

¹¹ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan, January 2007.

3.3 Administrative Structure of Kyrgyz Health Care

At this juncture we mention the administrative organization of Kyrgyz health care system. The Kyrgyz government has many responsibilities in the health sector. It reports annually to the parliament on the health of the population. It adopts, a health policy, an action plan for its implementation and a strategy of health care development after approval by the parliament. It also adopts finances and controls the implementation of national, state and specific programmes on health protection and the development of the state health system. It is responsible for the quality of health services and the quality control, safety and effectiveness of pharmaceuticals, medical products and equipment. It coordinates and controls territorial health bodies and organizations through coordination commissions on health management.

The Department of State Sanitary-Epidemiological Surveillance (DSSSES) acts through a separate line of responsibility and is directly accountable to the Ministry of Health. The fund operates through its territorial departments, present in each oblast, Bishkek and Osh cities. Initially, it was established as a fund under the government in 1997, transferred to the Ministry of Health in 1998. The parallel system includes services provided by seven ministries, five large state-owned joint stock companies, enterprises and organizations partially funded by the state. In 1998, parallel health services accounted for about 6% of total governmental health care expenditure.¹²

These health facilities are funded from the republican budget and directly accountable to their respective agencies. The private health sector has developed since the 1990s. In 2003, 254 licenses were issued by the Ministry of Health for private medical practices, 49 out of them were for legal entities and 205 for individuals. Private health facilities can tender for contracts from the public sector and participate in the State Benefits Programme.¹³

3.4 Health Apprehension Delivery System

At this time we deal the Health Apprehension Delivery System in Kyrgyzstan over all and women's particularly. The organizational structure of the health care system in

¹² Sargaldakova, A. et al. (2000), *Health Systems in Transition: Kyrgyzstan*, (Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe on behalf of the European Observatory on Health systems and Policies)

¹³ Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al. (2005), *Health Care Systems in Transition, European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 7 (2): 1.

Kyrgyzstan followed the model which was established in the USSR, like other countries of the former Soviet Union. The country has inherited the extensive Soviet network of health facilities. Health facilities had been built according to the Soviet nomenclature, which described in detail staffing, equipment, health services and population coverage. The taxonomy of health facilities changed during the years of independence. As part of health reforms, the rationalization of the network of health facilities has begun.

Services are organized differently in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, health services were rendered in the USSR by feldsher-obstetrical points¹⁴, rural doctor ambulatories and rural district hospitals, all accountable to the central rayon hospitals. In cities, health providers included general profile and specialized polyclinics, as well as city hospitals and maternity houses. Scarcely specialized hospitals, dispensaries, centers and republican health facilities provided specialized care. A widely developed network of san-epid facilities at the republican, oblast, city and rayon levels and anti-plague and disinfection stations provided public health services.

New facilities have been formed on the grounds of old ones, health facilities have been merged and some inefficient facilities have been closed down. The private health providers that emerged during the years of transition are mainly located in large cities like Bishkek and oblast capitals. They are independent and work on a for-profit, mainly on the basis of fee-for-service. Private providers usually render narrowly specialized outpatient services and serve the middle and high-income contingents of the population. Of the total number of private health facilities, less than 10% render inpatient services. In 2002, there were 12 private hospitals with a capacity of 3–50 beds.¹⁵ Present health legislation has given private providers the right to participate in the State Benefits Programme.

¹⁴ Feldsher-obstetrical points were established in the Soviet period to serve small villages and remote localities with populations between 500 and 2000. They are staffed by at least one health worker, called a feldsher, who is a paramedic. In larger villages, they are also staffed by a midwife and a nurse. Feldsher-obstetrical points and family group practices are the first points of contact with the health care system for patients in rural areas.

¹⁵ Mckee, Martin (2004), *Reducing hospital beds What are the lessons to be learned? European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 6.

3.5 Key Health Tribulations in Women

Presently, Kyrgyzstan faces the task of maintaining; reforming an expensive and inefficient system, with very narrow resources particularly women. Kyrgyz women are suffering from the bundle of health problems whether it is physical or mental. Here we point out some of them like Poor nutrition, anemia, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, Maternal mortality, extent of violence against women etc. Mortality rate nowadays is higher than birth rate, divorces are frequent, women do not want to have children, and it appears next to impossible to give birth due to high price of medical treatment and poor conditions. Diet of people in Kyrgyzstan, and especially in rural areas, lacks variety; in some cases households do not have even basic product such as bread.

Poor nutrition is one of the most serious health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic and women and children are particularly vulnerable. In 2002, more than 10% of all children aged 1–11 years were underweight, and more girls were underweight than boys overall. As a land-locked mountainous area, Kyrgyzstan is especially vulnerable to iodine deficiency unless salt is iodized. The rate of iodine deficiency has sharply increased. Iron deficiency among women is common in Kyrgyzstan also, like in other parts of central Asia. It is mainly due to patriarchal patterns of distribution of food within families. Iodine deficiency remains a serious health problem: it is estimated that more than half of all children and adolescents in the republic suffer from diseases related to iodine deficiency. The 1997 Demographic and Health Survey found that over 60% of women (including 90-95% of pregnant women) and 50% of children under three had anemia. In 2003, the number of registered cases of anemia was 95,385.¹⁶

Maternal mortality rates in the Kyrgyz Republic are the highest in this region. Gradually rising active tuberculosis rates among women, men and children are also a real concern.¹⁷ Most maternal deaths are caused directly by obstetric complications including post-partum hemorrhage, infections, eclampsia¹⁸ and prolonged or

¹⁶ Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al. (2005), “Health Care Systems in Transition”, *European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 7 (2): 1.

¹⁷ Asian Development Bank (2005), *Country Gender Assessment Kyrgyz Republic: 2005*, Asian Development Bank: Philippines.

¹⁸ Eclampsia is seizures (convulsions) in a pregnant woman that are not related to brain conditions.

obstructed labour. However, there are also significant indirect causes that heighten the risk of maternal deaths such as anemia, iodine deficiency, malaria and HIV/AIDS.¹⁹

According to ADB Country Gender Assessment Kyrgyz Republic, 2005 although infant mortality rates decline continuously over the last 10 years, they remain hazardously high, even by regional standards: 21.2 per 1,000 live births overall. Moreover, these figures are considered to be conservative, as the Kyrgyz Republic has used a definition of live births different from the WHO definition, and it is widely anticipated that the adoption of the WHO criteria will lead to a further increase in the infant mortality indicators. Since 1990, a pattern of higher mortality rates for boys than girls has been consistent, and in 2002 infant mortality stood at 17.1 (per 1,000 live births) for girls and 25.1 for boys. The main causes of infant mortality have remained the same: conditions emerging in the prenatal period, including respiratory infection and failure, and infections including diarrheal diseases.²⁰

The recorded incidence of sexually transmitted infections has also increased rapidly. The recorded incidence of syphilis, for example, rose from 2.0 per 100,000 in 1991 to 48.2 per 100,000 in 2003, reaching its peak of 167.8 per 100,000 in 1997, although the recent decline may in part due to under recording or increased private treatment. Similarly, a decreasing trend in the incidence of gonorrhoea (from 55.5 per 100,000 in 1991 to 27.4 per 100,000 in 2003) may not reflect the real situation because of self-treatment, treatment in private and non-medical facilities. The incidence of other sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydiosis and mycoplasmosis is also growing.²¹

It is recognized by the Beijing Platform for Action that social and cultural factors often increase women's vulnerability to HIV and may determine the course that the infection takes in their lives.²² Although malaria was rare until 2002, when a dramatic increase was recorded, thought to reflect increased migration from

¹⁹ UNICEF (2008a), *State of The World's Children 2009: Maternal and Newborn Health*. New York: UNICEF.

²⁰ Asian Development Bank (2005), *Country Gender Assessment Kyrgyz Republic: 2005*, Asian Development Bank: Philippines.

²¹ Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al., Op.cit. P.7-8.

²² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010), *The World's Women 2010 Trends and Statistics*, United Nations, New York

Afghanistan to the southern part of Kyrgyzstan.²³ Viral hepatitis is also a problem, particularly in the southern regions of the country. There is a high occurrence of infection with viral hepatitis B among medical personnel that come into contact with the virus.²⁴

AIDS is one of the most acute problems, threatening human development today. In 2001, an AIDS epidemic hit the Kyrgyz Republic when the number of officially registered HIV-infected people increased 10.6 times in the whole country and 44 times in the Osh oblast, which is considered to be the most infected.²⁵ The concentration of HIV cases in Kyrgyzstan's narcotics-injecting and prison populations makes an increase in HIV incidence likely. More than half of the cases have been in Osh, which is on a major narcotics trafficking route.²⁶

Where HIV/AIDS is a health issue, the epidemic is a gender issue. It markedly affects women and adolescent girls who are socially, culturally, biologically and economically more vulnerable than men. From the part of the results of the research conducted by UNIFEM in the KR, women are more exposed to the risk of contracting the HIV/AIDS due to their physiological peculiarities. Various gender and sexual-behavioural stereotypes are still widespread, when a woman cannot reject having sexual contact with her husband and oppose his spontaneous (sexual) desires. In about 80 percent of cases of female HIV/AIDS in Kyrgyzstan wives had been infected by their own husbands. The revitalization of old traditions like kidnapping future wives, in some cases even 13-year-olds, unofficial polygamy as well as increased extra-marital sex, often with prostitutes is also concern able.

The first HIV case has been reported in 1996, but a significant increase has occurred in 2001. As of end June 2003, the cumulative total of 364 HIV cases had been reported, out of them 302 are attributable to IDU. Great majority of HIV pos people are living in the Osh district and are mainly prisoners. Infection prevails among men (80%). About 70% of PLWHA are under 30 years of age. The main

²³ WHO (2000), *The World Health Report 2000, Health systems: Improving Performance*, France.

²⁴ International Monetary Fund (2004), *Kyrgyz Republic: Joint Staff Assessment of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report*, IMF Country Report No.04/201, International Monetary Fund Washington, D.C.

²⁵ UNDP (2002), *National Human development report-2002: Human development in mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic*, UNDP: Bishkek.

²⁶ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan, January 2007.

vulnerable groups are IDUs, SW and prisoners. If in 1997 only occasional cases of drug use were observed, in accordance with current estimations about 2% of population inject drugs.

The number of IDU SW is about 10-30%, STI rate remains high. Behavioural data from 2000 showed that 96% of surveyed IDUs shared their drugs and only 14% used sterile syringes; 99% take drugs from common container; 35% use the same syringe over 20 times; 64% cannot afford buying syringes²⁷. Despite of current low prevalence, there definitely exist the supporting factors for further and rapid growth of the epidemic. The annual population HIV/AIDS growth rate in the Republic is increasing by more than 100 cases annually already for two years (160 in 2002, 132 in 2003). Total number of registered with positive HIV/AIDS is 534 cases (official rate that is 10 times lower than actual) as of beginning of the year 2004, including 44 women. More than 90% of the HIV-infected citizens of the KR are injection drug users. A drug abuse situation among women remains unexplored and unclear. Women remain a closed, difficult-to-reach group for studies, need consultations and informing about the harmful consequences of drug use. This particularly relates to such categories of women like commercial sex workers and female injection drug users offering sex services for buying drugs.²⁸

In Kyrgyzstan trends in life expectancy have followed trajectories very similar to those seen in the former Soviet Union as a whole.²⁹ Life expectancy declined in the years after 1991, showing signs of recovery since 1994. Nevertheless, life expectancy has still not reached its 1991 level. In 2001, life expectancy was almost 10 years lower than in the European Union (EU), reaching 68.66 years at birth in Kyrgyzstan compared with 78.21 years in the EU.³⁰ As in the rest of the former Soviet Union, there is a substantial gender gap in life expectancy; in 2003, females could expect to live for 72.5 years, while male life expectancy was, at 65 years, 7.5 years lower. According to the official death registration statistics the main cause of death is

²⁷ Kumar, Sanjeev (2006), "Drug Trafficking in Central Asia: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan," M.Phil Dissertation, *School of International Studies*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

²⁸ UNICEF and Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic (2009), *Maternal and newborn health in Chui province & Kyrgyzstan: Assessment and implications for interventions*, UNICEF.

²⁹ MacLehose, L. in McKee, M. (ed.) (2002), "*Health care systems in transition: Republic of Moldova*, Copenhagen, European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 4(5).

³⁰ World Health Organization (2005), *The European health report 2005: public health action for healthier children and Populations*, World Health Organization: Denmark.

cardiovascular disease. In 2003, diseases of the circulatory system constituted 47.1% of recorded mortality, diseases of the respiratory system 12.7%, injuries and poisonings 10.2%, neoplasms (cancer) 8.7%, diseases of the digestive system 5.9%, infectious and parasitic diseases 3.5% and other causes 11.9%.³¹ The extent of violence against women is increasingly recognized. Nearly 30,000 women have turned to the ten crisis centers in the country in the past three years, seeking assistance after suffering various forms of violence. Some sources also describe trafficking in human beings, with an estimate of almost 4000 Kyrgyz women each year becoming victims of the trade in humans.³² Gender inequality can also increase the chance of physical complications during pregnancy and childbirth as well as maternal mortality.³³ For instance, women may be delayed or prevented from access to obstetric care in situations where they need the permission of a male relative to do so.

Kyrgyz communities bear no responsibility for health of women of fertile age. Financial needs of families make women who have just given birth not only do the full amount of housework, but also find work outside the household and such work is both hard and poorly paid. Another sign of neglect of women is that in many families' women cannot make family planning decisions, their health concerns are not taken into account, and they are forced to get pregnant. In reality, it becomes sexual murder. The health problems of Kyrgyz women at the early stage of their joining new family and community are so frequent that it can be said that they are prematurely biologically worn out. This problem can be very well observed in the communities that live in severe climate or geographical isolation. In the observation of the study team, in most sites Kyrgyz women look 10 or more years older than their actual age, basically all women over 30 have few teeth left, are tired and poorly dressed.³⁴

Women, alone cannot control birth by family planning. She has many difficulties in having access to family planning methods. Some of them are lack of

³¹ UNICEF and Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic (2009), *Maternal and newborn health in Chui province & Kyrgyzstan: Assessment and implications for interventions*, UNICEF.

³² International Monetary Fund (2004), *Kyrgyz Republic: Joint Staff Assessment of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report*, IMF Country Report No.04/201, International Monetary Fund: Washington, D.C.

³³ UNDP (2005b), *En Route to Equality: A Gender Review of National MDG reports: 2005*, New York: Bureau of Development Policy.

³⁴ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000/01*, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, p.120.

knowledge and awareness about family planning tools and techniques, problem in access to hospitals, long distance and more important key factor is social, cultural and traditional barriers which not allowed women to take their own decisions regarding family planning.

3.6 Health Reforms and Government Policies

Now, in this section we illustrate the health reforms and government policies and programmes for women's health, which are initiated by the local, regional, and national government or international donors, NGOs, or civil society. International organizations (UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, IMF, WB) support implementation of joint programs on reduction of anaemia, diseases caused by iodine deficit registered, among children and pregnant women. Conducting of reforms in the health care system and identification of a new direction on development of public health promotes qualitative formation of a healthy lifestyle among the population, which is the major requirement for protection of a healthy genetic fund of the nation.

At present the health-care sphere in the KR is regulated by several laws "On preventive measures against AIDS" (1996), "Reproductive rights of people" (2000), "Preventive measures against iodine deficiency diseases" (2000). Several national programs are in force, such as National health-care reform program "Manas", that foresees a decennial strategy for development of health-care system in the KR (1996-2006), National immunoprophylaxis program (2001-2005), National program "Jan-Ene" for 2003-2006, "Mental Health of population of the KR for 2001-2010", Government program on preventive measures against AIDS, STD and diseases transmitted with injections in the KR for 2001-2005.

Since independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan has undergone dramatic economic and political change. It is transforming itself from a Soviet republic with a command economy into an independent state with a more democratic and market-oriented system. The country witnessed for a severe increased markedly depression and poverty. These elementary changes led to reforms in all sectors of society in order to adjust to the changing environment and to manage the challenges of transition. The drastic contraction of funding for health had a negative impact on the quality of health services, which is likely to have contributed to the deterioration of the health status of

the population. This macroeconomic context has determined health care reform in Kyrgyzstan.

Health for all policy is a State Programme for a Healthy Nation, which was approved by the government in 1994. It was the first comprehensive national health policy of Kyrgyzstan. It defined five priority areas addressed through thirteen programmes:

- Family health
- Maternal and child health
- Protection of the environment
- Safe drinking water
- Healthy lifestyles.

Targets of the Health for all policy were identified in terms of performance indicators for 1994–2000. In 2000, the country developed a new national health policy for 2000–2020. This policy, called “Health Care of Kyrgyzstan in the 21st Century”, was developed in accordance with the principles of the WHO Health-21 Strategy. Experts representing 9 ministries, 11 state agencies and a number of NGOs participated in 15 working groups in the development of the policy document. The new national health policy also aims to achieve the primary objectives of the Comprehensive Development Framework, which has been developed in close collaboration with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international organizations, and which was approved by the government in 2001.³⁵

In the poor households, women are expected more frequently to meet the additional care requirements for sick children and other household members, including providing food and basic sanitary care for family members in hospital, as well as finding the additional funds to meet their own health-related expenses. The government has recognized the need to improve the availability of and access to quality and affordable family planning services, has implemented a number of key reforms in this area in the context of broader health sector reforms and programs such as the nationwide MANAS. In 1994, the Ministry of Health requested technical assistance from the WHO regional office for Europe in the development and

³⁵ National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003–2005 (NPRS), First Progress Report. Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 2004, Kyrgyz Republic: New Prospects. Comprehensive Development Framework for the Kyrgyz Republic until 2010, All-Nation Strategy, Bishkek, Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyz Republic, 2001.

implementation of a comprehensive health care reform programme. In November 1996, the national MANAS Health Care Reform Programme was approved by the government aimed to achieve the following four policy goals:

- Improvement in the health status of the population;
- Improving equity in the availability of health services by eliminating differences in health indicators in different regions and between urban and rural areas, by guaranteeing patients' rights and access to existing health services;
- Making more effective and efficient use of health resources and
- Improvement in the quality of health services.

The MANAS Programme has also become an umbrella project for international and bilateral organizations working in the health sector of Kyrgyzstan because of the active participation of numerous donors. In Kyrgyzstan, there are ample reforms of the health care system has been taking place through the Manas Health Reform program, which began in 1993. This has included establishment of a Health Insurance Fund, the introduction of an incentive-based payment system and the establishment of family medicine centers focusing on disease prevention and health promotion programs and interventions. The master plan of the MANAS defined three implementation phases over a period of ten years: the short-term (1996-1997), mid-term (1998-2000) and long-term (2001-2006) phases.

The **short-term phase** projected the following activities for 1996-1997:

- A reorganization of health delivery (rationalization of hospital services and strengthening of primary care);
- General taxes as the main source and paid services as supplementary sources of funding for health care;
- Development of a State Benefits Package.

The **mid-term phase** expected the following activities for 1998-2000:

- Continuation of the restructuring of health delivery;
- Introduction of earmarked taxes on alcohol and tobacco as supplementary sources of funding;
- Introduction of a new mechanism for the equitable allocation of resources among regions;

- Improving the management of facilities by replacing line item financing by a system of provider payments (global budgets in hospitals and capitation in primary care);
- Development of human resources for health by establishing an Institute of Public Health for the training of health managers and for the retraining of physicians and pediatricians as general practitioners;
- Quality assurance, with the aim of improving the physical infrastructure and modernizing the health information system;
- Review of the health planning and management system.

The **long-term phase** for 2001-2006 estimated the implementation of the following measures:

- General taxes, paid services and earmarked taxes will be supplemented by social insurance as a source of funding for health care;
- A purchaser-provider split will be established in the health system through the introduction of contracts between purchaser and providers and between health providers of primary, secondary and tertiary care.
- Some of the envisaged activities have been carried out later than planned, while other measures have been implemented earlier.
- The restructuring of health care delivery, which was planned to be completed in the mid-term phase (by 2000), was begun only in late 2000, when the government stipulated that no penalties would be imposed for reduced capacity and when it prepared to introduce the single payer system.
- The State Benefits Package, planned to be developed by 1997, began as a pilot project only in 2001.

Health care has been included as one of the priority sectors in the Development Framework, and particular emphasis has been given to improved population health and the provision of accessible and high quality health care. As mentioned in the introductory section, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003 to 2005 is the first phase in the implementation of the Comprehensive Development Framework.³⁶

³⁶ National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003–2005 (NPRS), First Progress Report. Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 2004, Kyrgyz Republic: New Prospects. Comprehensive Development Framework for the

A number of new laws have been adopted that address different aspects of health care system development particularly for women. The reform process required the adoption of many legislative and normative amendments in order to institutionalize the necessary changes and to provide the legal basis for further development and improvements.

The Kyrgyz government has provided the necessary institutional arrangements, while international organizations have provided technical expertise and financial assistance. The health care reform in Kyrgyzstan has depended heavily on domestic political support and the assistance of external donors. The step-by-step approach to health reform has proved to be beneficial. Innovations were first tested in pilot regions, with the support of external donors. Successful experiences were then rolled out to the rest of the country, provided that they were well-suited with the existing infrastructure, capacities and resources.

Implementation of pilot medical-and-social expeditions to remote rayons of the republic, distribution of medications, evaluation of health status, monitoring of morbidity among women and children in various oblasts of the republic and elaboration of recommendations on their improvement represent positive experience with regard to protection of women's health. The socio-economic changes in Kyrgyzstan have influenced the health sector. The reduction in financial resources has become the main obstacle in ensuring medical care and services, and this in turn has led to deterioration in the health of the population.³⁷

The main successes and failures, risks and future plans of health reform are based on the four key elements of health reform: health delivery restructuring; health care finance reform; medical education and human resources; and drug policy and quality assurance. The decrease in government health care spending since 1995 has led to a considerable increase in formal and informal payments by patients themselves; these unofficial payments are a significant burden on the household budgets of low-income citizens.

Kyrgyz Republic until 2010, All-Nation Strategy, Bishkek, Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyz Republic, 2001.

³⁷ UNICEF and Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic (2009), *Maternal and newborn health in Chui province & Kyrgyzstan: Assessment and implications for interventions*, UNICEF.

One of the main obstacles to successful health care reform can be the health personnel. It is therefore essential to ensure that health care workers are extensively educated and informed. These measures should be combined with financial and other incentives to enhance the motivation of health personnel, improve the quality of care and reduce demands for under the table payments or corruption. It is also essential to raise awareness of the population and civil society about the content of the reforms. It is very difficult to develop a new legislative framework at an early stage of programme development. Therefore laws tend to lag behind the reform process. New reform elements should be piloted and then rolled out to the whole country. A system of monitoring and evaluation is crucial for controlling and correcting the reform process.

At present, human resources are very unevenly distributed, with an oversupply in northern and urban areas of the country and a lack in southern and rural parts. The salaries of health care workers are still low, even though they have improved under the single payer system. The successes of the Kyrgyz health reform process to date have been achieved through domestic political support, the effective coordination of donors' efforts, continuity in health reform management and a step-by-step approach, linking pilot projects to national health reform. It will be necessary to ensure the continued support of all stakeholders for the implementation of further reforms. The country is facing the challenge of achieving a good performance in the health sector in the context of a difficult macroeconomic and political situation.

Health care reform in Kyrgyzstan provides the important lessons which are relevant to other health care systems in transition. The key lessons of the Kyrgyz experience are like development of the health sector depends to a large degree on the economic and democratic development of the whole society. Health financing reforms are extremely difficult if they are not embedded in a reform of the financial system of the country. Successes in health sector reform should not be punished by decreased levels of financing. All attempts to introduce mechanisms to ensure the more efficient use of resources when financing levels are declining risk and also losing public trust in the reforms. Restructuring of the health care delivery system is impossible to achieve without strong political will and new economic instruments, just as such restructuring is impossible to achieve solely through administrative methods.

Finally, it can be said that Women's health becomes a serious concern. It is necessary to take important state measures for support of families, women and children. Kyrgyz women are suffering from the bundle of health problems whether it is physical or mental. Some of them are Poor nutrition, anemia, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, Maternal mortality, extent of violence against women etc. The Kyrgyz government has provided the necessary institutional arrangements, while international organizations have provided technical expertise and financial assistance to reduce the health risks in Kyrgyzstan women particularly. Coordination of regional, national as well as international donors' activities is central to the successful implementation of reforms. The effective coordination of the activities of donors in the health sector and continuity in health reform management has also been important factors in the successful implementation of health care reform and the Department of Health Care Reform coordinated donors' activities, but the Ministry of Health subsequently took over this function. There has to be a professional and committed team of reformers who understand the essence of the reforms and are guided by the same vision.

CHAPTER-4

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Background

In the Kyrgyz economy women play a key role since they are a large source of Kyrgyzstan's labor resources. Now in Kyrgyzstan women's economic rights and independence have been promoted including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources; facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade; provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women; strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks; eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination; promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

A report by the International labor Organization (ILO) caught the world's attention by publishing their finding that while women and girls constitute one half of the world's population and one third of official labor force and perform nearly two-thirds of work hours they receive only one-tenth of the world's income and less than one hundredth of the world's property.¹ Women in the formal sector are focused on trade; they are specialising on sale of food, basic clothes, and toys for children and construction materials. While, in the service market they have necessary professional skills and tools provide consulting services, open health care centres, education centres, and law firms, even though the second are less frequent. The proportion of women is relatively high in artisan production, trade and services like beauty salons, tailoring services, restaurants.

Women's work is of vital importance both for family as well as nation. This has been brought out sharply in the report on the state of the World's Women (1985), at the end of the UN Decade for Women. It was observed that women perform two-thirds of the world's work, receive one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.² Women are producers and nourishes. The most important role of them is to make their households, communities and the world, which is definitely appreciated. Their caring activities are at the core of all human activities in the family as well as community. The care of sick, the old, children and other family

¹ Jahan, Rounag (1996), "The elusive Agenda Mainstreaming women and development", *The Pakistan Development Review*, Vol.35 (4): 825.

² Desai, Neera and Thakkar, Usha (2001), "Women in Indian Society", New Delhi, National Book Trust, p 40.

members and maintenance of family contribute in the human well-beingness which ultimately goes to national development.

4.2 Economy of Kyrgyzstan

The collapse of the Soviet Union's integrated economy and the sudden stop of overt and covert subsidies from the central Soviet budget had dramatic consequences for all sectors of the economy in newly independent Kyrgyzstan. The country embarked early on what is seen as the most ambitious economic reform programme among the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Liberalization, privatization, agricultural and land reforms and an early introduction of its own currency etc are the chief economic reforms in this region and it gained considerable support for these determined reforms from the international community.

Kyrgyz economy was extremely in danger due to high budget and balance of payment deficits.³ The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the expanded role of competition led to enveloping changes in structure and performance of the Kyrgyz economy. National output declined by 50 percent between 1990 and 1995 and recovered only very slowly thereafter. By 2000, real GDP was just 64 percent of its level in 1990.⁴ During the initial years of independence, from 1991 until 1995, the country experienced drastic reductions in output and income in all sectors of the economy. Hyperinflation and rising unemployment led to a dramatic increase in poverty and inequality. The industrial sector almost distorted and agriculture again became the dominant sector in the early 1990s.

After a first macroeconomic stabilization⁵ the economy of country recovered from 1996 until 1998. Nevertheless, this recovery was mainly based on growth in a few sectors remarkably agriculture, gold mining and energy. In late 1998, the country slid into a financial crisis mainly triggered by the Russian rouble crisis, from which it recovered only in 2000 when economic growth resumed. It is estimated that in 2002,

³ World Bank (2001b), *Kyrgyz Republic. Poverty in the 1990s in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Washington, D.C., The World Bank, Human Development Department, Country Department VIII, Europe and Central Asia Region.

⁴ World Bank (2002), *World Development Indicators*, Washington, D.C.

⁵ Macroeconomic stabilization means bringing inflation under control and lowering it over time, after the initial burst of high inflation that follows from liberalization and the release of pent-up demand. This process requires discipline (discipline in fiscal and monetary policy) over the government budget and the growth of money and credit and progress toward sustainable balance of payments.

GDP⁶ reached about 70 percent of its level in 1990.⁷ Consequently, after a sharp post-Soviet engrosses the Kyrgyz economy, is now on the path of recovery and growth whereas still being fragile and prone to external shocks.

Kyrgyzstan has become one of the most progressive countries of the former Soviet Union in carrying out free market-oriented reforms. A strict stabilization programme implemented with the support of international financial institutions. Finally, it got success in lowering inflation from 88 percent in 1994 to 15 percent in 1997 through stabilization programme. In the same year industrial production also grew by 46.8 percent, due to largely output from the Kumtor gold mine, and agricultural production grew by 10.7 percent. In 1998, however, this recovery was set back as a result of fallout from the Russian financial crisis. In 1999 and 2000, Kyrgyzstan's economy again showed growth.⁸

At present, the agricultural sector still plays a key role in Kyrgyzstan's economy. In 2002, it was responsible for more than one-third of GDP and gave employ to the half of the economically active population. Industry accounts for approximately 20 percent of GDP, but it is less significant in terms of employment. The importance of trade, transport, services for the economic performance and employment has considerably grown since the mid 1990s to the level of about one third of GDP generated in this sector.⁹

Some scholar like MacLehose, McKeem and others has stressed that there are important regional economic disparities within the country between economically more dynamic regions, such as the capital Bishkek and its surroundings in the north of the country and remote rural regions mainly in the south and in the centre of the country. Rural areas have often relapsed into continuation agriculture and a non-cash

⁶ Gross Domestic Product is the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period; usually it is calculated on an annual basis. It includes all of private and public consumption, government outlays, investments and exports less imports that occur within a defined territory.

⁷ UN (2003b), *The Kyrgyz Republic Millennium Development Goal Progress Report*, Bishkek, United Nations, UNDP, p.11.

⁸ USAID Country Profile, [Online: web] Accessed 9 January 2011, URL: http://www.usaid.gov/regions/europe_eurasia/car/kgp_age.html

⁹ UN (2003a), *Common Country Assessment*, Bishkek, The UN System in the Kyrgyz Republic, p. 41 and World Bank (2003c) World Development Indicators 2003, [Online: web] Accessed 19 Feb 2011, URL: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/data-query>.

economy. Furthermore, it has been also noted that the informal sector plays an important role in the country.

Kyrgyzstan is the only central Asian country so far to have joined the World Trade Organization, exposing its internal market to direct foreign competition. Agriculture is the largest sector of its economy; about half of the population works in agriculture, contributing to 35.2 percent of GDP in 2003. Industry and construction accounted for 22.9 percent of GDP. The mining industry, especially gold mining, is of particular importance and a major source of exports. Other than gold, however, Kyrgyzstan has few readily exploitable natural resources.¹⁰

Kyrgyzstan has also become one of the member countries of the CIS-7 Initiative, which was launched in April 2002. The Initiative is sponsored by bilateral donors, multi-lateral donors as well as International donors viz. the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank. Its aims are to promote poverty reduction, growth and debt sustainability. It encompasses seven low-income CIS countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.¹¹

In May 2001, a Comprehensive Development Framework for the period 2001-2010 was approved by the Kyrgyz Government, setting out a vision of socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation.¹² The National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005 constitutes the first phase in the implementation of the Comprehensive Development Framework. The Strategy was adopted as a medium-term action programme for economic, social and political reforms, developed in close collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

¹⁰ MacLehose, L. in McKee, M. (ed.) (2002), *Health care systems in transition: Republic of Moldova*. Copenhagen, European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 4: 5.

¹¹ MacLehose, L. in McKee, M. (ed.) (2002), *Health care systems in transition: Republic of Moldova*. Copenhagen, European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 4: 11.

¹² Ministry of Finance, Kyrgyz Republic (2001), *Kyrgyz Republic: New Prospects, Comprehensive Development Framework for the Kyrgyz Republic until 2010, All-Nation Strategy*, Bishkek.

4.2.1 Economic Position in Soviet Phase

The soviet women enjoyed equality in all walks of life, laid special emphasis on the guarantee of women's rights and the means of their realization. The Article 122 of the USSR constitution mentioned about equal rights of women with men to the sphere of employment, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and state protection of interests of mother and child, state aid to mothers of large families, unmarried mother maternity leave with full pay and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergarten.¹³

In the Soviet time, the Day care service provides some amount of freedom to women from domestic works has been dumped by the republics which impose more responsibility and burden upon them and decrease their economic and political empowerment. Lenin, the founder of the soviet state and leader of the communist party said in his speech, "*The task of the working women's movement in the Soviet Republic' had said: Owing to her work in the house, the women is still in a difficult position, to effect her complete emancipation and make her the equal to the man, is necessary for the women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men*".¹⁴

In 1917, the great October socialist revolution declared the full political, economic and civil equality of women for the first time in history. With the liberation of women was accomplished as set for in the programme of the communist party, which based on a scientific analysis of the development of the human society. They proclaimed that without the participation of women in socially productive labor they could have neither real equality nor freedom. Lenin initiated all the old laws which had kept women in a humiliating portion and deprived her rights were abrogated in the very first days of soviet rule. Lenin once said "*Of the laws which had kept women in an inferior position not single one remained*".¹⁵

The rapid development of the economy offered women unlimited opportunities for applying herself in any field during the soviet period. On the basis of

¹³ Sabedashvili, Tamar (2011), *The Identification and Regulation of Domestic Violence in Georgia (1991-2006)*, Ph.D Thesis, Georgia: Tbilisi State University.

¹⁴ Speech delivered at the Fourth Moscow City Conference of non-party working women, Sep 23. 1919, See Lenin on the Participation of the People in Government Moscow, 1979, p.193.

¹⁵ Petrova, L.S Gilevskay (1957), "Equality of women in the USSR", Moscow: Foreign Language publisher.

country's rapid economic development the right of women to work had been realized in practice in the USSR. In the USSR, there was no problem of employment for women even older women who received the old age pension frequently, continued work if they wanted to do. Marriage or motherhood was not cause for dismissal for women. The planned economy, the public ownership of the means of production economy, the country's industrialization and collective mechanized agriculture enabled the soviet women to overcome their economic backwardness and ensure the rapid progress of the entire national economy of the country.

From 1920s to the 1930s, there was an earth-shattering shift in soviet regime's approach to the women question. In the 1920s, the strategies adopted for the realization of women's liberation were women centered and feminist in its extreme sense. In 1920s, women were mobilized for their own development as a part of what could be regarded as consciousness rising exercise. In 1930s, the state took major initiatives to achieve these objectives. From the beginning of this decade they were drawn in extraordinary numbers into the soviet industrial labour force and began to take on work in formerly male dominated areas of employment including heavy and mechanized jobs.¹⁶

In 1954, women constituted 45.4 percent of all the factories, office and other workers engaged in industries. In the same year the percentage of the women workers in machine building were 44 percent, electrical engineer 47 percent radio engineering 55 percent machine tool and tool building 36 percent transport machine building 40 percent and heavy machine building 33 percent. Furthermore, the labor of soviet women engaged in the industry had changed qualitatively owing to the mechanization and automation of production the number of women working on complex machinery requiring knowledge and skill rather than physical. Effort increased with each passing year. Thus in 1954, 41 percent of automatic machine operators and their apprentices were women's, mental drillers 69 percent, grinders 51 percent, milling machine operators 38 percent, machine operators 64 percent and locomotive and motor drivers 42 percent.¹⁷

¹⁶ Llic, Melanie ed. (2001), *Women in Stalin Era*, New York: Palgrave.

¹⁷ Papova, V.L (1997), *Women in History: Women in Revolutionary Russia*, London: Cambridge University Press.

In the USSR, women had same social insurance as the man had. The soviet women had the right to rest on equal terms with men. They were afforded equal rights with the man in all areas of economic, civil and social political life. Soviet law punished severely, anyone who would dare to violate the rights of married women or mothers soviet women not only had a legal right to equal pay with men for equal work but also enjoyed those rights in practice.

In Soviet times, Kyrgyzstan was heavily subsidized from Moscow, with direct subventions contributing up to 25 percent of republican income. Its role in the Soviet division of labour was, like much of central Asia, as a producer of raw materials. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the transition from central planning, the country encountered a severe economic recession leading to a period of hyperinflation. In all central Asian republics, real output was lower in 1999 than it had been a decade earlier, and inequality and poverty increased.¹⁸ To cope with these economic pressures, Kyrgyzstan has embarked on a resolute course of liberalization, and has since 1994 cooperated closely with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.¹⁹

4.2.2 Economic Condition in Post-Soviet

The independent Kyrgyz society has systematically wound up women's stable social level of living. For instance, according to estimates, from 1993-1994 unemployment rate among Kyrgyz women was registered between 5-10 percent, while during 1991-1992 it was about 3. Many scholars like Richard, Desai and Fanon believed that only by uplifting the status of women, especially in the rural economy, the nation will succeed in stabilizing its population and achieving its economic potential. It is no longer a question of national will. It is a question of women's will.²⁰

Although men are supposed to be the bread earner women bear that major burden, especially in poor households and their income is certainly not supplementary. The poorest families are the most dependent on women's economic productivity. Nearly 30-35 percent of rural households are estimated to be headed by

¹⁸ Pomfret, Richard (2010), Constructing market-based economies in central Asia: A natural experiment?, *The European Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 7 (2): 449-467.

¹⁹ MacLehose, L. in McKee, M. (ed.) (2002), *Health care systems in transition: Republic of Moldova*. Copenhagen, European Observatory on Health Care Systems, 4(5).

²⁰ Rodda, Annabel (1991), "Women and Environment", London: Zed Books.

women and thus almost exclusively depend on their income. Even where there is male earner, women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households.²¹

One of the mysterious realities is non-recognition of women's work in the system of national accounts. It is not easy to calculate the remunerative aspect of women's work, mainly because the line between the household work services and market related activities remains indistinguishable. It has been pointed out by a global survey that the household as an economic unit of production remains one of the barriers of statistical analysis. Apart from the definition of household in existing surveys, there are a series of complex social and economic difficulties in considering the household as an economic unit and quantifying its production and services. Moreover, there are problems of definition of unpaid family labor and serious difficulties in quantifying various activities.²²

4.3 Rural Women and Land Reforms

Rural population of Kyrgyzstan makes up two thirds of the whole population. Land parcels have been allocated to about 2 million 462 thousand people of whom 50.8 percent are women. 24,225 peasant's farms, 14,499 farms were established in 1998 on the base of 354 restructured *kolkhozes*²³ and *sovkhoses*²⁴. Out of which 450 farms belong to women, which is 1.16 percent.²⁵ Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the former Soviet Union to introduce land reform. In the early 1990s, the transition government introduced legislation that privatized collective farms and other state property, established legal guarantees for private land entitlements, and created legal and administrative land market mechanisms.

Notwithstanding the fact that women make up a sizeable portion of the agricultural workforce in Kyrgyzstan and rural women are one of the poorest

²¹ Government of India, Country Report (1995), *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, Government of India*, New Delhi.

²² Sante, Domingo (1985), "Women in economic activity: A Global Statistical Survey 1950-2000", International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Cited in Desai, Neera and Thakkar, Usha (2001), "Women in Indian Society", New Delhi, National Book Trust.

²³ *kolkhoz* is a Soviet collective farm.

²⁴ *sovkhos* is a state-owned farm that paid wages to workers in the former Soviet Union

²⁵ Decree of the president of the Kyrgyz Republic on *March 2, 2002, On the National Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2002-2006*, Bishkek city, House of Government, March 2, 2002/DP No. 52 [Online: web] Accessed 19 Feb 2011, URL: http://www.un.org.kg/index2.php?option=com_resource&task...id..

segments of society, a land distribution survey in 2002 revealed that only 450 of 38,724 farms belonged to women.²⁶ Women's land ownership is still constrained by a combination of legal, procedural and cultural factors. Prominent among them are the precedence of customary over statutory law in determining property, inheritance issues and limited awareness by rural women of their land rights and entitlements. International organizations and banks were extending credits for agriculture; women were mainly extended micro-credits for organization of self-employment and poverty alleviation during all these years. Under the UNDP project "Capacity Building of Women's Organizations" 46 projects submitted by women's organizations were approved for allocation of grants for a total amount of 141,390 thousand US dollars.²⁷ They involved women in market economy, encouraged them to start their own business, created jobs for women and improved their living standards, especially of those living in rural areas.

Many scholars like Sante, Papova, Pomfret and others pointed out that the growing problem of unemployment and changes in the labor market has affected women especially in the age of 18-29 more than others. Currently, many young rural women have to limit their activities to traditional housework and a growing number of women have become economically dependent on their relatives. Nowadays, however, there are situations where the pension of the old parents is the only source of income not only for them, but for the families of their adult children, too.²⁸

4.4 Women in the labor market

The labour market created an unequal opportunities for different categories of women in the republic. Therefore, rural women and young mothers have more chances to lose their jobs or be rejected. Absence of the future prospects in the rural area in terms of employment explains the mass flow of women from rural areas to the capital and more developed industrial centres.

28 UN Millennium Project (2005), *UN Millennium Development Library: Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and empowering women, Task Force on education and Gender equality.*

²⁷ Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (2002), *On the National Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic For 2002-2006* on 2 March 2002, Bishkek.

²⁸ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000/01, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek.*

Globally, women's participation in the labour market remained stable in the last two decades from 1990 to 2010, hovering around 52 percent. In contrast, global labour force participation rates for men declined steadily over the same period, from 81 to 77 percent.²⁹ Structural changes in the economy of Kyrgyzstan affected the status of men and women in different ways. Although the employment rate among women in the economy of Kyrgyzstan is still relatively high, there is a tendency of "washing them out" from the economic sphere which has been formed over the recent years. If in 1995, the number of employed women were 50.8 percent out of the total number of people employed in different economic arrears, in 2002 the indicator went down to 47.4 percent versus 65.7 percent of men.³⁰

4.5 Economic Challenges for Women

Kyrgyzstan has faced many social, economic and political challenges encountered by other newly independent republics over the past decade. In the modern and complex society the scenario of women's employment and their participation in economic activities has thrown up new challenges. At the one side of coin working women in the urban areas are visible and vocal, while on the other side of coin, there are women especially in the unorganized sector who are constantly engaged in the battle of daily survival both are coincide. It is to the credit of women that they face many difficulties with pebbles and determination, radiate with positive self-image and seek empowerment through their work and perform well.

In the new economic atmosphere certainly women have to face many problems to get a job. On the one hand, market economy gives more opportunities and chances to everyone; while on the other hand, women are less preferred than men in the region as they are considered less skillful and capable than man. Women are badly affected socially, economically, politically after the adoption of new economic policy. The average Kyrgyz woman is undergoing serious economic and psychological risks in the transitional period for a number of reasons. Roughly around 1995, eighty-three percent of all women were in the labor force as Fanon stated in his article, but today women form the majority of the unemployed in Kyrgyzstan. This is connected to the recent elimination of many positions in the sphere of service, ideological activities

²⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010), *The World's Women 2010 Trends and Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

³⁰ Final Report Kyrgyzstan: Country Gender Profile December 2004, Siar-Bishkek, p.22.

and from reduction in social support. Traditionally, these positions were occupied mainly by women.³¹

Women of Central Asia already had unequal access to economic and financial resources and decision-making more than 85 percent of wealth in Central Asian countries is owned by men. Women entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to get access to financial resources because real wealth is concentrated in men's hands.³² In the economic transition, women's economic status is very seriously affected. First women have to lose their job as compared to men. Due to growing poverty and unemployment, women have to engage in prostitution, illegal woman trafficking³³ and drug trafficking for earnings in order that they can look after themselves and their families too.

Scholars like Standing and others believed that in many countries, women earn less than men for the same work. Women are also concentrated in the lowest status jobs and receive lower pay for this reason. Throughout the 1980s, employment conditions worsened in many countries, and job insecurity increased. Women may be particularly affected by these trends. Women's earnings in the informal sector are significantly lower than men's and many women work as unpaid family labour.³⁴

In spite of, some success of the reforms, the Kyrgyz economy still faces a number of crucial challenges, including diversifying its economy, reducing the heavy burden of external debt, strengthening governance, expanding exports, increasing investments, developing small and medium businesses and agriculture³⁵, the latter in particular in marginalized rural areas. Historically, ethnic Kyrgyz people were nomadic and Kyrgyz women were more independent than other Central Asian non-

³¹ Fanon, Frantz (2000), "The Social and Political Status of Kyrgyz Women: the Historical Heritage of the Soviet Union and Negative Tendencies in Post-Communist Kyrgyzstan" *Kyrgyzstan in International Journal of Central Asian Studies* Vol.5.

³² Djanaeva, Nurgul (2010), Statement at the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Nongovernmental organizations, Civil society organizations and the Private sector, United Nations Headquarters, New York 14-15 June 2010, Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan.

³³ Kumar, Sanjeev (2006), "Drug Trafficking in Central Asia: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan," M.Phil Dissertation, *School of International Study*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

³⁴ Standing, G. (1989), "Global feminization through flexible labour", *World Development*, Vol. 17 (7) and United Nations (1991), *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics: 1970-90*, UN, New York.

³⁵ UN (2003a), *Common Country Assessment*, Bishkek, The UN System in the Kyrgyz Republic and World Bank (2003a), *Country Brief Kyrgyzstan*. [online: web] Accessed 1 January 2012, URL: <http://www.worldbank.org/kg/ECA/Kyrgyz.nsf/ECADocByUnid/5D1C02A085120E6BC6256DC1001063F0?Opendocument>.

nomadic women. Kyrgyz women generally are not veiled and are not segregated from men. Because of the demands of the nomadic economy, women worked as essential equals with men, having responsibility for everyday jobs such as milking as well as child-rearing, the preparation and storage of food.

4.6 Poverty and Women

Scholars like Agnes, Lawrence and Christive asserted that 70 percent of the world's poor are women. Women are poorer than men. Poverty in Kyrgyzstan is the consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, privatization of collective farms and state industries, misdirected agrarian policy, unemployment, unfavourable tax law, high prices, lack of agricultural equipment, lack of sales markets, failure to pay pensions and social benefits in a timely manner, natural disasters, undeveloped banking system and inadequate law enforcement mechanisms. Additionally, there are other factors contributing to the incidence of poverty like alcoholism, ignorance and inability of people to solve their own problems, laziness, lack of basic knowledge in business or agribusiness and previous history of poverty in the family. This implies that globally there are 900 million poor women and 400 million poor men.³⁶

The Poverty problem became one of the sharpest ones in Kyrgyzstan with beginning of the reforms. Transition to the market economy and reducing the economic role of the state, explain rapid stratification of the society by the level of income. Poverty among women is further exacerbated by women's unequal access to employment. Women face different kinds of discrimination in the job market. A main indication of gender inequality in employment is the gender wage gap.³⁷ Women earn significantly less than men for the same work. This hinders the economic empowerment of women. The gender wage gap is a useful indicator for tracking the

³⁶ Agnes R. et al. (2001), "Are women overrepresented among the poor? An analysis of poverty in 10 Developing countries," *Journal of Development Economics*, vol.66: 226.

³⁷ Gender wage gap is also known as the gender pay gap, it is the difference between male and female earnings expressed as a percentage of male earnings, according to the OECD. The European Commission defines it as the average difference between men's and women's hourly earnings. There is a debate to what extent this is the result of gender differences, implicit discrimination due to lifestyle choices e.g., number of hours worked, need for maternity leave or because of explicit discrimination. It can also define as the difference between the amounts of money paid to women and men, often for doing the same work: The aim of government is to enable women to know whether or not their employer has a gender pay gap.

extent of gender inequality and discrimination against women in the labour force evident in the continuation of lack of parity in wages.³⁸

Most of the men fear the financial independence of their women and their ability to make a career and they oppose it. Such men, especially when they are unemployed, view success of their wives as their own failure. Gender analysis of the situation existing in both urban and rural sites shows that roles of men and women have not changed much on a household level and patriarchal way of living is still strong. The national statistics committee of Kyrgyzstan reports that 70 percent of women in Kyrgyzstan are suffering from financial difficulties.³⁹

The excessive money spent on traditional ceremonies is viewed as a major problem by both rural and urban poor. In spite of their poverty, poor families will borrow money in order to butcher a horse for *ash* (funeral ritual); huge sums of money are also spent on wedding ceremonies. Parents of the bridegroom must pay *kalym* (payment to parents of the bride for raising a good daughter), and parents of the bride provide *Sep* (dowry) depending on wealth of the family.

At the same time, there is the other tendency in some villages that women now are involved in trade and play the role of primary income earners and family providers who have the last say in decision making, especially when financial issues are involved. Ability to earn money gives women more confidence and decisiveness.

The main issues on which decisions within households are made, are family budgeting, raising children, family planning, and maintaining links with relatives; these decisions are made by women rather than men, because “women know better.” Some of the informants said that the idea of “influential” family members is directly related to their ability to earn money. The spouse who makes more money is more influential.⁴⁰

³⁸ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2007), *Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Asia-Pacific: Linking the Millennium Development Goals with the CEDAW and Beijing Indicators*, Gender and Development Discussion Paper Series No. 20, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok: Thailand, p.91.

³⁹ Deyeung, Alenj (2006), *Surviving the Transition: Case Studies of Schools and Schooling in the Kyrgyz Republic Since Independence*, Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.

⁴⁰ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000/01, National Synthesis Report* The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, p.115.

4.7 Businesses and women

Women having limited or even zero opportunity to establish their own business, which became women unemployed, owner of small, medium enterprises and also turn them into the informal labour market. Women dominate in this sphere as they have opportunity to combine household activities with the activity that brings income. Business activity of women is focused on the commerce and import-export. The range of goods includes cloths, food, toys, luxury goods and construction materials. In the sphere of human services, women offer professional consultation: medical clinics, educational centres and rarely law firms. Most part of women is involved in business which requires less educational level and technical skills: hairdressing saloons, ateliers, restaurants and handicraft industry.

There are a number of obstacles like lack of fund, low level of education and others on the path of development of business activity of women. The hardest of them is no access to funds. Although the financial needs of informal entrepreneurs are small, banks consider the work with them as troublesome and ineffective. Relatively low level of education of women in this sector makes it more difficult for them going through administrative procedures related to filling out credit applications. Women do not play yet important role in the formal private sector. Women are not active and are not main borrowers of banks; they are not members of international business clubs and have no information about opportunities of investment, stock exchange of export associations. Thus, it is cleared that they have so little chances to develop their own business.

Women all over the world, identify five major issues, which are related to their business. The Centre for Women's Business Research in the United States conducted research in over a half a dozen countries and found that women share concerns about the following five challenges:

- Access to information,
- Access to capital,
- Access to markets,
- Access to networks and
- Validation.

If above these five areas are addressed by those involved in business development issues, then women's business ownership will not only continue to grow, but will flourish even more strongly. Government agencies, NGOs, large corporations or business associations are involved in business development issues. Unleashed and unencumbered, women's entrepreneurship can provide the fuel for economic growth and opportunity for communities around the world.

4.8 Privatisation and Women

The process of privatisation in the country practically did not affect women. Most of the women did not have the tools and resources needed to become owners of big objects of property. Participation of women in state governance is very low. Women account for 35.8 percent of state officials, but most of them are intermediate level officials. The situation with access of women to entrepreneurship is similar. Thus, in 1996 as few as 24,000 women had small businesses. The existing situation at the labour and service market makes women try for work in the formal and informal sector as a strategy of survival.⁴¹

In the face of the smooth and dramatic implementation of privatization in the KR, it's generally resulted similar to other post-soviet countries in considerable worsening of the women's position. Women did not possess them into the necessary means of control (power, funds), which would let them take part in preparation of normative documentation, become owners of considerable property. Only few women could establish their own farms, privatize part of the property of former farms. According to the data of 1997, 24,225 agricultural households and 14,499 farms were established in the republic. Out of that number of farms, 450 are managed by women.⁴²

4.9 Women and Employment

There is still gender unevenness in employment status. The majority of employed women (36.5percent) are the hired personnel by enterprises and organizations and only one percent of women are employers. In most cases the workforce is presented by men, i.e. the management of the enterprise prefers to hire men. The situation of

⁴¹ World Bank (1999), Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000/01, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, p.121.

⁴² Final Report Kyrgyzstan, ob.cit., p.23.

women's labour in Kyrgyzstan was shaped in Soviet times when women accounted for a large part of the workforce and their employment was promoted by Soviet ideology of gender equality at the labor market.

According to UN report 2010, in none of the Asian countries for which latest data is available, the proportion of female employers exceeded 4 percent. Actually, Nepal has the highest share with 3.7 percent of its total female employment being classified as employers. In many countries, the proportion of women who work as employers is so low that it falls below one per cent. This includes Mongolia (0.4 percent), Cambodia (0.1 percent), Viet Nam (0.3 percent), Bangladesh (0.1 percent), Bhutan (0.7 percent), the Islamic Republic of Iran (0.9 percent), Pakistan (0.1 percent), Sri Lanka (0.7 percent), Georgia (0.4 percent), Kazakhstan (0.6 percent), and Kyrgyzstan (0.6 percent). Interpreting this trend over time it can be concluded that female employers have been just as rare in previous years.⁴³

Women face more unemployment than men and particularly, in scientific and technical fields than in other fields. Even when women are employed, they tend to be concentrated in low paying jobs and they are discriminated against in wages also. It is worth mentioning that women of the younger generation have many options and avenues. Mostly, the traditional areas like medical, education etc attract the women. Now women are entering in the male dominated areas like architecture, computer science, engineering, business management, defense, air line services etc. At the same time many of them choose to balance career with family, so that they choose specialized work which can grant them some amount of freedom and flexibility in their jobs. Therefore they prefer the flexible job by which they can manage their family life as well as professional life easily, means they want to avoid *role conflict*⁴⁴ situation.

The most acute causes and problems for the high rate of unemployment among women are wage and pension debts, disputes due to land distribution problems, lack of access to education, unavailability of credit, lack of cash etc. It can be seen as one

⁴³ United Nations (2010), *Gender Equality and Empowerment a Statistical Profile of Selected Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region*, United Nations: Bangkok, p.19.

⁴⁴ *Role conflict* is the presence of contradictory and often competing role expectations. It is an emotional conflict arising when competing demands are made on an individual in fulfillment of his or her multiple social roles.

of the main factors contributing to social isolation in the poor. Employment levels in the services sector continue to grow for both women and men. Over the years, women have entered various traditionally male-dominated occupations. However, they are still rarely employed in jobs with status, power and authority or in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. A constant gender pay gap in all places is the result of Horizontal and vertical job segregation. While, it is closing slowly in some countries, it has remained unchanged in others.

Generally girls work longer hours than boys, whether they are engaged in housework only, employment only or at both levels. Like their adult counterparts, girls are more likely than boys to perform unpaid work within their own household. In the less developed regions, many young girls aged 5-14 take on a large amount of household chores, including care-giving, cooking and cleaning and older girls do so to an even greater extent. While boys also do household chores, their participation rate is not as high as that of girls. Long hours of work affect children's ability to participate fully in education.

4.10 Participation in Informal Sector

Women more often try to find additional sources of income due to low salary and inappropriate payment. It means that the work in all economic spheres they work without repayment of taxes they are finding a place in the informal sector. The level of participation of women in the official labour market is lower than that of men. Its analysis by sectors of economic activities demonstrates that the share of women in the total number of workers and employees in education, health care and social protection, culture, informational and computing services, trade and public catering is rather large. They are less in number in science, industries, agriculture and transport.

The role of women in the formal sector is hardly noticeable and it cannot be change a lot with time. The informal sector has a number of characteristics which make women's participation in economic development. This field is dominated by women. The difficult situation has made women actively change gender stereotypes.⁴⁵ Social and economic changes that have taken place on a household level on the

⁴⁵ Gender stereotypes are generally accepted stable ideas on the society, necessary "female" and "male" behavior, their destiny, social role and activity. Gender stereotypes are determined by social cultural environment and accordingly are subject to change. Gender stereotypes form the so called gender expectations.

national level have made women's contributions to the family budget an absolute must. Women act as mediators and they do their best to make the shock of the current situation easier to sustain, decrease their own consumption level and increase their work in those families where men are unemployed or poor. Many women are joining the informal sector.

Women face a number of obstacles in the field of informal sector. Since their informal businesses are not officially registered and therefore may be viewed as illegal. They cannot issue access loans by institutional funds. The financial needs of informal businesses are usually low, but banks prefer not to issue even small loans for them, as this work is inexpedient and troublesome. The relatively low level of education of women, lack of land or other property (to secure a loan) make it difficult for them to do all paperwork and follow all administrative procedures required to obtain a loan as well as limit access to formal loans. Women are not active at borrowing money in banks, do not know much about investment raising, stock exchanges, or export associations, do not participate in international business clubs and therefore, are excluded from the field of formal private entrepreneurship.

The limitations of the formal sector faced by women that move them to the informal sector are different than those of the informal sector, which are the following-

- In many cases women do not have access to loans.
- Representatives of the formal sector have to waste a lot of time and money on the due to the confusion arising in the process of state regulation of their activities. In this situation, links to government bureaucrats, including the corrupt officials, are the best resource possible. These resources are less accessible for women than for men, so many women are squeezed out of the formal sector.
- Most of the formal sector entrepreneurs are professionals who have been trained in business and have experience of work in state agencies. These criteria are most frequently met by men, while women lack managerial skills and knowledge.
- Women are dependent on the public opinion which is rather conservative about gender roles.

- Access of women to ongoing support of the government and donor organizations through a legal network for women development is still limited, even though the government and the donors increase their support to women entrepreneurs of the formal sector.

4.11 Women and trade

The liberalization of the economy creates better opportunities for trade. The women, who speak foreign languages and have an aptitude for trade, use the opportunities of developing a market economy to a greater extent than men. However, these opportunities are not accessible to everybody. In 1993-1998, trade activities reached their peak, while now there is a certain decline can be observed. *Dordoi*⁴⁶ is undergoing difficult times and the focus of wholesale trade has shifted to the neighboring town of Almaty (Kazakhstan). In the past, a great number of buses of Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh traders came to *Dordoi* market to buy goods, while now, due to objective reasons such as a strict customs policy introduced by Uzbekistan, high customs taxes in Kazakhstan, and the depression of the Kyrgyz national currency, traders are facing difficulties. Many people now survive by selling small food items which are always in demand. The technology of self-employment organization via the system of crediting and micro-crediting also aimed at the support of unemployed women was widely spread throughout the republic.

4.12 Government Policies and Programmes

Government introduce the system of micro-crediting, support of women's entrepreneurship and farming, retraining of women and organization of payable public works aimed at providing assistance to women in difficult situations of the transition period, were carried out not only within the framework of the National Program "Ayalzat", but also other national programs like "Araket", "Labor Market and Employment in the KR", "Emgek", "Program of Actions on State Support for Small and Medium Business", etc.

The Ayalzat National Programme is the republic-wide executive organ responsible for implementing State policy on the family, women and young people. It has 11 sections and each section is divided into short term objectives and long term objectives. One out of eleven sections is based on women and the economy. Women

⁴⁶ *Dordoi* is one of the biggest wholesale markets of Central Asia, located in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan.

play a key role in the economy since they are a large source of Kyrgyzstan's labour resources.

A- Long-Term Objectives

- Provision of employment for women;
- Development of the souvenir and handicrafts industry, creation of additional jobs;
- Promotion of the establishment and operation of non-governmental employment services;
- Provision of free legal consultations concerning hiring and dismissal practices, social guarantees in the event of dismissal, observance of labour legislation affecting women;
- Establishment social and psychological services for unemployed women and women in part-time employment;
- Promotion of female entrepreneurship.

B- Short-term objectives

- Organization of a business women's association;
- Preparation of analytical information on the situation of women in the labour market;
- Organization of a women's credit institution;
- Support for low-income and large families;
- Strengthened monitoring of the targeted use of foreign investments;
- Formulation of measures to support single elderly women.

As economic scenario is changing, women's lives are changing. In place of the adverse circumstances, women work hard for survival. They organize themselves against injustice, inequality, discrimination. They work to preserve the environment and to create new avenues of income. In the world of competition, they discover their potential to survive, to earn and to develop self-esteem. Gender differentials in education and health are not an efficient economic choice. Women are employed in various sectors of the economy like agriculture, industry, education, health, physical education and social security Construction, trade and catering, Government agencies and others.

The relative status of women is poor in the developing world, compared to developed countries. Increases in per capita income lead to improvements in different

measures of gender equality, suggesting that there may be market failures hindering investment in girls in developing countries and that these are typically overcome as development proceeds. Women working outside the home or outside the community, women may have freedom, but they also pay less attention to the children, which leaves their unemployed husbands the responsibility of the care of the children and the housework. Thus, problems within the marriage have also increased. Those women who are particularly vulnerable to the difficult conditions of a transition economy include unemployed young women, women with many children and ethnic Russian female pensioners.

The collapse of Soviet Union and independence of Kyrgyzstan draw many changes in its political, economic and social life. Responsibilities of men and women have changed and the national customs and traditions are damaged. These factors changed the status of women. Women have lost many of their formal achievements, such as a stable place in the economic structure and the political life of the country. Now, women are counted in the group of most seriously suffer. At the same time, women are singularly active at the informal labor market and are the core of the force development economic changes in the country. Women have managed to create a flexible system of employment for them and increase income for their families. Since 1993 women have been involved in trade known also as *chelnochny business*⁴⁷ and bazaar economy.

Now, it can be said that the Soviet time appears to be synonymous with a sense of well-being, while post-Soviet times represent ill-being. One of the most definitive differences between the Soviet and Post-Soviet situation is that now there is a total lack of permanent jobs. We shouldn't forget about "gender segregation" or dominating concentration of men and women in separate economic spheres. As in many other countries, women of Kyrgyzstan outnumber in a small number of "female" branches and professions: health-care and education, system of the social insurance and provision of pensions, culture and arts.

On one hand women are significantly underrepresented among legislators, senior officials and managers, craft and related trade workers and plant and machine

⁴⁷ *chelnochny business* is that of travelling to other towns and even countries to purchase goods and products for re-sale.

operators and assemblers while, other hand they are heavily over represented among clerks, professionals, and service and sales workers. In all regions, women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work. Women who are employed spend an excessive amount of time on the double burden of paid work and family responsibilities; when unpaid work is taken into account, women's total work hours are longer than men's in all regions.

Certainly, one can say that women and their work play very vital role in individual life, family, society as well as in national development. Although it is not possible to present a clear cut picture of women and their work but one thing can be seen explicitly that without women's work it is impossible to move an inch for men alone. Women continue to bear most of the responsibilities for the home: caring for children and other dependent household members, preparing meals and doing other housework.

CHAPTER-5

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
OF WOMEN

5.1 Background

Political empowerment of women in Kyrgyzstan is one of the major challenges in the post-soviet republics. Women of the newly independent KR (Kyrgyzstan Republic) have been affected adversely by the new political and economic transitional period. One can say the gender equality is affected by Soviet rule. Globalization, political and economic transformation etc. are responsible for disempowering women. Women's political empowerment in this region is the pre-requisite for the stable society, peaceful society and successful democracy.

The political participation of women in this region is almost none. Women are rarely represented at the local to national level; therefore they have little access to the political process. In most cases the legal framework for them has already existed but women themselves are unaware of this. They are not politically educated and also have not necessary information's about themselves. Equal participation of men and women in the political life of the country is critical for further improvement of women's lives and can be viewed as a necessary component of the protection of women's interests. Political rights and freedoms include, first of all, the right to vote.

Political empowerment of women is very essential requirement and an important factor of gender empowerment for achieving the target of gender equality. It has been found that political gender equality in the form of female representation in parliament is associated with lower levels of personal integrity rights abuse by state agents.¹ The women have to face inequality and discrimination at all levels in all sectors. The authoritarian politics in the Central Asian Republics is the byproduct of political transition. Women's political participation in this region has also been encroached by this authoritarian political regime.

Women's inadequate representation and small share in political power is a worldwide problem and not unique to the Kyrgyzstan particular. Nevertheless, given the Soviet legacy of egalitarian laws and rhetoric, the post-Soviet political activism of women in national-liberation movements, universal literacy and women's high level of economic participation, one would expect a much stronger representation of women in political power. While there has been a decline in women's representation

¹ Erik, Melander (2005), "Political Gender Equality" *Journal of peace research*, Oslo, Vol. 42(2): p.163.

at the formal (national and local) government levels and in political parties, there is an unprecedented increase in women's participation in NGOs.

Women are still severely underrepresented in governments worldwide. A recent World Economic Forum report covering 115 countries notes that women have closed over 90 percent of the gender gap in education and in health but only 15 percent of it when it comes to political empowerment at the highest levels. Although 97 countries have some sort of gender quota system for government positions. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union², women fill only 17 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide and 14 percent of ministerial-level positions-and most of those are related to family, youth, the disabled, and the elderly.³

The Beijing Platform for Action says about the political empowerment of women that women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice for democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account.⁴ The political rights and freedoms of women, unlike their personal rights and freedoms, are aimed primarily at active participation in the life of the society, rather than independence within it. These rights create the conditions required for strengthening links between individuals and the society, citizens and the state. Equal participation of men and women in decision making will create the balance and better reflect the composition of the society, so strengthening the democratic changes in the country.

After the independence of Central Asian Republics from the Soviet Union in 1991, all the Central Asian Republics have moved from centrally controlled planned economy of the Soviet period to market economy. Many scholars like Fathi, Sabi and others believed that the poor economic and poor political conditions of women in Central Asian Republics both are supplementary of each other. On one hand the economic backwardness is results of less participation of women in politics, while on the other hand less political participation of the women in Central Asian Republics region is by product of poor economic condition of women in Central Asian Republics.

² The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an organization that fosters exchange among parliaments.

³ Hunt, Swanee (2007), "Let Women Rule", *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2007.

⁴ "Women in Power and Decision making", FWCW Platform for Action. online: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm

5.2 Political Structure of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven Oblasts viz. Batken, Chui, Issyk-Kul, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Osh and Talas oblasts and Bishkek, the capital. Oblasts are divided into a total of 40 districts. The districts in turn are divided into rural communities, each comprising up to 20 small settlements.⁵ Each province is headed by a governor (*akim*)⁶ who is appointed by the president. District administrators are appointed by the central government. Rural communities are governed by directly elected mayors and councils.

Kyrgyzstan is a unitary presidential republic that began the post-Soviet era as the least authoritarian of the five Central Asian states. Kyrgyzstan's Promotion of Women in Parliament aimed to promote women's representation in Parliament, build capacity of representatives and experts to address gender issues, build partnerships to support women parliamentarians and overall gender issues, and advocate to include gender issues in the Parliament's agenda. It seeks to institutionalize good governance reforms and practices at all levels of government, civil society organizations and the private sector towards poverty reduction, protection of rights and sustainable human development.

On 31 August 1991, the Kyrgyz Supreme Soviet voted for independence from the USSR. Six weeks later, Askar Akaev was re-elected as President of the new country. In December 1991, Kyrgyzstan became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). A new constitution was adopted on 5 May 1993, with several amendments since. The constitution defines Kyrgyzstan as a sovereign, unitary, democratic republic built on the principles of a constitutional, secular state. In January 1995, Akaev was re-elected President for a new 5 year term. Referenda in February 1996 and October 1998 significantly expanded the power of the President and consolidated a presidential style of government. Akaev was re-elected President for a third term in October 2000.⁷

⁵ Library of Congress- Federal Research Division Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan, January 2007.

⁶ Akim means a head of an executive body or local state administration at a corresponding level of territorial authority

⁷ National Statistical Committee, Krygyz Republic (2004), Demographic yearbook of the Krygyz Republic (1999–2003), Bishkek cited in Meimanaliev, Adilet-Sultan et al. (2005), Health Care Systems in Transition, *European observatory on Health Systems and policies*, Vol. 7 (2): 2-3.

Local state administrations in oblasts (regions) and rayons (districts) are headed by Akims (governors) all appointed by the President for four years. In 1996 the President established a new Security Council to act as an inner cabinet. Unlike the broader cabinet, it was not answerable to parliament. The Office of the Procurator General supervises the implementation of legislative acts and is responsible for criminal prosecution in courts. The highest judicial bodies are the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court. Local self-governing bodies are represented by local keneshs (councils) and local governments (including mayors' offices). Deputies of local keneshs are elected for 5 years; heads of local governments are elected for 4 years. There are three territorial levels of local keneshs: primary (villages and towns), rayon and oblast levels. The local self-governing bodies are responsible for dealing with local matters. In April 1999, Kyrgyzstan adopted a new election code, whose Article 3 states that citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and after reaching the age provided for by the constitutions, may be elected to Parliament and local government.⁸

5.3 Political Participation of Women

Worldwide, women's representation in parliament was about 11 percent in 1992 in developing countries. Overall parliamentary representation of women in developing regions remains low. Proportion of women in parliament increased between 1975 and 1987 but women still make up less than four percent of representatives in many countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific, with notable exceptions. Democratisation does not guarantee improved representation of women. Institutional barriers, socio-cultural factors and lack of time may constrain women's participation.⁹

Around the world, a lack of gender balance in decision-making positions in government persists. Women continue to be underrepresented in national parliaments, where on average only 17 percent of seats is occupied by women. The share of women among ministers also averages 17 percent. The highest positions are even

⁸ Women 2000. An investigation into the status of women's Right in Central and south eastern europe and newly Independent States". IHF report, available online : [www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php? sec id=3&d id=1465](http://www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=1465).

⁹ United Nations (1991), *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 1970-90*, United Nations, New York.

more intangible only 7 of 150 elected Heads of State in the world are women, and only 11 of 192 Heads of Government. The situation is similar at the level of local government: female elected councillors are underrepresented in all regions of the world and female mayors even more so.¹⁰

In many countries, women have only recently been granted the right to vote. In 11 countries across Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific, equal suffrage was only granted between 1976 and 1991. Women continue to be denied the vote in Kuwait. Certain factors may limit women's ability to exercise their right to vote, although disaggregated figures on the electorate are rarely available. Women's higher illiteracy rate constrains political awareness and effective choice. In some of developing countries as well as developed countries, men are able to vote by proxy for female members of their families. However, abuse of this provision, has only been informally recorded.¹¹

In the political terms gender equality was quite well addressed by various political and legislation steps: presidential decrees, state national plans, new laws and law reforming gains. But women's empowerment doesn't need only political declarations; they also need adequate mechanisms, equal opportunities, adequate resources and real actions. Women's empowerment is a key to successful development recognizing positive steps of States towards implementation of MDGs, BPFA and CEDAW in the Central Asian region Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan is expressing a deep concern with continuing challenges faced by poor and marginalized women in this region. Current dramatic underfunding of women's issues and women's groups continues putting at risk adequate improvement of women's wellbeing and gender equality certainly at national levels.¹²

In 1996, Kyrgyz Republic had ratified the Covenants on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); on Political Rights of Women; on Consent to Marriage, Marriage Age, and Registration; on Civil Rights of Married

¹⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010), *The World's Women 2010 Trends and Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

¹¹ United Nations (1991), "The World's Women: Trends and Statistics - 1970-90, UN, New York and Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1992," *Women and Political Power, Series "Reports and Documents"*, No 19, Geneva.

¹² Djanaeva, Nurgul (2010), Statement at the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Nongovernmental organizations, Civil society organizations and the Private sector, United Nations Headquarters, New York 14-15 June 2010, Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan.

Women; and on Safety of Motherhood. However, Kyrgyz society is moving away from gender equality as promoted by the Soviet State, and as espoused in its own laws. There has been a sharp decrease in the number of women in the Kyrgyz Parliament and in all management levels in various sectors of the economy. Women constitute only 6.7 percent of the members of Parliament and in 2002 only two out of 12 ministers were women, compared to the Soviet period when over 35 percent of Parliament and the government were women. As well, in 2002, only one woman was in charge of a state (oblast) administration, and of 455 aiyl okmotu¹³ heads (local government), only 21 were women.¹⁴

Representation of women in Jogorku Kenesh is proportional and makes 6.7%. The “Pyramid” tendency is kept when women make 12% in regional, 13% in rayon and urban, 16% in rural administrations. The share of women in electorate is 52%. Out of 12 Ministers in the KR as of the year 2001 there are only 2 women; moreover there is no woman on regional governor positions, only one woman occupies a position of the head of rayon administration; out of 455 heads of Aiyl okmotu only 21 women. According to data as of 2001, women have a 14.7% share among heads of government bodies and directorates occupying the top positions; among heads of departments and administrations the share is 24.4%.¹⁵

State power and local self governance in Kyrgyzstan are elected. A percentage of women in the parliament have been affected of the country the new election system in Kyrgyzstan. In the Soviet past, there were official quotas of women that had to be represented in the Soviets of various levels thus ensuring the active participation of women in political life. After the extinction of this practice the number of women in the Kyrgyz parliament has decreased significantly and only 5 of 82 women were elected. Currently there are only 4 women in the two chambers of the *Jogorku Kenesh* (Parliament), which is 4.7% of the total number of votes. In regional *Keneshes* women

¹³ Aiyl Okmotu (village authority) is an executive and administrative body under the aiyl (village) or community kenesh whose responsibilities include management of local social activities and social services for a specific community.

¹⁴ UNDP (2002), *National Human development report: Human development in mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic*, UNDP: Bishkek.

¹⁵ National Human Development Report (1990), *Democratic Governance: Alternative Approaches to Kyrgyzstan's Future Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.23.

represent 14% of the total number of members, in *Keneshes* of district level they account for 25% of members, and in *keneshes* of village level for 31-34%.¹⁶

In Kyrgyzstan, the share of female representatives has increased by 25 percentage points between 2000 and 2009. The most significant progress over the last two decades has been achieved by Singapore (20 percentage points), Afghanistan (24 percentage points), and Nepal (26 percentage points). In addition to its significant improvement, Nepal is the only country in which women own more than 30 per cent of the seats in the single or lower house of national parliaments.¹⁷ According to survey results, the attitude of women towards political activity is positive. 73.2% of those surveyed consider that the participation of women can bring stability, flexibility and development into politics. On the other hand, 64.4% of women consider that their obligations at work and in the home prevent them from seriously considering a political career. The same survey found that 10.8% of women are actively involved in public and political life. At the same time, women today constitute the vast majority of members of NGOs and public associations. This indicates that their activity can have a significant influence on the formation of entities for democratic governance.¹⁸

There is a very little representation of women in political parties. In social research *Women of Kyrgyzstan: A source of political activeness* which was conducted by Diamond Association is shown that only in 8 parties out of 16 (except Democratic Party of Women) have some women in their bodies. Their representation is not essential only 1, 2-7%. None of these parties consider women as a political power that can independently define the strategy of personal and public activeness as well as none of them has a program that would support women's political activeness. Women are considered as objects whose life can be improved from the outside, but not through personal initiative. Possibly, this is a reason why parties do not consider women as a political power. From generation to generation, it has been formed that mostly men control political and economical sphere in the whole world. In this section we will discuss the political participation of women under two following sub-titles-

¹⁶ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000-01*, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek.

¹⁷ United Nations (2010), *Gender Equality and Empowerment a Statistical Profile of Selected Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region*, United Nations: Bangkok, p.25.

¹⁸ National Human Development Report (1990), *Democratic Governance: Alternative Approaches to Kyrgyzstan's Future Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.23.

5.3.1 Participation in Soviet Period

Posadkaya and others have stated that political participation of women of Kyrgyzstan was not different than the Political Participation of Russian women, because till 1991, Kyrgyzstan was a part of Soviet Union. Russian women thought that the previous rights were either taken away or might be threat for future. They found their automatic right to paid work and to fixed percentages of political representation taken away. Luckily some new political opportunities were open to women in this unstable and insecure economic setting. Yet, men still hold powerful political positions. Some amount of hesitation was also found in women, which was also responsible for backwardness of women. Perestroika and Glasnost play important role in the issue of equality of women in the Russian society.

Some scholars like Marietta, Rosalind and Fathi said that the social structures of Central Asian Republics were traditional and patriarchal where status of women is not satisfactory and relatively low then the status of men. This discrimination could be seen in any sphere of life viz. social, economic, political etc. After the October 1917 revolutions, the communist initiated the process of empowerment of women. This is believed that 'the proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women.'¹⁹ In short, the Bolsheviks strived to transform the situation of the Muslim woman. They were convinced that the October Revolution had intended to designate her as a producer in the new society. In the path of this achievement, firstly they considered eliminating the oppression of the Muslim woman inherited from czarism', thus they favoured her economic and social liberation as necessary step.²⁰

The Political history of Soviet Union, after the October Socialist Revolution of 1917, is the story of an unprecedented experiment to transform radically social relations. The first decrees of the Soviet State of 1917 and the Soviet construction of 1918, declared equal human rights for men and women, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion and equal pay for equal work regardless of the sex, equal opportunities in social and political activities and so on, for the first

¹⁹ Lenin N. (1979), "To the working women, On Participation of the people in government", Moscow, p.217.

²⁰ Fathi, Habib (1997), "Otimes: the unknown women clerics of Central Asian Islam", *Central Asian survey*, Vol.16 (1), p.28. Oxford.

time in the history of Russia.²¹ In the Soviet Union, post 1917 era there were many impressive progress had made like new election campaign, they tried to increase women's participation in political life and in the process of State management. From 1921-1927, fundamental institutions like the waqfs (properties in mortmain, the cannon (Shari'at) and customary ('adat) law, and religious teaching were liquidated.²²

According to Rosalind Marsh, under Gorbachev and Yeltsin women have haunted even less powerful in mainstream politics than in early period of Soviet history. Some Russian feminists have called the system male democracy or a men's club.²³ In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came into the power, he started the political and economic reforms and he stated his point of view about female issue in two statements. In the first statement, He asserted that it was necessary to restore the "Zhenosoviets" (women's council), which he made at the twenty seventh party Congress of the CPSU in 1986. The second statement appeared in his book "The meaning of my life: Perestroika", where he wrote that women's "truly feminine predestination should be returned to women completely". Both statements have been echoed in state policy making.²⁴

The government had created 240,000 women's council across the country by 1987. They created under Perestroika were placed under party control and their activities completely regulated. The Soviet Working Committee (SWC) assumed the role of organizational center and it issued its regulations concerning the "Zhenosoviets". The SWC lingered on, pretending to be active, to be a principal center of movements of women and to speak on the behalf of Soviet women. The party also initiated a Communist women's movement which aim was to stimulate the actual transformation of relationship to undermine the traditional attitudes of men and women, to mobilize women in the national effort to reconstruct a socialist society.²⁵ The Soviet State officially and constitutionally established equal rights to women and

²¹ Marietta, Stephaniants (1988), "Women and State Politics: The Soviet Experience" in Klienberg, S. Jay (ed), *Retrieving Women's History* UNESCO: Berg Publisher, p 214-253.

²² Megoran, Nick (1999), "Theorizing gender, ethnicity and the nation-state in Central Asia", *Central Asian survey*, Vol.18 (1), p.42, Oxford.

²³ Marsh, Rosalind (1998), "Women in contemporary Russia and the former Soviet Union" in Rich Wilford and Miller, Robert L. (eds), *Women Ethnicity and Nationalism the politics of Transition*, New York: Routledge, p. 98.

²⁴ Marsh, Rosalind (1998), "Women in contemporary Russia and the former Soviet Union" in Rich Wilford and Miller, Robert L. (eds), *Women Ethnicity and Nationalism the politics of Transition*, New York: Routledge, p. 98-99.

²⁵ Szymanski, Albert (1984), *Human Rights in the Soviet Union*, London: Zed books, p.105.

men to elect and to be selected to all bodies of power and to hold any posts in State and economic agencies without any discrimination and inequalities between men and women. The key role of the party was to the liberation of women in the Islamic societies where the status of women is suppressed.

The traditional Sharia-based tribunals replaced by a new set of codes and civil tribunals. These tribunals had previously regulated family life, equality before the law of all citizens, regardless of ethnic or national origin, sex or social status, was proclaimed, women were given the right to vote and access to all position of power (Act.64 of the Soviet constitution of 1918) and from onwards, religious marriage Kalym bride price, and polygamy were prohibited, while the legal age of marriage was fixed at 16 (instead of 9) for girls and 18 (instead of 16) for boys.²⁶ In the opinion of the Soviet Government that if women could work outside the home while domestic work and child care were socialized their oppression would be eliminated and communities' societies would bring equality between men and women.²⁷ Political rights of women were ensured by the first Constitution of the USSR, which was adopted in 1918. We can see in the table that Kyrgyz women got right to vote and to stand for elections first among all the five Central Asian Republic. Following table shows right to vote and right to stand for elections for women in Central Asian Republics-

Table No. 5.1 Participation of Women in CARs (1924-1938)

Central Asian Republics	Right to vote	Right to stand for election
Kazakhstan	1924	1924
Kyrgyzstan	1918	1918
Tajikistan	1924	1924
Turkmenistan	1927	1927
Uzbekistan	1938	1938

Source: *Human Development Report, 2004.*

The women of the Central Asian Republics got political rights far before than other Muslim countries for e.g. in Iran women got political rights to vote and contest

²⁶ Fathi, Habib (1997), "Otimes: the unknown women clerics of Central Asian Islam", *Central Asian survey*, Vol.16 (1), p.28. Oxford.

²⁷ Sabi, Manijeh (1999), "The impact of economic and political transformation on women: the case of Azerbaijan", *Central Asian survey*, Vol. 18(1). p. 112, Oxford.

elections in 1963, in Egypt in 1956, in Turkey in 1930's and in Pakistan women got political rights in 1947. In the countries like United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, women's right to vote and participate in the elections is not recognized.²⁸

In the Soviet period there was a quota system which ensures the representation of women in politics and decision making institutions. The quota system empowered women in the Soviet Central Asia. At this juncture women's political empowerment in the Soviet Union was achieved by approving women in political sphere and it was just a superficial positive gender outlook got thrust in the society.²⁹ The Central Asian Republic women did make progress in various areas and their status in some areas was even far better than the international standards. Abdurazakava was argued that one of the principal trump cards of the Soviet propaganda was the changed image of Eastern women, who enjoyed far more freedom during the Soviet regime when compared to neighboring Muslim countries.³⁰

Thus, we can say that the process of women empowerment was started during the Soviet regime. Traditional Islamic Central Asian Republics customs and values did not allow women to take part in public life. It is Soviet regime who encouraged and supported work outside and not restricts women to domestic affairs only. The Soviet policy of freeing of labor put its potential impact on the prevailing status of women and many reforms were brought about. The dream of "*freeing of Labor*" was sougled by the Soviet system for achieving equality between men and women. Women as equal half of the proletariat enjoy equality in all departments of life: in marriage, in the family, in the political affairs, etc.³¹

5.3.2 Participation in Post- Soviet Period

The status of women is not satisfactory in the independent Central Asian Republics as compare to the status of women during the Soviet period, state policy supported women at that time. Although after the dissolution of Soviet Union, the newly

²⁸ UNDP (2004), *Human Development Report: Cultural liberty in today's diverse world*, UNDP, p.234-237.

³⁰ Abdurazakava, Dono "Gender Issues in Central Asia: A Challenge for Development?" available online:
<www.newscentralasia.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=906>

³¹ Syzmanski, p.227

independent Central Asian Republics also proclaim women's rights by incorporating constitutional and legal provisions but many factors which disempowering women were also exists side by side. In Kyrgyzstan, there is one women's party that is the Democratic Party, who has included gender related issued in its agenda. Some of them are cultural revival, authoritarian politics and fragile economic situation in the region. Though, authoritarian nature of political systems in Central Asia was barrier in political empowerment of women in this region because nature wise it is undemocratic, but Kyrgyzstan was termed as the most democratic country among the CARs. The former President of the Kyrgyz republic Akayav has called his republican "*island of democracy in Central Asia*".³²

Article 1 of the Convention on the Political Rights of women³³ says that "*women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal term with men without any discrimination*", Article 2 of the convention says that "*women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination*" and Article 3 of the convention says that "*women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public function, established by national law, on equal terms with men without any discrimination*". After the collapse of the Soviet Union all the Central Asian Republics have established liberal democratic form of political system, which opposes cultural views and values in this region like status of women, is unequal to men in Central Asian Republican norms and values while in democracy women have equal rights to men. It is said that "Democracy without women is no democracy".³⁴ Therefore, Democratic Kyrgyz republic promotes women's political empowerment.

Article 3 of CECSR (International covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right) said that "*the state parties to the present covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural*

³² "Women 2000 – An investigation into the status of women's Right in Central and South-Eastern Europe and Newly independent states". IHF reports, available online www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=1465.

³³ opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly resolution 640 (VII) of 20 December 1952, entry into for 7 July 1954, in accordance with Article VI, available online: www.unhcr.ch/html/man3/b/22.htm as cited in Ritu Ranjan Kumar (2005), *Political Empowerment of women in Central Asia, 1991-2000*, M.Phil Dissertation JNU, New Delhi.

³⁴ Posadkaya, Anastasia (1994), *Women's movement in Post Socialist Russia in Perspectives on women's movements across Nationality* sponsored by Women's Programme forum: Ford Foundation. Amherst. p.1.

rights set forth in the present covenant".³⁵ According to the Article 22 of the Family Code, "women and men have equal rights; they are equal when they set up a family and they do not need official permission from their families in order to marry".³⁶ Thus we can say that women of Central Asian Republics are equal to men legally and constitutionally. But practice is different than ideal or theory. There are many reasons behind the low status of women like poverty, unemployment among women, male dominance social, religious and power structure, increasing domestic work on women etc.

Political parties play very crucial role in promoting equal participation of men and women in politics. They not only put demand coming from the citizens before government but also develop leadership and political leaders among people. This is a fact that women are less represented in political parties at all levels of hierarchy. The Beijing platform for action reports that traditional working pattern of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life.³⁷

Theoretically, the electoral system in central Asian republics is based on multiparty system. In this region the political parties are male dominated so that women issue is not at priority political parties are not preferred women as candidates in election. The democratic party of women is a women's party, which was registered in 1996. It took part in the Kyrgyzstan elections is considered pro-presidential political party. Gender issues were raised only by this party. The percentage of women in the parliament is one of the most important indicators to assess political empowerment of women in a country this indicator has been recognized in the Millennium Development goals to promote gender inequality and empowerment of women.

³⁵Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 3 January 1976 in accordance with Article 27. This covenant is monitored by the committee on economic, social, and cultural Rights details available on www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm as cited in Ritu Ranjan Kumar (2005), *Political Empowerment of women in Central Asia, 1991-2000*, M.Phil Dissertation JNU, New Delhi.

³⁶ Women 2000. An investigation into the status of women's Right in Central and south eastern europe and newly Independent States". IHF repprt, available online : www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&id=1465.

³⁷ The fourth world conference, United Nations A/CONF.177/20 online web www.un.org/esa/gopher....

After the collapse of Soviet Union the central Asian republics abolished the quota system existed in the soviet regime, which led to decline the number of women in the newly independent parliaments. In the independent central Asian region, there is no quota system except some exceptions which ensure women's political participation. It is noteworthy that the political party quota for electoral candidate is given only in the Kyrgyz republic among CARs.³⁸ The presidential form of democracy was adopted by the all five Central Asian Republics. The Turkmen and Uzbek parliaments have single chamber, while other three Central Asian countries the Kazak, the Kyrgyz and the Tajik Parliaments have two chambers. After independence, the first election was held on mid 1990s, which result shows the inadequate political participations of women in this region. In the first parliamentary elections women were very low in number in all five Central Asian countries the following table shows women's less representation-

Table No. 5.2 Women in Parliament, 1995

Republics	Elections	Total elected	No. of Women
Kazakhstan	Dec.1995	67	9
Kyrgyzstan	Dec.1995	70	1
Tajikistan	Feb.1995	181	5
Turkmenistan	Dec.1994	50	9
Uzbekistan	Dec.1994	250	15

Source: *inter-parliament union* www.ipu.org

The above table shows the number of women in all five central Asian countries in 1995, while the next table shows the women in parliament in 2000.

Table no.5.3 Women in parliament, 2000

Republics	Elections	Total Elected	No. of Women
Kazakhstan	Oct. 1999	77	8
Kyrgyzstan	Feb. 2000	43	1
Tajikistan	Feb. 2000	60	9
Turkmenistan	Dec.1999	50	13
Uzbekistan	Dec.1999	250	18

Source: *Inter-parliamentary union* www.ipu.org

³⁸ Global database of quotas for women online web www.quotaprojet.org

One can compare the percentage of women in all five CARs through above two tables named women in parliament, 1995 and women in parliament, 2000. In Kazak women in parliament were 13.4% before October 1999 elections, while 10.4% after the elections. In Kyrgyzstan, the number of women in parliament was increase from 1.4% to 2.3%, In Tajik parliament it increased from 2.8% to 15%, In Turkmen it increased from 18% to 26% and in Uzbek parliament it increase from 6% to 7.2%. It shows that except Kazak in rest all four central Asian countries number of women is increased.

In Kyrgyz republic the number of women working at the lowest levels of management is relatively high, up to 70% with only very few representative at the highest levels of power.³⁹ The percentage of women administrators and managers from 1993 to 2000 is given in the following table-

Table No.5.4 Women administrators and managers in Kyrgyzstan

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
% of women	35	36	36	35	32	36	32	39

Source: *National Human Development Report, Kyrgyz Republic, 2001.*

CEDAW's Article 7⁴⁰ says that State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in Political and public life of the country and in particular shall ensure to women on equal terms with men, the right:

- To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be elected bodies, eligible for elections to all public.
- To participate in the formulation of government policy and implementation and thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.
- To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

³⁹ UNDP (2002), *National Human development report-2002: Human development in mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic*, UNDP: Bishkek.

⁴⁰ Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, [Online: Web] Accessed 9Jan 2012, URL: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/law/cedaw/>.

5.6 Government Programmes and Policies

Gender equality and women empowerment is supported by all the Central Asian Republics including Kyrgyzstan, their state policies, their newly adopted constitutions, laws etc. The Kyrgyzstan Constitution guarantees and recognizes ‘the basic rights and liberties of human beings’ and ensures everyone’s equality before the law and in court. The Kyrgyz Constitution says that no one may be discriminated against.⁴¹

The Kyrgyz National Programme “*Ayalzat*” says about ‘women’s participation in decision making at the political, legislative and executive levels’.⁴² This program has 11 sections and each section is divided into short- and long-term objectives. One section out of eleven sections related to Women's participation in decision-making at the political, legislative and executive levels and it has also long term and short term objectives, which are following-

The **long term** objectives are-

- Establishing a gender balanced pool of candidates to fill administrative and diplomatic posts and
- Achieving the target endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council of having 30% of women in positions of decision making levels.

The **short term** objectives are –

- Developing and implementing programmes to overcome traditional attitudes and negative stereotypes, and training women to take part in political life and electoral campaigns.
- Establishing a political leadership school for women and
- Taking women’s interests into account in the granting of credit land and so on.

A whole set of measures were undertaken in order to increase the opportunities for women’s advancement to various levels of power and to ensure gender-balanced staffing in government agencies: the database on women-managers,

⁴¹ Women 2000, “*An investigation into the status of women’s Right in Central and south eastern Europe and newly Independent States*”. IHF report, available online : [www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php? sec id=3&d id=1465](http://www.ihf.hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=1465).

⁴² National Plan of Action and Strategies, [Online: Web] Accessed 9 Jan 2012, URL: www.un.org/womenwatch/law/country/national/natplans.htm.

activists of women's movements was created, proposals and comments were introduced to draft laws of the Kyrgyz Republic related to the procedure of filling vacancies, promotion of women-civil servants. There was constant interaction with women's non-governmental organizations to increase their potential and resource capacities.

The engagement of women in governance leads to the development of local and national policies that are more likely to address the socio-economic and political challenges facing women, their families and disadvantaged groups. Countries that encourage and support the equal participation of women, in the workplace and at the ballot box, have likewise higher standards of living and lower levels of corruption. In countries emerging from war, reconciliation and reconstruction efforts take root more quickly when women are involved. Djanaeva has explained that gender equality was quite well addressed by various political and legislation steps as presidential decrees, state national plans, new laws and law reforming gains in the political terms. Women don't need only political declarations; women need adequate mechanisms, equal opportunities, adequate resources and real actions.⁴³

Women have made significant strides in most societies over the last century, but the trend line has not been straight. In recent interviews it has discovered that where women have taken leadership roles, it has been as social reformers and entrepreneurs, not as politicians or government officials. This is unfortunate, because the world needs women's perspectives and particular talents in top positions. Women are much more likely to wield influence from a nongovernmental organization (NGO) than from public office. At NGOs, the story is very different women are consistently over represented at the top levels.

Female political participation would bring significant rewards. Research sponsored by the World Bank has shown that countries with a high number of women in parliament enjoy lower levels of corruption. Another World Bank sponsored study concludes that women are less likely to be involved in corruption and that corruption is less severe where women make up a large share of senior government officials as well as the labor force. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that

⁴³ Djanaeva, Nurgul (2010), Statement at the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Nongovernmental organizations, Civil society organizations and the Private sector, United Nations Headquarters, New York 14-15 June 2010, Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan.

everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

Although women have made large strides professionally over the last century, politics remains a man's world. Significant barriers stand in the way of more women assuming positions of political leadership not least women's own attitudes. If serious efforts are not made to break down these barriers, the world will miss out on the benefits in policymaking that women can bring out. Legislation of Kyrgyzstan related to political rights and powers of women is limited to purely declarative statements, even though issues related to such rights and powers penetrate all fields of public life.

Political rights and powers could allow women of Kyrgyzstan to improve not only their lives, but also lives of their children and the society as a whole. Therefore, relevant agencies need to provide concrete guarantees of women's participation in legal and political life regulated by adequate legislation on state agencies and electoral system. According to the study World Bank, parliamentary legislation on the political rights and powers of women is limited to purely declarative statements, even though issues related to such rights and powers penetrate all fields of public life.⁴⁴ In the Soviet times, men and women were more or less equal in decision making on a household level. After independence, women have become less active in the political life of the country. Women have little time to publicly express themselves, much less to protect their interests because of the demands of household survival.

⁴⁴ World Bank (1999), *Counterpart Consortium Kyrgyzstan, Consultations with the Poor, Participatory Poverty Assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic For the World Development Report 2000-01*, National Synthesis Report The Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, p.10.

CHAPTER-6

CONCLUSIONS

God produced women and men for reciprocated understanding and support during their lives. Unluckily, the ideal is not always coinciding with reality. It is generally known that social roles of women and men are interactive. When people change this concept, then they change the whole idea of harmony between men and women. The integrity of gender issue is making it a great tool in social justice building in any country. Since women are making the half of the population of the world, all issues have feminine part. Equal and full rights, participation of women are essential in the solving of social, economic and political problems.

Women have been always treated unequal in every society and central Asian republics in general and Kyrgyzstan specially is not an exception as status of women in this region is also unequal to men. Mostly status of women is determined by the traditions. Traditionally, home is the work place of women; they are expected from childhood to old age to care of family members. Women are also not enjoying the independency and self dependency due to their dependency on male. Before marriage a girl has to under her parents and brother, after marriage her dependency moves to her husband and later on it goes to her son. Means in the journey of life women never ever feel freedom.

In the patriarchal society duties of women as good daughters, good wives and good others are well defines. Motherhood and wifhood are accepted as key roles for women by implication these roles they need not pursue any specialized discipline of knowledge, art or profession, the good women is sweet, gentle, caring, loving and ever sacrificing.

During the soviet period women were extremely well represented among professionals and involved in policy advocacy and analysis. In 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic has begun to implement different reforms and strategies directing towards a transition to more democratic governance and a market economy after declaring about its sovereignty and independence from the Soviet Union. The key changes in political and economic systems were aimed to decentralize decision-making and resources from the central to local levels. The system of protection of women, children, and families has changed dramatically in the post-Soviet environment and research on gender issues has become more active.

In all five Central Asian Republics there is increasing in inequalities and discrimination among men and women in the education, health, employment, economic and political participation means socio-economic-political status. Kyrgyzstan was the first country among CARs to identify clearly the human orientation of its reforms. In this region women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in decision-making positions. Women should be present at the table when solutions are being discussed to support economic growth rooted in gender equality and social justice.

There are a number of things distinguish daily life in Kyrgyzstan from daily life elsewhere in Central Asia. Women enjoy more freedom than these in neighbouring countries with the possible exception of Kazakhstan. This is in part the result of the Kyrgyz attitudes toward Islam and did not let it interfere with many pre-Islamic customs and traditions. In Kyrgyz societies, the rights of young women may be violated not only by their husbands, but also by their mothers-in-law. Traditionally the role of girls has been secondary in both family and community level. Boys are viewed as the future of the family and girls as temporary members of the family and the community. As a result, the social status of girls and women on a community level is less stable than the level of boys and men. Girls begin to actively participate in housework at the age of six or seven.

Kyrgyz society was a traditionally developed union of family groups, with a patriarchal culture strongly consolidated by a hierarchy of sexes and, as a consequence, by substantial discrimination against women. The Kyrgyz people's nomadic way of life was characterized by the hard and tedious daily labour needed to run households, which was mainly performed by women. Women were not only undermined their physical strength and caused serious illnesses, but also gave them fewer scope to regard as intellectual questions, hampering intellectual development. In addition, women often are poorly informed about their rights and there exist in society stereotypes and traditions that came about under the patriarchal system.

Women's responsibilities of child rising and reproductive work on a household level increased, while possibilities to participate in economic, social, and political development decreased. While men get paid for their work, women do a great part of their work for free. Their responsibilities include making clothes for

family members, working in the garden and vegetable garden, cooking, doing the laundry, washing up, and raising children. This work is very time-consuming and is rarely appreciated by other family members. Responsibilities of women outside a household are undergoing serious changes, while their responsibilities within a household tend to stay the same. A modern woman is busy both at work and at home, they no longer rely on support of men.

The opinion of Kyrgyz men about their wives can be seen by the following Kyrgyz proverbs about women: “A good wife will make something (good) out of nothing and a bad wife will waste all the good things she has”, “Health is the greatest treasure and a wife is the second greatest treasure”, “If a wife is good, her husband is good, and if an advisor is good, his ruler is good”. At the same time, there is a Kyrgyz proverb “Ayaldyn chachy uzun, akyly kyzka” (a woman’s hair is long, but she is short of brain). Many People never thought the need of equal rights of women with men’s in making decisions on political, economic and other issues. The society needs open discussion of traditions and customs with participation of men and women in the way that will allow bettering protecting women’s rights. Women’s roles and responsibilities are also critical to the livelihoods of households and to the well-beingness of future generations.

The status of women in Kyrgyzstan society was further improved by the secular government policies and programmes, International donors, NGOs, INGOs and mainly by the cooperation of both man and women. The Kyrgyz Government provides compulsory education for women, guaranteed their employment, paid for their year-long maternity leaves, free health care in clinics and free medical treatment at sanatoriums for children with chronic diseases, paid benefits for young children and family. The system of social objects, such as kindergartens, baby kitchens, canteens, sports facilities, laundry and dry cleaning facilities.

Kyrgyz Republic is astray to meet targets for gender equality in education, health services, employment and parliament. Although gender equality in primary schools has been met, unemployment is high amongst women as employers prefer males to females as a stable workforce; women’s wages are lower than those for men. Women hold few managerial and parliamentary positions. One of the major and most significant achievements of the KR is a high education level of women due to

provision of equal access to compulsory education irrespective of sex. But there is still an inequality of wages of men and women.

Kyrgyz women participate more actively in business, education and other professions rather than do women's of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, or Tajikistan. They even make up one third of all their country's elected officials, although almost exclusively at the lower levels, at the same time, old traditions that subordinated women to men persist especially in rural areas like the custom of bride kidnapping in which young women are kidnapped by male suitor and held overnight at the home of his parents. Spending a night at a men's house often is disgraceful enough to force a young women to agree for marriage.

There are certain factors have been noticed to hamper the process of women's empowerment and the achievement of gender balance. Some of them are growing poverty and unemployment of women, lack of gender approaches in politics and mass consciousness, undeveloped training system of women leaders, ignoring of gender methodology, monitoring and political analysis assessment systems, insufficient stability of the institutional mechanism, lack of continuity regarding its personnel, etc.

The Main socio-economic and political problems of Kyrgyz women are insufficient access to credit, difficulty in educating their children, limited access to political activities, poor housing, absence of work that would fit their profession, Pressures of housekeeping, lack of money, lack of required health care facilities etc. It is also crucial to ensure that women can participate in decision making in all management, professional and political arenas on equal footing with men. There is a need to increase the number of women in decision making positions as well as in economic activities to advance the economic and political empowerment of women.

There is a big challenge to create equal ground for men and women in each and every sphere viz. social, economic, political, cultural, etc. For that first of all we have to point out the barriers and challenges in the path of equality of men and women then we have to work on them, prioritization is also needed. What and which type of problems are faced by women and then try to solve them.

Mass media of the KR is also play a significant role in conducting certain job on gender education of women. A permanent radio program for woman "Ayalzat"

was created being broadcast in several languages (Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, etc.). TV channels covered participation of women in political processes taking place in the republic. Thus, the program “Ak Bosogo” reflecting the problems of women and family relations, etc. was organized on the Koort channel.

Women’s NGOs are also essential part of the gender equality and women empowerment. Their aims are to support the socially vulnerable groups of women and children, and the establishment of gender balance, especially in the resolution of unemployment and poverty problems. In Kyrgyz Republic where the NGO movement is stronger as compared to the other republics, it has been found that the number of people involved in the activities of NGO is much higher than in the system of public administrations. Currently many of these organizations are completely independent from the government, they do not receive government funding, and feel no pressure by the government in their activities, which makes them different from women’s organizations of the Soviet type.

Women’s participation in NGO has been accepted as an important tool for women empowerment and gender equality. They act as development actors and are driving forces for reaching gender equality. 1999 is a period when more than 150 non-governmental organizations that protect women rights were formed. These are key players in the civic movement in Kyrgyzstan. Now, they are trying to cooperate with different international organizations and movements. More than 80% of NGOs are led by women. Many of these organizations have achieved considerable organizational growth, including the Congress of Women of Kyrgyzstan, Forum of Women’s NGOs, League of Women, Women in Development Bureau, the Committee of Women of Kyrgyzstan, Independent Union of Women, and in rural areas, organizations such as Alga Rural Women, and Kol-Kabysh. These NGOs have many different tasks and purposes, but overall they focus on the improvement of women’s status.

The Republic has a normative legal basis which defines the rights and interests of women and does not run counter to international norms. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that women in Kyrgyzstan today enjoy equal rights with men. Women are today encountering such barriers to equality as increasing poverty and unemployment, a low level of social security, decreased participation in decision-making and the redistribution of property, and a high level of morbidity. Although women are

seriously affected by the transition, at the same time they are a major force in the transformation of society.

The situation currently faced by women is much more difficult than it was in the past. Women feel unprotected in all fields of their lives. Traditionally, the authority of men in Kyrgyz families was never questioned, while now, as men lose their status of family providers, their position in the family are also change. During the transition relations between men and women have become more difficult and many of the old values have lost all their sense. Such changes in priorities are never easy, but there are also some positive features of such transition.

Status of women is not only the issue of women's but both men and women. Achieving gender equality involves redefining the power relationships, confronting gender stereotypes and traditions, overcoming barrier to equality etc. A society where ideas of men's superiority are prevalent can only be altered by strong laws, state authority and mentality of men as well as women. Equally serious changes in women's mentality are needed, too, because it is the women who raise children and make them follow stereotypes. This vicious circle can only be broken if work is done both from men's and women's side.

It cannot be said that women of Kyrgyzstan enjoy equal rights to men's as they are supposed to under the existing legislation. Patriarchal traditions still limit freedom of women and choices that they make in their lives. After the two decades of independence of Kyrgyzstan women have become less active in the political life of the country, as they still cannot use all their political rights and powers, including the right to express themselves and protect their interests.

Although the Convention on Liquidation of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does contain a definition of discrimination against women, national legislation might go further than these minimal standards and requirements set forth by the international documents. It appears appropriate to include the notion of discrimination into legislation of Kyrgyzstan, make it broader and more concrete. Women are constantly facing both open and hidden discrimination. The issue of liability of the parties guilty in such discrimination, especially the regular hidden discrimination, needs further clarification.

International Conference on “Kyrgyzstani Women at the Edge of Centuries” in April 2001 indicated that there have been a number of significant positive changes in such areas as the constitutional development mechanism on women’s empowerment, improvement of the national legislature in terms of women’s rights, in the sphere of education, health care, elimination of all forms of violence toward women, support of girls and the development of the economic potential of women, including rural women.

Many International, national, regional organizations, United Nations Commission, Central Asian Republics as well as Kyrgyz Government are considering to solve the problem of Gender discrimination in Kyrgyzstan. The voice of women has been listened by the governments. To institutionalise support to Kyrgyz women, a number of important measures have been taken: the State Commission on the Issues of Family, Women, and Youth was created, the network of non-governmental organizations is being strengthened, and mechanism of review of legislation from the gender viewpoint is in place.

The Kyrgyz Republic has a legal environment that defines the rights and interests of women in fulfilment with international norms. Nevertheless, the rights of Kyrgyz women still cannot be viewed as equal to the rights of men. Women’s attempts to achieve true equality are hindered by growing unemployment and poverty, the low level of social protection, the decrease of participation of women in decision making and property distribution and the high level of diseases. Many women are poorly informed about their rights and stereotypes and traditions formed by the patriarchal way of living are still strong in the society. The legal environment still needs improvement aimed at broadening the scope of legal institutions and increasing the efficiency of court decision enforcement.

Although achieving gender equality is a difficult task, but one and foremost it must be addressed at all level in all sectors. The lack of understanding of what gender equality really means is probably the greatest obstruction. Sometimes inequality lies in the equality meaning equal treatment of persons in unequal situations will simply perpetuate inequalities. By and large, it is believed that equality means treating people in the same way and thus applying existing policies and practices in the same way which itself is enough for gender inequality.

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