KYRGYZ COUNTRY CASE STUDY

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2011

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Introduction
Following the guidelines laid out in the TOR received from the World Bank, the Kyrgyz case study focuses on the impact of the transition process since the early 1990s, at institutional and societal level.

It examines four topics: state provision of services (eg education, health); changes in labor markets and new opportunities for women; and changes in family formation and dissolution; and the role of NGOs and the state in these areas.

At the outset, the team identified the following key tasks:
1. Map the actors and structures that provide public services in the relevant spheres
2. Analyse the zones of the greatest gender gap and tension
3. Identify the different actors in the labor market, key gender gaps and opportunities for women
4. Define the main changes in women’s attitudes and models of behavior in the economic sphere
5. Study the dynamics of legislation in the sphere of marital and family relations
6. Study changes in perceptions and attitudes to marriage, family, fertility, domestic violence, inheritance, etc.
7. Identify the role of women in the processes of formation and dissolution of family relationships, family planning and inheritance
8. Show the development of state and NGOs collaboration on protecting rights

Our preliminary findings are that:
- There is a clear discrepancy between the official policies and strategies on provision of public services in education and healthcare, on the one hand, and actual practice, on the other.
- The population is with difficulty growing out of dependence on paternalistic structures, both in the family and wider society
- Modern market institutions and prevailing socio-cultural attitudes do not support active involvement of women in economic activity;
- Women’s economic behavior and strategies are complicated by the lack of opportunities for advance and the requirement to carry out their traditional family roles.
- The main cause of gender inequality in the labor market is the exclusion of women from property and strategic means of production (as a result of the privatization of state assets).
- The decreasing role of the state in regulating the private and personal sphere is reflected, on the one hand, by a liberalization of norms, and on the other, the strengthening of negative patriarchal phenomena like bride kidnapping, forced marriages and births, and polygyny
- These changes in attitudes and behavioral norms can be described as patriarchalization of relations, accompanied by actual loss in women’s status and opportunities
- NOGs have participated actively in development processes (programs and projects), but they have had less influence on government policies

The methods used in the case study included a comparative analysis of legal and policy documents, reports on social and demographic development, collection of statistical data from the 80’s to the present time, and a short analysis of public expenditure in the social sector. The team encountered several problems in compiling the report, among them a lack of gender statistics, incompatibility between different statistics. One example is the almost complete absence of information about private property in Kyrgyzstan. Another is the pension system. The recent move from a government run pay-as-
you-go system to a notional defined contributions system made comparative analysis of pension data during the period studied impossible without more detailed research. A third area where little information is available is that of changes in the family and social norms in general.

The report has four main sections. Section 1 describes the state provision of services and legal and policy changes in this area. The focus is on an analysis of the education and health system, since (as noted above) it was difficult to fully analyze pension and social security reforms and outcomes. Two case studies are included. The first features the reform of school education and describes the role of NGOs in the implementation of the new voucher-based teacher training system. The second is devoted to safe motherhood. Section 2 examines labor markets and opportunities for women, including women entrepreneurs. Section 3 looks at changes in social norms and gender roles and how these have affected outcomes: for example, changes in family formation and dissolution. It includes a case study on what it means to become a widow in Kyrgyzstan. Section 4 is devoted the role of NGOs in protecting rights and outcomes. This section focuses on women’s NGOs.

**Summary. Main changes in gender outcomes**

**Collapse of the state in the provision of services (education, health, pensions, social transfers).**
Before the market reforms in the Kyrgyz Republic the government not only regulated economic life in detail, but also redistributed approximately 50% of GDP through the budget. This allowed it to provide free collective goods (education, healthcare) and a high level of social protection. During the transition to a market, the share of government revenue in GDP began to decline.

There is every reason to believe that the co-occurrence of economic liberalization and the crisis in education, healthcare, and social protection is not accidental. The results of the chosen strategy have included impoverishment of a large part of the population, a sharp rise in social inequality, and increased insecurity due to the collapse of the welfare system and the reduction in quality and quantity of medical services.

In studies investigating the post-Soviet experience of transition, to which the Kyrgyz Republic belongs, there is clear evidence of degradation of public services in education, healthcare, pensions and social benefits. The following evidence of this degradation can be observed:
1. Extension of the range of recipients of social benefits and payments, along with a decrease in the volume of GDP. The number of welfare recipients in the country today has been calculated as 2,584,860.1
2. Marginalization of social groups: eg, women who have dropped out of the formal labour market; people with disabilities from childhood; migrants.
3. Expansion in the list of paid services in the sphere of education and healthcare, leading to a reduction in the number of people with access to services, arising from widespread poverty.

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1 Currently, every fourth resident of the Kyrgyz Republic is entitled by law to certain benefits. There are up to 42 types of social benefits, and 30 categories of persons have the right to use them.
2 This includes all persons below working-age, recipients of the unified monthly allowance or other social benefits. 370,808 people receive the unified monthly allowance, which is 12.2% of working-age population. 195,833 of them are women.
4. Crisis or stagnation affecting institutions providing services. Most of the funds allocated to medical and educational institutions go on paying the staff, with almost no funds available to purchase equipment and supplies, or carry out repairs. The number of teachers in schools today is less than 70% of requirement. The situation is especially critical in the regions, where more than 1/3 of working teachers and doctors are of pre-retirement or retirement age.

5. Decrease of the role and influence of the government in providing services because of the mass privatization of social infrastructure – educational and health facilities – in the 90’s.

6. Increase in types of deprivation among the poor and disadvantaged: eg, an increase in the number of children, predominantly boys, not covered by compulsory primary education; expanding practices of labour at home - outside healthcare facilities, etc., are marked

7. The working-age population now accounts for only 59.5% of the total adult population, and the majority are not employed in the formal economic sector. The state now refuses to take overall control over the system of social protection or to guarantee employment. Financing for the healthcare system has decreased dramatically, with many hospitals and clinics transferring to paid services.

Changes in the labor markets and opportunities for women (including women entrepreneurs).

During the period 1991-2007, economic activity among women of working age decreased from 81.6% to 42.3%\(^3\), and in a number of oblasts even more (in Naryn oblast it went down to 38.9%). According to data provided by gender studies of labor market and entrepreneurship development, women are especially active in the informal labor market, service and trade segments.

Thus, a sample survey of households in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2008 showed that the proportion of women with two or more paid spheres of work, excluding housework, is much higher than among men\(^4\). In this regard, we can assume that there is a significant difference in employment strategies between women and men. The traditional terminology of “poverty” and “unemployment” does not adequately reflect gender differences in the position of women in the labor market.

State contributions to the development of the labor market in the Kyrgyz Republic have been considerably reduced: state-owned enterprises have been closed or sold off, and the proportion of people working in the government sector is decreasing dramatically and is now limited to the public services. Expansion of the labor market in the Kyrgyz Republic can be seen in the private sector and business. However, despite the existence of labor laws, the business sector remains “impenetrable” for legal norms and regulations. In fact, the state itself can hardly be considered an exemplary employer. This kind of environment is not “employee-friendly”, and in particular for women.

Changes in family formation and dissolution (marriage, divorce, fertility, domestic violence and inheritance).

The sphere of family and marital relations traditionally reflects the influence of not just legal but other social norms: religion, norms around sexuality and fertility, value systems regarding marriage. The general trend is not unchanged – unmarried status is not common among adults. Thus, in 1990, only


0.1% of men and 0.2% of women over the age of 50 had never been married\textsuperscript{5}. The percentage of married people went down sharply in the late 1990’s, and then rose again during the next 10 years – so that by 2009 it had reached a level close to the late 1980’s. The number of registered marriages has declined over the past 20 years (see table 1, also table 10 in attachment). Most likely, this is because some new marriages were unregistered. It is difficult to obtain precise data on unregistered marriages; however, the number of children born in relationships of this kind is an indirect indicator of the growth of unregistered marriages (see section on the family).

Table 1: Overall coefficient for marriages and divorces in Kyrgyzstan (per 1000 persons)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriages</td>
<td>10,5</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>5,4</td>
<td>7,2</td>
<td>8,4</td>
<td>8,4</td>
<td>8,3</td>
<td>8,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorces</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>1,4</td>
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</table>

Since the late 80’s, legislation has been steadily moving in the direction of reducing the mandatory requirements of the state and widening citizens’ opportunities to determine the terms of reciprocal rights and responsibilities in marriage and the family; for example, signing prenuptial or alimony agreements. The Family Code has recognized the gender equality principle in family relations.

An increasing number of persons now enter marriage without registering with the official agencies\textsuperscript{6}. What is more, some women in legally registered marriages find that they are still not protected against patriarchal, male-dominated decisions on property issues, education of their children, etc. The strengthening of traditional culture has led to a proliferation of practices such as bride kidnapping\textsuperscript{7}, polygamy, domestic violence, and forced child-bearing.

\textsuperscript{5} Kyrgyzstan: general country assessment. Bishkek, 2001
Section 1. State provision of services in education and health

The extent, level and quality of state services particularly in the social sector are determined by the state of the economy. With disintegration of the USSR and the transition from planned socialist economy to a market economy, there was a huge loss in production – estimated at 40-60% and lasting about ten years. At the beginning of economic transformation there were major disputes about the pace of reforms between advocates of shock therapy and gradualists supporting slower transformation. The adherents of shock therapy claimed that it would be best to make the transition to a new system “in one jump”, and that this would help avoid a troubled period when previous rules no longer obtained and new ones had not yet started working. The gradualists objected to destruction of existing institutions and cancellation of previous rules of economic regulation, prior to development of new institutions and new rules, warning that an institutional vacuum could bring about a catastrophic setback in production. Kyrgyzstan chose (or was forced to choose) shock therapy whereas neighboring countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan chose more gradual reforms.

The general experience of countries with transitional economics allows one to make at least one general conclusion with regard to the process of reform: if reforms require structural adjustment (rereallocation of recourses), then their tempo must be such that the scale of restructuring should not exceed the investment potential of the economy. This is the basic reason for gradual not immediate liquidation of tariff and non-tariff barriers, subsidies and other forms of state support to certain sectors of economy.

The dynamics of state expenditure within the transition period appears to be the most important factor in successful transformation, rather than the speed of the reforms. Axing state expenditure is a recipe for institutional collapse and rapid drops in production, leading in turn to the intensification of social inequality and, as seen in Kyrgyzstan today, a narrow focus on macro-economic indicators.

Kyrgyzstan, like other countries with transitional economics, inherited from the USSR ample guarantees for free of charge medical aid, education and social welfare. Cuts in state financing in the transition period were accompanied, on the one hand, by legalization of forms of payment for services by the population such as introduction of co-payments for medical aid (fixed payments for each visit to a doctor or overnight stay in a hospital etc.), and permission given to educational institutions to charge fees from students, etc. On the other hand, the state system continued the practice (seen in the socialist epoch) of accepting informal payments for services by the population, indeed this practice grew more widespread.

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8 In particular, they stated that Chinese strategy of "growing out of socialism" (via the rapid growth of non-state sector companies created de novo) is preferable to the strategy of wide-ranging privatization, as it secures better rights to property .
Education

Prior to independence and transition to the market economy, education in Kyrgyzstan was free of charge and provided by state institutions. Provision at all levels up to secondary (full) general education was compulsory.

As part of market reforms, the country adopted the policy of requiring the population to participate in the financing of educational services. Firstly, this was forced by shortage of government budgets for education. Secondly, the policy was dictated by new ideological conceptions that bringing in the population alongside the state in the funding of educational services would help bring about more effective allocation of limited budget resources\(^\text{10}\).

A number of recent research studies offer recommendations on how to bring the educational system in Kyrgyzstan into compliance with actual financing. For example, they suggest that state guarantees should only cover the rights of citizens to basic secondary education; or that state financing of full secondary, professional and high education should only be provided for talented children from poor families, by means different grants\(^\text{11}\).

A comparative analysis of constitutional guarantees and Kyrgyzstan legislation in the educational sector demonstrates a considerable change in the obligations accepted by the state in respect of the population. Thus Article 43 of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic as of 20 April 1978 established the right to free education at all levels, including compulsory secondary education, provision of state scholarships (stipendia) and benefits to pupils and students, and free school textbooks. According to the sovereign Kyrgyzstan Constitution of 5 May 1993, amended in 2007, free, compulsory education is now limited to 9 classes (instead of 10), to be provided through state and municipal educational institutions\(^\text{12}\).

Meanwhile, it is important to maintain the level of compulsory education because, as evidenced by successive reports on the quality of school education, many school-leavers lack skills and confidence in understanding, analysing and communicating information as required in modern society\(^\text{13}\).

The main reason for the deterioration in the quality of school education is the acute shortage of funding and hence the outflow of qualified teachers from the country or the profession reduced material and technical supply to schools, in particular, a lack of necessary textbooks and teaching aids. The content of educational programs is largely out-dated and requires revision.

\(^{10}\) Shishkin S.V., Zaborovskaya A.S. Forms of participation of population in payment for social services in countries with transition economy. M., 2004.

\(^{11}\) See Kyrgyzstan at a new stage of development. UNDP, 2005

\(^{12}\) In the Constitution of 27 June 2010, not only basic 9-class education is described as free, but also secondary general education in state educational institutions.

\(^{13}\) For example, according to PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) studies, students in Kyrgyzstan are ranked last according to a number of indicators: can do exercises in the field of natural science literacy of 13.6%, reading literacy 11.7%, mathematical literacy -11.8%
Educational reform began in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2002\textsuperscript{14} and was aimed at creating a self-developing, efficient system of education, the main lines of which are focused on promoting early childhood education, developing a network of preschool institutions (see data in attachment – table 2), and transition to 12-year secondary school education. One must note the donor contribution to the implementation of educational policies. Thus, “The Second Education Project” is being implemented with financial assistance from the ADB. The project consists of three components: modernization of curriculum and assessment of the quality of teaching; strengthening and supporting the teaching profession; rehabilitation of priority schools in rural areas. Another project – “Rural Education,” funded by the World Bank, has five components: improving the reward scheme for teachers, school subgrants to improve teaching; textbooks, teaching materials; evaluation of students; budgeting and strategic planning in education (see data in attachment table 3).

Statistics refer to a 96% attendance index – meaning almost complete coverage of all children aged 7 to 15 in terms of schooling. At the same time, there are regional imbalances in coverage of children by basic education (in the Osh region it is only 88%).

Age-based statistics show that after about 9% of children leave the education system after primary school, and almost 29% - after receiving basic education. The reasons why parents take their children out of school can be found in their severe material difficulties, sometimes the desire to educate their children in a particular profession from an early age, the reluctance of children to learn, etc. Perhaps it also signals a change in social reference points for a section of society (see data in attachment – table 4).

Gender imbalances are almost completely absent up to 9\textsuperscript{th} grade, but emerge at older ages and reach 8.6%. That is, among children completing secondary education, girls significantly outnumber boys\textsuperscript{15}.

It should be noted that international norms and principles have had a big effect on national legislation with regard to the prohibition of discrimination on various grounds including sexual relating to the right to education.\textsuperscript{16}

The system of higher education, in compliance with the Kyrgyzstan law on education, includes guarantees to preserve budget supported places in state educational institutions\textsuperscript{17}. It should be mentioned that enrollment in professional educational institutions has by no means decreased. The development of non-state educational institutions was given a positive impulse by the new demand for specialties connected with law, international relations, economy, management, foreign languages - and also the limited amount of places in these subjects in state high schools, which up until the 1990s were monopolists in the higher and professional education sector.

\textsuperscript{14} The concept of education development up until 2010 was approved by the Government of Kyrgyzstan on April 29, 2002 N 259
\textsuperscript{15} Second report on progress in achieving MDGs. Bishkek. 2008
\textsuperscript{16} Art.3 of Law on Education dated 30 April 2003 N 92
\textsuperscript{17} Art.26 of Law on Education of 30 April 2003 states that enrolment plan for state funded students in high schools must be kept at the level of the enrolment plan in 2000.
Table 2. Number of students of secondary professional, high and post graduate education for 1 thousand people (Source: State Statistic Committee of RF, 2003).

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<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
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Annually about 33-37 thousand secondary school graduates participate in republic-wide testing\(^\text{18}\). The republican budget finances about 5 thousand places in state higher education institutions for those who pass the testing, meeting approximately 13% of the demand at this level. It is important to note that only government institutions recognize the certificates and some of them require a very high score, so that in practice many students are forced to pay fees in order to enter college. Thus, a large part of the financial burden for higher education rests on students and their families\(^\text{19}\).

This system of student admission, in practice, allows each university to conduct their own entrance tests, change the rules of admission, and independently determine tuition fees. Thus, the norm of differentiation of opportunities of different social groups in receiving professional education is reproduced. The unequal opportunities of school-leavers are determined both by differences in the technical and educational potential of the central/urban and regional/rural schools, as well as by inequalities in income and capital (including social capital) among households and families.

Legislation on education allows admission of students on a contractual (fee-paying) basis by state educational institutions of specialized secondary and higher education above the established target. However, the total number of students in an educational institution must not exceed the quota established in its license for educational activity.

Table 3: The proportion of women among students in higher professional educational institutions (in%)\(^\text{20}\)

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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>55.7</td>
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The proportion of girls enrolled in certain specialities is traditionally low: in agriculture – 24.6%, in architecture and construction - 24%, in transport – 6.8%. At the same time, for specialties associated with industrial and agricultural production, creation and maintenance of infrastructure the Ministry of Education and Science allocates a significant number of budget places.

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\(^\text{18}\) After republic-wide testing participants receive a certificate showing their score on a range from 0 to 220, which allows them to enter an appropriate higher education institution in line with their rating, without an entrance examination.

\(^\text{19}\) Meanwhile, in the majority of European countries the State participates in the financing of private educational institutions.

In recent years, privatization/corporatization of public educational institutions is being increasingly and persistently discussed in society.21

**Case study 1. Voucher-based teacher-training systems: is competition a guarantee of service quality?**

The pilot project to introduce a voucher-based training system is almost the only initiative in recent years aimed at expanding the access of teachers to professional training. The new system was based on teachers getting a voucher entitling them every four years to take free courses of professional training, as well as the right to choose a necessary educational course. Until now, the State Academy of Education had a monopoly on the provision of such services at the national level and training institutions at the regional (oblast) level. The voucher-based system was intended to enhance the educational services market, offering professional development for teachers of secondary schools, improving the quality of these services and the emergence of new players in this field, including representatives of NGOs and the private sector, as well as generating competition among different providers.

The innovative practice of using a voucher was supposed to be tested within this project, and to be formalized at the institutional level later on. The voucher scheme of teacher training was supported by Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan and PEAKS (Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening, funded by USAID) 22. This was one of the largest projects on introduction of market mechanisms in school management. An NGO “Foundation for Education Initiatives” (Bishkek) was selected as an implementing agency, and 14 local NGOs offered training services.

During the course of the project, approximately 2,500 out of 7,500 teaching staff in the region, i.e., more than 30%, undertook professional development. Some 90% of teachers attending training were women. Courses for teachers were based on interactive methods, which emerged as one of the strongest aspects of the programme. Participation in training was free: all costs connect with the organization of courses were covered by project funds, while the travel costs of participants were covered by the state.

The project was implemented jointly with regional (oblast) departments of education. The original agreement stipulated that the department would not have to contribute any funds during 2005 (the first year was defined as a preparatory phase), while in 2006 its contribution would be 40%, and in 2007 – 100%.

Despite these agreements and the success of the first steps of the project, NGO staff providing training faced resistance from the department and the regional professional development institute. According to representatives of the project, the opposition of the local authorities could be explained by the fact that

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21 The steep decline in the number of preschool and special educational institutions from the start of the 1990s can also be seen as an indirect indicator of the negative influence of privatization on the education system. See data in attachment – table2-3

22 A Voucher System for Teacher Training in Kyrgyzstan. A. Ivanov, V. Deichman in How NGOs React: Globalization and Education Reform in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia, Kumarian Press USA 2008
the management of both agencies (the department of education and regional professional development institute) as a result of reorganization had ended up under the control of the regional education department. The latter “naturally” resented losing their monopoly on provision of services. However, resistance was encountered not only from part of the state, but also public organizations such as the regional teachers' union which objected to the voucher scheme, calling it “omnivorous” and accusing the state in caving into international organizations, rubber-stamping everything that foreigners showed them.

The revolutionary events of March 2005 and subsequent political developments led to a change in leadership in the governance structures of the education system at all levels. As a result, at the half way point it became apparent that no senior figures in the ministry were familiar with the project any more. The NGO had to begin anew the process of negotiations, agreements and signing contracts.

**Healthcare**

Kyrgyzstan inherited a healthcare system focused on the mass use of relatively simple and inexpensive medical technologies. The development of medicine and pharmacy has dramatically expanded the capacities of treatment of many diseases and thus led to the growth of needs of the population in obtaining better quality healthcare services. But the state is no longer able to meet all these needs or to provide free medical care of all types to all citizens. Budget financing of healthcare and mandatory health insurance, giving citizens the right to a wide range of free medical, preventive and rehabilitation services, are facing the challenge of how to balance the increasing cost of these guarantees and the limited funding available.

Kyrgyzstan, like other former Soviet states, faces a major dilemma: either increase the tax burden and thus generate new funds for healthcare, or limit guarantees and boost the effectiveness of available resources. Reduction in accessibility of quality medical care for the general population, the growth of the volume of paid medical services and expansion of informal payments – all these are caused by the state’s inability to provide free medical care to all. The poor suffer more than other social groups, since inequality of access to quality medical care is high. At the same time, the available funds are spent inefficiently; often they are used to maintain excess hospital beds in inpatient medical institutions, to the detriment of the necessary development of prevention and outpatient care.

**Table 4: Dynamics of healthcare expenditures growth, % of GDP**

|---------|------|------|------|

25 Shishkin V. S., Zaborovskaya A.S. Forms of participation of population in payment for social services in countries with transition economy. M., 2004
In the republican budget of Kyrgyzstan for 2011, 32 billion 158 million KGS, representing 40.4% of the national budget, or 13.5% of GDP, were provided for the entire social sector (healthcare, education, social services - pensions and allowances).

Changes affecting in varying degrees the amount and quality of medical care in the Kyrgyz Republic, were conducted through the implementation of the National healthcare reform program “Manas Taalimi” for 2006-2010\(^{26}\), the National Strategy for protection of reproductive health of the population by 2015\(^{27}\), the "State Programme on prevention of HIV/AIDS epidemic and its socio-economic consequences in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2006-2010\(^{28}\), and a number of other programs.

The main features of the new healthcare model of the Kyrgyzstan are its multi-structural nature, the formation of an infrastructure corresponding to the health needs of the population and its financial resources, decentralization of management, increasing the managerial and financial autonomy of healthcare organizations with division of the healthcare sector to "suppliers" and "buyer of medical services,” priority development of primary healthcare, family medicine, free choice of a family physician, providing accessibility of the population to medical services within the framework of government guarantees Program, introduction of methods of results-oriented financing, and payment for medical workers depending on the quality of performed work.

Persons with special needs (such as the elderly, pregnant women, people with disabilities, children, etc.) are provided with free or partially funded medical services or prescriptions. Currently, there are 73 groups in this category, which is a huge coverage in comparison with 1999 when only two groups were included.

The implementation of healthcare reform was planned over a period of ten years in three phases: short-term (1996-1997), medium-term (1998-2000) and long-term (2001-2006). The main task of the short-term phase was a rationalization of healthcare departments, strengthening primary healthcare, development of new methods of financing. The mid-term plan focused on an increase of healthcare resources, their equitable distribution and efficient use. In the long-term period, strategies on improvement of efficiency and quality of medical care through structural changes that improve patient satisfaction were planned.\(^{29}\)

\(^{26}\) Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic as of February 16, 2006. N100

\(^{27}\) Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic of July 15, 2006. N387


\(^{29}\) As a result of the healthcare reforms, the number of both hospital beds and medical institutions in Kyrgyzstan has declined dramatically. See date in attachment – table 5
The state guarantees the following types of healthcare: primary medical care, general healthcare, specialized medical care for outpatients, inpatient medical care, dentistry, provision of medicines and immunization.

The national healthcare system is founded on the priority of primary healthcare and oriented on the increasing role of public healthcare, so as to meet the criteria and objectives proclaimed by the WHO, with a qualitatively new approach to financing the sector through the per capita system.

These structural changes took place simultaneously with the country’s continuing economic difficulties, leading to a decrease in the share of state financing of healthcare in the GDP structure from 3.7% in 1995, down to 2.5% in 2009, as well as reduction of the share of financing in the structure of public expenditure from 13.5% in 1996 to 8.7% in 2009.

One key healthcare issue that has a distinct gender dimension is the level of maternal and infant mortality. In the future, more reliable information will be provided in this area, as a result of measures aimed at improving the registration of maternal mortality: for example, the introduction of a confidential audit of mothers, and a moratorium on the punishment of doctors for poor results in maternal mortality. The official maternal mortality rate in 2008 was 55.0 cases per 100,000 live births according to the NSC and 62.3 cases per 100,000 live births according to the Republican Medical Informational Centre of the Ministry of Healthcare. According to other studies, the maternal mortality rate is 104 cases per 100,000 live births30.

Table 5: Maternal mortality ratio / per 100,000 births

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<th>Year</th>
<th>KYRGYZSTAN</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Village</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure of maternal mortality is dominated by so-called preventable factors: gestosis (23%), and obstetric haemorrhage (20%). They reflect problems such as lack of access of pregnant women to medical services, low-skilled primary health workers in prenatal care, late recognition of complications, lack of obstetricians for safe management of labour, and inadequate provision of intensive care31. Access to maternity services is limited due to increases in the informal payments required for childbirth. According to the Program of state guarantees32, pregnant women and maternity patients were assigned

31 Interim assessment of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2007-2010, AST, OSCE / ODIHR, 2009
to the privileged category and made exempt from co-payments for hospital stay arising from pregnancy complications and basic pregnancy services at the primary level. However, these measures did not yield the desired results. The growth of internal migration resulted in the appearance of a category of women who are not registered at their place of residence, and as a result are not registered with a doctor. According to the law "On Mandatory Social Guarantees,” pregnant women should register with a doctor regardless of residence registration; however, very few women are aware of this requirement. There is an acute shortage of skilled professionals such as neonatology physicians, obstetrician-gynaecologists in several areas; for example, in the Batken region there are only two obstetrician-gynaecologists left in public health service.

Case study 2. Defending the rights to safe motherhood: will innovations by NGOs become the required standard?

Maternal mortality rates in Kyrgyzstan have stayed critical throughout the transition period. The second national report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals states that if a certain level of sensitivity has formed in regard to infant mortality, manifested in a change of criteria, formulation of policies, which led to a certain degree of stabilization of performance and increase in their credibility, in respect of maternal mortality it is still to be done33.

However the state programs (described above) did not include any specific policies or measures to address the problem, or they regarded the problem primarily as medical, without taking into account the socio-cultural environment, inequality and discrimination.

In contrast to the state, NGOs have more room to experiment with innovative approaches. Thus, during 2006-2010, the “Alliance for Reproductive Health” (ARP) network implemented a pilot project entitled “Services for People: Safe Motherhood.” The main objective of the project was to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in rural areas, contributing to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality. Priorities of the project were to provide access to quality services for vulnerable women in rural areas by uniting medical institutions and local communities under a single motto: if people cannot get quality medical services, we will provide them with these services34. The project covered different levels of work - individual, community, professional - and several components: information and training, expanding and improving the quality of services. A network of Schools for Parents was formed in the pilot areas, which provided training courses on preparation for childbirth for pregnant women and their partners. Topics included the client’s right to information, confidentiality, respect, safety and the right to give birth in the presence of a partner. Parallel with this, trainings for service providers were organised in maternity hospitals in the pilot areas. They included a clinical workshop where health staff could get modern, evidence-based knowledge and skills concerning pregnancy and childbirth, care for newborn babies and postnatal women. A special feature of the training program was that the issues around effective communication and the management of changes in obstetric care were also included.

33 Second report on progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Kyrgyz Republic. UNDP, 2009 http://www.undp.kg/resources/e-library
A comparison of the work of NGOs and the state shows that the public appreciates the services of the former as valuing interpersonal provider-client relationships. State medical facilities, by contrast, are often seen as cold, and impersonal places, where individuals fail to get the necessary attention and care.\footnote{State-NGO Relations in Health Care in Central Asia E. Johnson Central Asia survey April 2008}

In 2009, the Alliance of Women's Legislative Initiatives, which includes the RHA, linked up with UNDP, UNIFEM and UNFPA to conduct a joint informational charity campaign to promote the idea of safe motherhood. The aim of the campaign was to draw public attention to the issue of maternal mortality as a problem reflecting not just medical issues but also social inequality. The campaign raised money to support the National Maternal and Child Heath Centre, which treats pregnant women with the most severe health problems.

These examples show the value of partnerships between parents, professionals, communities and local authorities. At the same time, their future remains unclear. As researchers point out, Kyrgyzstan has a hybrid health and social welfare strategy, retaining a high degree of state control while also allowing for the development of NGOs that now compete with government in health care and social protection services. As a result a poor government facing political competition continues to dominate the health sector, while NGOs with the support of foreign donors oppose the government policies, lobby on behalf of constituents, and provide health and social services that compete with state medical institutions.\footnote{ibid}

Section 2. Changes in the labor markets and opportunities for women (including women entrepreneurs)

Main trends

Radical economic reforms and social transformation, plus the rejection of strict state regulation of employment and wages have created a new kind of labor market in the Kyrgyzstan. The most appropriate term to describe the essence of economic reforms in Kyrgyzstan is “redistribution.” “The redistributive processes of the 90s are best characterized by the following employment trends: from public to private and joint-stock enterprises, from large-scale to medium-scale and small units, from industrial sectors to the service sector, from wage employment to self-employment and entrepreneurship, from formal economic sectors to informal\footnote{Z. Hotkina, Novyi vek – novye problem. Genderne aspekty truda i zanyatosti v Rossii. [New century – new problems. Gender aspects of labor and employment in Russia]. Materials of the Summer School “Society and gender,” Ryazan, 2003}.”

The current demographic situation in the country has contributed to the growth of the labor force, which increased by 7.7% over the past 3 years (2006-2010) and amounted to 3.8 million people.\footnote{Calculated as the sum of the economically active and inactive population, based on the NSC data} The largest share in total number of economically inactive population is made up of students and retirees.
(70%), while the remaining 30% are mainly people maintaining a household. Women made up more than half of all economically inactive groups, and two-thirds of the total economically inactive population (about 850 thousand out of 1.3 million people). First of all, the significant gap is due to a large number of housewives (about 285 thousand people) and female retirees (more than 260 thousand people). For this reason, the employment rate of men is much higher than that of women, by more than 22 percentage points (71% and 48.2% respectively on average in 2007-2009)\textsuperscript{19}. Economically active women accounted for only 42% of the total economically active population.

Such a forestalling of the growth rates of the economically inactive population over the economically active suggests that despite growth and economic expansion, the pressure on the labor market is growing and the number of jobs created “is not keeping up” with the increase in labor supply. And if one considers that the tension in the labor market is partly alleviated by labor migration, it becomes clear that how to boost employment and decrease unemployment remains a big problem.

The vast majority of new jobs (75-85\%\textsuperscript{40}) in recent years were created in the informal sector of the economy (Figure 1), which indicates the limited ability of the state to create acceptable conditions and conduct an effective employment policy. Thus, the high level of mandatory deductions for businesses\textsuperscript{41} and low incomes of the population, aggravated by lack of trust in the state social security and pension system, has led to the expansion of the “gray” economy and employment in the informal sector.

\textsuperscript{19} NSC digest “Zhenshiny i muzhchiny Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki” [Men and women of the Kyrgyz Republic], 2009

\textsuperscript{40} According to the data of the NSC official website: \url{www.stat.kg}

\textsuperscript{41} The tax burden, including contributions to the Social Fund, comes to about 40\% on top of net wages.
Despite the economy’s apparent labor surplus, the market is not able to fully and accurately respond to fluctuations in the demand for labor, or to respond in timely way to technological changes. The “lag” in labor supply relative to the structure of demand is due to deficiencies in the vocational training system and low labor mobility. This is evidenced by NSC data on the distribution of unemployed according to education. Thus, in 2008, 19.3% of the unemployed had higher or incomplete higher education, and 21.3% - university or vocational education. That is, more than 40% of the unemployed had an education or profession that turned out to be unwanted (deficiencies of the education system) and could not find work in other professional markets (low mobility). Moreover, the percentage of unemployed women with education or profession is noticeably higher than that of men (44.8% and 36.6% respectively). The gap between male and female unemployment is growing each year: if in 2007 the advantage held by men over women was 1.4 percentage points, in 2009 it rose to 2.4 percentage points (see more data in attachment tables 6,7,8).

The main features of the labor market and different groups of people within it are as follows:

- Weakening of role of the state, the decline of public trust in it, widespread flowering of the shadow economy, orientations on survival rather than development are observed. Official statistics estimate the share of illegal sector in GDP at 13%, while some experts estimate it at 26-30%, and others even claim that the GDP of the “illegal” sector exceeds the GDP of the formal sector. According to

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42 According to the data of the official NSC website: www.stat.kg
43 NSC digest “Zhenshiny i muzhchiny Kyrgyzskoi Respublikii” [Men and women of the Kyrgyz Republic], 2009
44 Adapted from: K. Isakov, Optimizatsia politiki zanyatosti i regulirovaniye rynka truda [Optimization of the employment policy and labor market regulation]. Vestnik Kyrgyzstan SU, #1, 2003
the study “Analysis of the shadow economy in the Kyrgyz Republic”, the size of the country’s economic “shadow” is as much as 53%.

- Recent changes in tax laws, despite their apparent gender neutrality, have the potential to heighten gender inequality in the labor market. Increases in the tax load in traditionally female fields of business, plus the elimination of many types of entrepreneurial activity from the list of those entitled to work by patent (ie self employment), has significantly worsened the situation in the market of business initiatives for women\(^{45}\).

- The polarization of society in terms of income (which does not always correspond to people’s actual contribution to the GDP) is continuing. Thus, during the decade from 1991 to 2000, the value of cash income of the 20% highest-income groups over the 20% lowest income group increased from 3 to 7 times\(^{46}\).

- A significant gap has opened up between the incomes earned by groups with a similar vocational qualification level, for example, the gap between those living in I towns and villages. The difference in wages in industries with the highest and lowest average monthly wage in 2000 was 8.2 times vs. 3.2 times in 1991.

- In general, the minimum wage, pensions, unemployment benefits and welfare payments do not meet the subsistence minimum. This has caused a massive flow by groups like retired people, students and children into paid work, and additional competition for certain jobs. On the one hand, the market reacts to this pressure by lowering wage levels (which is evidenced by mass poverty of physically healthy and educated people in jobs), on the other hand, by developing non-standard\(^{47}\) forms of employment.

- In recent years, many potential employees in the domestic labor market have been forced to resort to labor migration. Despite the many costs and disadvantages of the status of a migrant worker (often illegal), for migrant families and the country’s economy as a whole the contribution of migration is very important. Labor migration provides important sources of incomes for modern rural families: in 2002-2005, the volume of remittances sent home by Kyrgyz workers employed abroad has increased more than ten-fold – from 30 million USD (in 2002 this was equal to 2% of GDP) up to 331 million USD (amounting to 14% of GDP in 2005 and, according to expert estimates, about 25% of the GDP in Kyrgyzstan). It is noteworthy that the increase in money orders remitted to the Republic over the last few years greatly exceeds the annual growth in foreign direct investment and official international development assistance for the Kyrgyz Republic.

\(^{45}\) A study on the impact of the new Tax Code (2009) on women’s entrepreneurship in Talas and Bakay-Ata districts of Talas oblast discovered that “the differences in patent costs within activity types are very high, increase in patent pressure on types of activities traditionally carried out by women, and ranging in gaps within each activity type.” ADB-UNDP project “Promoting entrepreneurship among rural women in Central Asian countries.” Bishkek, 2010, p. 33.

\(^{46}\) Up until 2000, NSC digests published data describing this process - the Gini coefficient. However, in the last decade, even these data are not widely reflected. Therefore, one can speak credibly and objectively about the trend of changes that existed in those years. Variations in consumption are an indirect indicator of continuing polarization. Thus, a particular segment of services and trade is focused on conspicuous, very high cost consumption, while other parts of the respective segments – on cheap and limited consumption.

\(^{47}\) Full-time waged employment on the basis of an open-ended labor contract in an enterprise or organization, under the direct supervision of a director or managers assigned by the director, is considered to be standard. In the majority of countries this standard is supported by labor legislation. All forms of employment and labor relations (including underemployed weeks, overtime and secondary employment, self-employment, etc.) are considered non-standard. See more: Nestandartnaya zanyatost’: rossiyskiye osobennosti [Non-standard employment: Russian features]. \(``Chelovek i trud`` (``Person and labor``)\) №6, 2006
At the same time, the state still has no clear policy on either internal or external migration flows. Gender aspects of migration practices have not yet been evaluated or taken into account.

As a result of the above-mentioned transformations, the realities in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, as well as in the structure of economic sectors, can be described in terms of gender disparities and gender segregation of women in the labor market. In general, the labor market in recent years has witnessed reduced opportunities for women: the figures given below demonstrate that in most spheres of activities the proportion of women tended to decline during 2004-2008 (NSC Kyrgyzstan 2009, p.87). The only exceptions are traditionally female areas of work like education and health care, where wages are less competitive and employees are often classified as working poor.

**Gender gaps in the labor market**

The distribution of the employed population among the sectors of the economy according to gender is uneven. The share of women in employment is highest in healthcare and social services (79%), education (76%), and hotels and restaurant services (65%). Men are most engaged in construction (95%), mining (91%), and the energy sector (81%). In addition, the total number of occupied employers are predominantly male (70.6%), and among unpaid family workers, by contrast, the number of women is higher (60.4%)\(^{48}\).

The presence of gender gaps in different sectors of the economy reflects the diversity of women's vulnerability in the labor market. On the one hand, they are largely concentrated in “nonstrategic” fields (in terms of investment, technology development, economic growth etc.), often with a low rate of profit and low wages (such as education, social work, etc.). On the other, they are found in industries with higher wages and good profits but vulnerable to political and economic changes (such as services and trade). These sectors suffered badly during the recent economic recession Kyrgyzstan’s political unrest, when jobs were lost faster than in other spheres. For example, in the crisis year of 2009, of the 4,500 jobs lost, 80.4% were in jobs in the service sector. The unemployment rate increased by 8.4%\(^{49}\) at the same time. Political events in April and June 2010 also had a significant negative impact on the service sector, when due to the destruction and looting of many trade outlets, a large number of people employed in this area lost their jobs, putting more pressure on the labor market.

**Figure 2. Share of women in total employed population by economic activity**

(From the section "Employment and Unemployment“ in the Integrated Households Survey, in %)

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\(^{48}\) NSC digest “Zhenshiny i muzhchiny Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki” [Men and women of the Kyrgyz Republic], 2009

\(^{49}\) In 2007-2008, the unemployment rate remained unchanged – 8.2%. The Government’s short term plan until the end of 2010 includes reconstruction works in regions affected by conflict plus a variety of public works to provide short-term employment.
The reduction of jobs in the formal labor market following the structural crisis of the country's economy in 2006-2007, pushed people into the informal sector or the so-called “shadow” economy, which continues to provide the growing number of unemployed across the country with jobs. Despite a certain improvement in the labor market for women, as seen from Figure 1., in many areas of the economy, the proportion of women among the employed population was lower in 2008 than in 2004.

In 2008, the proportion of women working in wage employment amounted to just over half of employed women, including only 11,700 (or 3.68%) out of 317,500 women employed in agriculture. In 2007, 46.7% of women considering themselves as employed, noted that they did had not signed a contract of employment, and it is likely that most of these worked in the informal sector. The majority of people engaged in the market, non-organised (street) and “shuttle” trading are women. “Many women work as home-workers, paid babysitters and sick-nurses. There is an increasing number of women working as home-workers who apply for micro-credits. Quite often they manage small non-official enterprises and this indicates that many women are able to work outside of the formal market”50.

Women who trade on streets and in bazaars (markets), say that the non-official sector is less burdened with bureaucratic requirements and to work in this sector one can have lower starting capital and operating costs. This sector is quite flexible and enables them to combine economic activity (work) with child care and household duties.


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Work in the non-official sector means wages that are not set officially and poor working conditions. Out (home)working is unregulated but women can save money which they would otherwise have spent on child care. But over time it tends to increase poverty levels as women have to combine working for money and taking care of their children and doing the household chores. This kind of work lacks social protection, paid sick-leave, maternity leave and pensions, and greatly increases the vulnerability and exposure to poverty of workers in the non-official sector.

In summary, the following points can be made about gender asymmetry in the labor market:

- Gender asymmetry with more profitable male positions characterizes the labor market in different sectors and the formal / informal spheres of the economy. As seen in Figure 2 above, there are significant differences in gender representation in mining or construction, and in services or trade. Also, asymmetry describes the representation of the gender in any economic activity in terms of a vertical line, a hierarchy: women fill the lower layers of the hierarchical social structure, while men dominate at the levels of management and decision-making;

- Analysis of labor force and labor supply in Kyrgyzstan indicates the presence of the structural unemployment (i.e. disparity of human resources with the needs and demands of the labor market). The key gender feature of the contemporary labor market is very low demand for women with education and a profession;

- Government policy declares its support for entrepreneurship in order to boost employment. However, in the field of entrepreneurial initiatives one observes gender inequality, determined not only by differences in cash start-up capital available to men and women, but also by gender-blind legislation that results extra costs for the most vulnerable groups of women;

- Since investments in the economy are mainly aimed at asset-intensive and masculinized industries like mining and energy, state investment policy tends to the gender gap in the labor market. It also contributes to reproduction of low-technological labor, where economic growth is mainly achieved through high exploitation of human resources.

**Women’s economic opportunities and entrepreneurship**

When analyzing the impact of economic growth on employment and unemployment, it is important to note the contribution of small and medium-sized businesses. Thus while SME represents 45.5% of GDP (average for 2007-2009)\(^51\), the number of people employed here was only 13.6%\(^52\) of total employment in the economy (average for 2007-2009).

Current policy for entrepreneur support is “gender-neutral”. However, experts have calculated that if the same amount was invested in women farmers (capital, training etc) as in their male counterparts, this would increased the volume of production in their farms by more than 20 percent.

\(^51\) According to the data of the NSC. [www.stat.kg](http://www.stat.kg)

\(^52\) Not accounting for peasant and farmer enterprises. [www.stat.kg](http://www.stat.kg)
The budget and tax system does not promote savings by agricultural producers for investment, nor does it stimulate the development and export of agricultural products. On the contrary, the high level of tax increases labour costs and adversely affects the price of products and the general level of inflation, reducing the competitiveness of SMEs in rural areas. Small farmers and entrepreneurs, many of whom are women, have limited resources and are most vulnerable to changes in trade and tax policies.

For example, the small detail of the Tax Code related to the sizes of patents for many types of activities (where female or male domination may vary) does not always correspond to the objectives of economic growth and support for entrepreneurial initiatives in rural areas.

Table 6. Changes in the cost of patents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Average increases in the cost of patents / times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sale of products made from fur, felt, leather and substitutes</td>
<td>10 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sale of food products</td>
<td>2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Sale of non-foods</td>
<td>6.6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Manufacture and sale of products of catering trade</td>
<td>2.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Sale of construction materials</td>
<td>5.3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Luggage room services</td>
<td>3.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Plumbing, wiring and carpentry works</td>
<td>4.6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Provision (engrossment) and sale of agricultural products</td>
<td>20 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Services for lease of water runners, ski and parachutes</td>
<td>83.3 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predominantly women’s types of activities --- No’s 30, 31, 32

As one can see, there is clearly not just a multiple increase in the cost of patents by type of activity, but also very large differences in the cost of patents within the same type of activity. Additionally, there are significant increases in patent loads on types of activities traditionally performed by women.

Access of micro and small enterprises to credit and financial resources is vital for the development and sustainability of women entrepreneurs. However, we have to note that women-entrepreneurs have access only to “short-term” money (loan sizes of 500 USD to 10,000 USD). This is due to the fact that women generally do not have their own or borrowed capital or property; they cannot choose the strategies used by men or enjoy the same conditions of long-term and large-scale funding.

Table 7. Micro lending recipients, recent years.\(^5^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5^3\) Country Gender Assessment, 2008.
Women’s choice of entrepreneurship as of a form of employment and the selection of specific types of economic activity are conditioned by a number of gender specific issues, including the following:

- Traditional stereotypes ascribe to women the whole meaning of her life in “reproductive” labour on behalf of and in the household, while men work in the market-oriented, “productive” sphere. This gendered division of labour is preserved and passed on from generation to generation by a system of cultural patriarchy;
- Where it is necessary for women to enter the sphere of public production, the whole of society and families impose on women specific stereotype-based demands, namely: to combine family roles and professional work. To do this the woman needs to choose “suitable-flexible” professions such as teacher, doctor and so on, which provide for part-time employment. She should prefer family over career and be responsible for childbirth, childcare and maintenance of the emotional relationships of the family and community. She also should hold a lower position than her husband in terms of social and professional status, and have a lower income level and so on;
- Traditions prescribe a subordinate position for women in society and family, and fail to acknowledge rights of women to own property and prohibition to manage financial and other resources of the household, are imposed on women by family practices;
- The very heavy burden of household duties, plus uninterrupted fulfilment of women’s reproductive functions, determine the formation of the classical “mother’s dilemma” – the psychological guilt of a working mother who constantly feels negative emotions – at work, for the reason that she cannot take care of her children at the moment, and at home when with her children – for the reason that she cannot fulfil her professional goals;
- The media promote traditional images of men and women, where the norm is considered a passive, self-sacrificing woman. Sometimes women do not have enough specialized or technological knowledge due to the segregated nature of professional training. For example, a language teacher in a rural school may have limited knowledge about agriculture or cattle-rearing.

The situation when a woman has to learn about business management on her own based on trial and error, is very common. Women in this situation can only develop their business slowly and probably inefficiently, and quite often this becomes the factor determining the failure of the business. Limited start-up resources held by women remain a key restriction in entrepreneurship, as well as a factor contributing to the creation of a “glass ceiling” for women in business. Therefore, women predominate at the micro and small business level.

At the same time, the results of field research make it possible to formulate a hypothesis about the greater stability of women’s entrepreneurship projects and initiatives. Unfortunately, the lifespan of business enterprises, including in different types of economic activity, and with a different gender

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54 Economist Heidi Hartmann stated that the basis of subordinate position of women is rooted in the gender division of labor. The economic development of capitalism comes from the logic of capitalistic accumulation. As a result, production is oriented to market exchange, rather than to use. In the end, capitalist society cannot adequately value the benefits of work that is not put on sale on the market (particularly benefits created by the unpaid domestic labor of women). That is why in capitalist society female labor is judged to be of a secondary importance and socially insignificant. Hartmann, H. 1979. The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union. Capital and Class. London.
structure, are not tracked in the national statistics. However, one field survey discovered that the average age of a female business enterprise is 7.5 years. According to international experts, a business can be considered successful if it survives more than 5 years. That is, despite all the obstacles and difficulties and lack of government support, women entrepreneurs are trying to stay afloat and continue the business which they established.

Analysis shows that state policies which give a priority to traditional women’s activities are likely to face serious challenges of a normative and institutional nature, as well as risks related to the development of human capacity. If state policies adhere to maintaining the involvement of women-entrepreneurs in traditional crop production activities, then it will be difficult to expect efficient promotion of business initiatives in these areas, as there remains a whole number of unsolved problems. In particular, in such a traditional strategy it will be necessary to resolve problems related to the generally low (often zero) levels of mechanization and capitalization, the lack of widely accessible services of various kinds or, for example, the problems of poor knowledge in the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Human capacity, time and material resources for crop production are at risk due to unfavorable weather conditions and other uncontrollable factors such as geo-economical factors. Even if local produce has a high ecological quality, low volume of production, inadequate marketing channels, branding and other elements mean that costs remain high. In its turn, a poor population will “vote with their feet” and buy cheaper products. As a result, many agricultural businesses forecast high costs and a high social price (high wages, problems of morality and motivation). Due to these disadvantages many local producers of grain, sugar, fruit and berries are being forced out of the market in the Republic, and in these areas the women’s contribution was significant.

In the Soviet economy, public policies and regulatory frameworks determined the basic parameters of the labour market. Modern economic mechanisms of the market economy do not permit such a traditional approach anymore. The state regulation of the labour market has been reduced and employment in modern conditions is marked, as already has been mentioned, by extreme dynamism and multiple dependencies. A strategy is required capable of solving the contradictions between the formation of a rational structure of production and productive employment, on the one hand, and the economic mechanisms of a market economy on the other. Better monitoring the needs and opportunities of regional economies in terms of labour forces (in view of specialties and qualifications), technologies and institutions is a vital tool if Kyrgyzstan is to develop an adequate state policy on labour, employment and migration.

Monitoring of configurations of the regional and national labour markets, as well as the expansion of the practice of gender analysis and gender program budgeting is the only possible way to further regulate the labour market and employment. The gender-sensitive approach allows us to identify opportunities for the development of realistic and meaningful assessments to determine new policy aimed at a positive qualitative change in the lives of specific groups of citizens, rather than generalized economic growth.
Section 3. Family formation and dissolution: changes of social norms and gender roles

Over the past two decades a large number of books and reports have been written on the nature of changes occurring in the state and society in Kyrgyzstan. However, among the vast amount of literature, only a small portion is devoted to studying changes in the family sphere.

Statistics and surveys are more oriented at presentation of "hard" indicators of changes in the form of macro-economic and socio-demographic statistical indicators. Nonetheless, ethnographic and sociological studies of marriage and family in the Soviet and post-Soviet period conducted by a number of foreign and domestic scholars mean that this topic is by no means a "terra incognita" for science. For example, studies during the Soviet and post-Soviet period throw light on the role of women in society. Researcher K. Kuehnast has studied women's adaption to changing socio-economic realities, Professor R. Kleinbach initiated the study of bride kidnapping, and sociologist G. Ibraeva examined the marital strategies of the current and past generations in Kyrgyzstan.

Nevertheless, the study of the changes in the family as an institution in the Kyrgyz Republic remains a somewhat "peripheral" subject in the literature on the transformation of societies and states in the region of Central Asia. That is why this review to a large degree relies on traditional sources - statistical data and analytical reviews provided by gender-oriented projects financed by international organizations.

We have divided the analysis of the various changes affecting families over the past two decades into three key areas in line with the concept of the family as an institution consisting of by three types of property: 1. Erotic property (related to ownership of a human body), 2. Family relations property (ownership of children), 3. Household property (ownership of material possessions), as developed by American sociologist R. Collins.

Transformation of erotic property.
It is rather difficult to discuss transformations in this area, despite the obvious importance of sexuality in marriage and the family sphere. It is no accident that there have been major changes in this area. "Ideological re-evaluation of the sexual is characteristic for all periods of social decline and decay and, moreover, a one-sided understanding of it is inevitable: an abstract asocial side of it is moved to the forefront. The sexual aspires to become a surrogate for the social. All people fall into, primarily, if not exclusively, men and women. All other units seem insignificant" - noted M. Bakhtin in his work "Beyond the social."

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The study of public discourses in the Kyrgyzstan allows one to talk about the presence of a contradictory spectrum of normalizing discursive systems. One discourse, a religious one, constructs family and marriage in the spirit of Puritanism, sinlessness and asexuality. This is dominated by the patriarchal orientation on the desexualisation of woman and putting her beyond the scope of sexual attractiveness, reducing women's entity to the discourse of motherhood. This discourse is aligned with the traditionalist nationalist discourse, in which motherhood is viewed as synonymous with patriotism and commitment to the national tradition. A task of national significance is set for Kyrgyz women: to give birth to sons of the fatherland, to reproduce the nation. An opposite public discourse views the entire social life, including the family sphere, through the prism of sexuality. Media, mass cultural images are replicating porno-erotic standards of interaction between the sexes; the fashion industry promotes sexualized types of men and women.

However, the statistics are almost completely insensitive to the sexual aspect of people’s lives. Single indicators, monitored within the socio-demographic data, may only indirectly point toward changes in family relations in the aspect of sexuality. Among these indirect measures, fertility can be considered a key indicator in assessing the changes in the perception of the family as erotic property. As has been noted above, in traditional culture sexuality is still strongly associated with reproduction. There is plenty of evidence that if a young woman after one-two years of marriage has not given birth and/or is not pregnant, she is diagnosed by the community and the family as unhealthy, incapable of being a mother and multiple conflicts arise for the newly married couple.

General indicators in the retrospective perspective suggest two waves of development of this indicator: from the 1990s until 2001 - a steady decline in fertility rates (as well as the absolute number of births), and since 2002 – an increase in both the percentage and absolute number of births. (See table 8 also see data in attachment table 9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Birth rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 1,000 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than a third of births (31% in 2009) are by mothers not registered in an official marriage. According to the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyz Republic, "of the total number of children

---

56 It would be more correct to note the presence of paradoxical gender asymmetry in matters of sexuality in this discourse – male sexuality is liberalized and absolutely "normal", female is problematized and repressed.

born outside legal marriage, approximately 60% are registered on joint application of the parents, while 40% - only by application of the mother... \(^{58a}\) The statistics given below show an increase in the number of children born in unregistered marriages (see table 9):

**Table 9: Proportion of children born from women in unregistered marriages, as a percentage of all births (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that according to statistical data, the use of contraceptives has been decreasing over the past decade, although according to the statistics provided by NGOs, training in reproductive planning and distribution of contraceptives have increased significantly (see table 10).

**Table 10: Use of contraceptives (in%, including mini-abortions)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan in general</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batken oblast</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalalabat oblast</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issyk-Kul oblast</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naryn oblast</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osh oblast + Osh city</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>38.8+41.1</td>
<td>39.3+75.8</td>
<td>37.3+55.9</td>
<td>32.1+58.9</td>
<td>34.8+63.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talas oblast</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chui oblast</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishkek city</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the statistics on the average family size, the standard for a nuclear family established during the Soviet period continues to be reproduced: on average in 1999, an urban family consisted of 3.5 persons; a rural family includes 4.9 family members\(^ {59}\), in 2010 – on average 5. Numerous studies in villages somewhat contradicts the statistics, indicating that in the cattle-breeding regions of the country most families are multi-generational, the family type - extended. In urban areas the less affluent is the groom's family, the higher is the chance of organizing life in at least a two-generational family. Moreover, the tradition of a patrilocal family retains its importance: the newly married couple may live in the bride's family only in exceptional cases, and life with the groom's parents is perceived as normal and natural. The new role of young women in marriage as an unpaid labour force replacing their old role as a "worn-out worker" mother is increasing. In families with a high income, where hiring servants to do


the housework is already normal, there is no need for the newlyweds to live with the husband’s parents, and financial resources allow them to find their own accommodation.

The analysis of family types in the Soviet period promoted the existence of an egalitarian family type, where relative equality was based on the so-called double contract of a "working mother." Over the past two decades of independent development, many women have essentially been forced out of the labour market, they are no longer "breadwinners" and more women are limited to performing the family roles. For this reason, the value of the egalitarian family type has significantly decreased.

The objective limitation of women’s opportunities in the labour market conditioned the current demand for the dominant ideological concept of woman’s mission as a mother and wife. This model has been re-ideologized, within both the monogamous and polygamous Islamic family in Kyrgyzstan over last two decades. In accordance with this ideological construct, woman’s sexuality is recognized as synonymous to reproduction, and issues of gender inequality in the realization of her sexuality are justified by (pseudo-Muslim) discourse about men's responsibility for the reproduction of the nation and the care of all single women, whose sole purpose - maternity – must necessarily be fulfilled.

Today masculinity is associated in the public discourse with sexual power, wealth and unlimited consumption. This includes consumption of women as commoditised objects. Taking into account the fact that a large percentage of working-age men have no job and poor employment prospects, and if actually employed, earn pitiful incomes, it is clear that the canonical image is severely undermined by practice. This contradiction between practice and the normative system has a negative impact on men’s mental health. According to surveys conducted by the Reproductive Health Alliance, men’s sexual health is in a critical situation.

At the same time, the level of venereal disease cases (syphilis, gonorrhoea), according to statistics is steadily decreasing and is almost insignificant. (According to the data for 2009, the incidence of syphilis per 100,000 is 25.4 cases among men and 19 among women, while the incidence of gonorrhoea is 19.7 among men, 12 among women). However, many experts doubt the accuracy of these figures and fear that they may not reflect the true state of disease incidence due to low doctor referrals and a preference for self-treatment among the diseased. The validity of these conclusions is confirmed by the statistics on disease incidence for "new generation" sexually transmitted infections – such as chlamydia, gardnerellosis, mycoplasmosis - which since 2000 (when these types of infections began to be diagnosed) have a tendency to increase.

Analysing the dynamics and structure of morbidity and mortality in the population in 2001, a group of domestic demographers noted the deterioration in the health of the population, calling the tendency "driving the disease inside" for a number of reasons including limited access to quality and affordable medicine.
Increasing social stratification has led to a greater diversity of sexual practices within and outside the family. Thus, one category of the population - mostly rural, with a low educational level, for the most part poor, tends to experience sexuality within marriage or adultery. Without cultural and social capital or the institutional conditions for interaction between different sexes in rural areas, young men view marriage through bride kidnapping or rape as the only way to realizing their developing sexuality. Thus, research by R. Kleinbach\(^{60}\) suggests that that non-consensual kidnapping for marriage was common in the Soviet period and has been on the increase since 1991. The statistical evidence from comparative research conducted in villages in 1999, 2001 and 2004 suggests that the number of ethnic Kyrgyz women married against their will as a result of bride kidnapping increased from 33% in 1999 to 45% in 2004. Based on data collected in these three studies, the authors argue that 35-45% of ethnic Kyrgyz women are forced to marry someone not of their choosing through the process of kidnapping.

The growth of rural households engaged in subsistence farming with a low level of technological development demands a lot of unpaid workers. Grooms view bride kidnapping perhaps the only strategy "to increase the labour potential" of the family, so their future marriage is made primarily on economic/pragmatic rather than romantic grounds in the traditional sense. However, mass consciousness has also "invented" an ideological "path" for the kidnapped woman: a myth around the romance of the kidnapping procedure, "inspired by the tradition of our ancestors," has been promoted to reconcile her with this destiny and to achieve her greater obedience. A majority of the population believes that kidnapping is an ancestral tradition, a truly national marriage strategy that must be continued by new generations and passed on to others. Typically, the average age of men and women entering into this kind of marriage is getting younger, sometimes grooms have barely crossed the threshold of sexual maturity, and brides do not even finish secondary school.

In fact, post soviet society as a whole is marked by a “celebration of masculinity”... In Kyrgyzstan, various conservative gender ideologies – capitalism, local nationalism, Islamism and even "global" youth cultures like hip hop encourage boys to be tough. A local jigit (boy, lad) is supposed to display “laddish” behavior. By adopting certain cultural practices, from “national” sports such as kurosh to forced bride kidnapping, young Kyrgyz can affirm their identities as both “Kyrgyz” and a “man”\(^{61}\).

Premarital or extramarital sexual contact in rural areas is hampered by strong social control and stigmatization of women for such relationships. Day-to-day observation allows us to conclude that there is a group of stigmatized women in any village who provide sexual services. However for a man, especially a young man, the use of these services is not encouraged and usually actively discouraged. Another part of the population - more affluent, mostly urban, have much more opportunity to satisfy

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\(^{61}\) In the marketplace for styles and identities: globalization and youth culture in southern Kyrgyzstan. S. B. Kirmse, Central Asia Vol.29, No.4, December 2010, 393-394
their sexual needs. In cities, young women and men can date each other and even engage in trial marriages, cohabitation without significant complications. For this category of men and women, the average age of entering into marriage is on the increase:\textsuperscript{62}

Table 11: Average age of marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entering into a marriage</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among urban and affluent men and women the ritual aspect of marriage and family relations are especially strongly developed. In line with evolving needs, a new industry has emerged catering for all stages in the engagement and wedding process, with both families. The dominant strategies for entering into marriage are marriage brokerage and agreement between the parents of the groom and the bride. Love marriage is also quite legitimate.

Regardless of the social status of young people, the cult of virginity is supported by most of the population. Sexual experience of men entering marital relations is welcomed, but it is expected that the girl will preserve her virginity. At the same time, conflicting requirements are imposed on girls: while preserving her chastity, she is expected to engage in sexual activity in the spirit of porn film heroines. The answer to these conflicting demands is the expanding practice of surgical reconstruction of the virginal membrane.

The fact that virginity has become so important for the marriage ability of girls led to a strange phenomenon that took place after the summer 2010 ethnic clashes in the South. In the conflict zones, the ethnic Uzbek population opened an active season marrying off their daughters, even minors. Girls were married off by their parents by force, even as second and third wives, to grooms of a much older age, after rumours about the mass rape of Uzbek girls in the conflict zones.

**Transformation of family relations property**

As mentioned above, the commodification of social relations is a key tendency affecting the family as an institution. During the last two decades, the instrumental value of children in the family has significantly increased, with utility for the family becoming the key factor in any decisions. In the post-Soviet period the phenomenon of using child labour as a strategy for the family to overcome or alleviate poverty has become particularly prevalent. A whole range of uses of child labour can be noted: thus, in cattle-breeding and agricultural regions children become unpaid workers in family peasant households; in the cities children find their niche in the bazaars. A gender-significant "professional" structure has already formed in the market: boys and young men work as “barrow-pushers,” shoe polishers, loaders, meat

choppers, etc. Girls and young women are mostly employed as waitresses, cleaners, in the kitchens, sellers of fruits and vegetables, gatherers and sorters of garbage from the market.

Legislation enacted by the state has placed the responsibility for raising children on the family and has limited its own contribution in the payment of social benefits for children in poor families, social transfers in situations of disabled children in the family, provision of access to higher education and healthcare. The state now guarantees payment of a sum of 1,000 soms (20 USD) a month for two months before and two months after birth. This sum is not linked with particular costs for the mother or the new-born baby. But since all expenditure for a new-born child is the responsibility of the family, the tendency is for families to perceive a greater utility value in sons rather than daughters (and this corresponds with re-emerging patriarchal ideology). An indirect indicator of this preference for boys can be seen in recent years, in the phenomenon of girls of up to five years old lagging behind boys in weight, in families faced by severe deprivation.

**Transformation of household property**

The question of household property rose at the dawn of sovereign Kyrgyzstan with denationalization of property and legalization of private property. Privatization of housing and other property were the first steps in this direction, and later on a Land Code was developed and adopted, and land reform began, which turned land into capital, property. Projects supporting land reform by aid agencies such as Chemonics International, Lark, and UNIFEM’s project to strengthen economic opportunities for women in land reform have collected a large number of cases where the rights of young women, whether daughters, ex-wives or daughters-in-law, to own part of the land allotment was limited by the traditional patriarchal authority of the family, its head.

Two decades later, the question of ownership on any type (personal, family and even state) in the Kyrgyzstan has no transparency and is virtually a taboo. There are lots of rumours about the nature of the ownership of capital by one or other person, but no official sources exist. The regulatory requirement for civil servants to file an income declaration (detailing all property held by family members) is not being fulfilled and no sanctions are enforced on violators of the prescribed rules.

Even research in the fields such entrepreneurship, revenue policies, or a local government budget has proved unable to lift the veil of silence surrounding property issues. We are forced to rely on stories in the mass media for often unverified information about who owns what in the country or a particular area.

The legislation on property of women and men in the family requires the integration of all income as the jointly owned capital and property of the family. However, the Family Code was amended in 2008 to introduce the concept of a "marriage contract" and provide an opportunity, with the consent of the spouses, to change the legal status of their property. This legislation clearly regulates the legal property relations not only between spouses, but also other adult family members. However, practice indicates the presence of gender-discriminatory mechanisms: the property rights of daughters not married and
living with their parents, and daughters-in-law living in their husband’s families, are extremely vulnerable.

An example is the question of land ownership in the family. According to the legislation, all rural citizens must have their own plot of land, the size of which is calculated proportionately to the number of family members (including children, regardless of their sex and age), and therefore each family member should know their share in the family’s land allotment. However, when leaving her father’s family a grown-up girl, a woman - the daughter of her parents – does not even think of selling or leasing her share of the land. Her share by default goes to her parents and will become a part of their sons’ and grandsons’ inheritance. It is even more obvious that a daughter-in-law in case of a divorce from her husband, according to tradition, cannot claim her part of the family’s land allotment. If a daughter or a daughter-in-law dares to assert their right to property in court, the community is likely to perceive this as disrespect towards tradition and a violation of the natural way of life. Even having abandoned her part of an allotment, a woman is unlikely to be able to exchange or sell it, as members of the community would likely not support her interests, even if they coincide with their economic interests. Sometimes violation of an individual’s property rights occurs not because of traditional authority in the family, but because of the patriarchal traditionalism of the state authority. In regions with a limited amount of irrigated land, heads of local government often give the most remote and non-irrigated land plots to widows, divorced village women. Once again, research data is incomplete; however, a variety of projects (for example, by the Association of Women Entrepreneurs on access of women to land, funded by UNIFEM) have uncovered instances when single mothers, widows and divorced women lost their rights to land or received land of less quality or quantity than they were entitled to.

As regards inheritance within the family, Kyrgyzstan law lays down that a spouse can inherit property according to a will made by the deceased partner, or if no will was made, by law. The property he / she inherits does not include the share which is due by law to other persons, for example, children. The right to a portion of the inheritance (in cases where a will was drawn up prior to death) only belongs to spouses who are unable to work, or to minors . Those who inherit property when no will was made have the right to household goods irrespective of their priority and share of the property, if they lived with the deceased not less than one year. Children are considered first priority heirs, and if a will was made, minors and children unable to work have an absolute right to a share in the property (Articles 1142, 1139, 1150, 1157 -Civil Code)

The passing of the law on the marriage contract became a transformational point in family property relations. Contracts are practiced mostly by wealthy citizens who have a considerable property prior to marriage and wish to keep it. Contracts have become a tool of out-of-court regulation of property relations. In general, property disputes between families members are steadily increasing, which indirectly indicates changes in the family institution. The consciousness of individuals in the family about property rights, the strengthening of the power of money as a value in society and the commodification of social relationships – these are just some of the elements in the transformation of the family as a structure based on property. Phenomena such as married migrant workers abandoning their families
without any support; the increasing number of orphans children left in long-term custody with elderly family members; the many court cases contesting property ownership between close relatives (even between parents and children, which would have been culturally impossible just two decades ago) – all these are elements bearing testimony to the disintegration of the traditional type of family relations. However, paradoxically, other phenomena show, by contrast, the vitality of the traditional tribal family.

A clear example of this is the increased economic interactions within tribal structures in terms of inputs to major festivals -joint celebration of Eids (religious feasts), “tois” celebrating birthdays and weddings, and other rituals (such as funerals). Both rich and poor members of the community tend to invest in this kind of "networking" regardless of the cost of participation for the household.

Case study 3. Story of a widow

The social status of widows in modern Kyrgyz society has not been examined in any depth. However, there are some studies devoted to the role and status of widows in Kyrgyz and Kazakh nomadic communities at the turn of the 20th century. According to these studies, “the status of women in a nomadic society was determined primarily through the status of men associated with her – that is, her husband and sons.” Also, the age of a widowed woman and whether or not she had sons among her children were very significant. After a woman’s reproductive period or after the birth of a certain number of sons, it was considered that she had fulfilled her duty, and so a woman who survived her husband’s death and inherited his status could begin to be perceived almost like a man. In cases like this, a woman’s behaviour in the family hardly differed from the stereotype for a man. Thus, her rights and responsibilities changed, as did the location of her social activities. It moved from the location of a woman’s functioning – the home – to that of her male opposite – her kinship group or tribe. Thus, the system of traditional social relations changed, both within the family-kinship group and the tribe as a whole.

While accepting the importance of tradition inherited by society from the past, the authors believe that the radical changes in the politico-cultural and socio-economic realities that have taken place in recent times should have significantly changed the situation of widows, their role in the family and community. Since there is little analytical research on this topic, we cannot say whether the example of the life history of a widow presented in a student’s thesis is typical of the situation facing widows in Kyrgyzstan today. But it certainly shows many of the problems facing women in dire economic and family circumstances.

In the thesis study of AUCA student A. Arzieva about people living and working in the city dump in Bishkek, there are several life stories of widows. This case represents one of these stories based on an in-depth interview.

Respondent A. is 59 years old; she comes from a small town Min Kush, where during Soviet times she worked at an office equipment factory, in the felt-pen production department. Eight years ago her

63http://www.dissercat.com/content/status-vdovy-v-kulture-kazakhov-i-kirgizov-na-osnove-materialov-xix-nachala-xx-veka
64 Ibid
husband died, by which time her three sons had grown up and started their own families. Remembering the old Soviet past, when she and her husband worked and raised three sons, the woman particularly noted her level of personal consumption: she never drank tea without milk, always ate meat, and loved chocolate... After the death of her husband, at first her sons supported their mother financially - “as much as they could.” But for the last few years they too have been unemployed. As the number of children in their own families increased, the help they could give their mother decreased. Since there was no prospect of finding work in her home town, A. was forced to leave and move to the capital four years ago, in the hope of a better lot. Here she began a new work career in a clothing workshop of which there are many in Bishkek, working on a semi-legal basis and where finding a job not difficult. But it turned out that A’s eyesight was not as sharp as it used to be and she was too slow to work as a seamstress.

Work in a sweatshop turned out to be quite dangerous (A. pierced her hand more than once with the needle of her automatic sewing machine), and the wages offered did not even cover her essential needs – paying the rent, food, the necessary minimum of clothes. Moreover, the work was highly susceptible to seasonal fluctuations, market conditions, etc. Work and earnings vary significantly for seamstresses according to the season and availability of orders: less during the winter, more during the summer when wage rates are higher. A. tried her luck in trade by getting a job as a seller in “Dordoi” market. But during her very first month, instead of receiving a salary she found herself owing money to her boss, and as she described it, “became a bankrupt.” In one of her “down times”, unemployed and consequently hungry, A. heard from people like her renting accommodation in Kalys Ordo (a new housing settlement created by squatters five years ago, and legalized only in 2010) that one could make money at the city dump all year round, collecting plastic or metal.

So a year ago A. found herself on the city dump. She admits that at first she found it very difficult. The foul smell and smoke constantly rising from the smoldering landfill was an almost insurmountable obstacle. A. remembers “streams of tears running from your eyes, the stench permeating your soul so you hardly had strength to stand up”. But, as she said, “You have to go on living. A dump is a place where you arrive in the morning without anything, and in the evening you already have money to live on. Sometimes we even got lucky breaks – for example, one woman found a package of gold jewelry. Personally, once I collected metal worth $50 in just one day.”

The interviewer noted that after a few visits to this respondent, she noticed that the woman was constantly in a state of slight intoxication. A. admitted that she has health problems that the dump is worsening her health and she had been to a fortune-teller who “diagnosed” her with a tumor. She had not gone to the local healthcare centre because she does not have the necessary registration as a city

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65 In Kyrgyzstan, the system of registration of citizens’ permanent or temporary residence has remained in force since Soviet times. Lack of a registration certificate substantially restricts a citizen’s rights, and in some cases completely bars their access to government services.
A resident to be treated by a doctor at a municipal clinic, and going to a private doctor would be too expensive. She has not been in contact with her relatives, even her children, for a long time. A. said that she cannot send money to her children and does not want to be a burden or depend on them. In the past few months she has met a 40-year old man in the new housing development who also lives off the dump. The man drinks a lot, she admits, but so as not to be alone she has moved in with him...

Section 4. The role of NGOs and the state in protecting rights and outcomes

The rapid formation of civil society organizations was one of the most dramatic aspects of the first years of Kyrgyzstan's independence. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became the most actively developing sector of civil society (CS) in the republic; over the last 20 years their number has increased by hundreds of times. Thus, if in 1991 according to official figures there were about 400 NGOs, including trade unions, voluntary associations, religious and political organizations, in 2010 there were more than 15,000. The range of interests and issue covered by the NGO sector and the value/ideological base of its activities is characterized by a great diversity. It is not uncommon to find examples of liberal forms/approaches (e.g., human rights) in an NGO’s work combined with the promotion of traditional (e.g., nationalist or religious) values.

The opportunities for NGOs to work for protection of rights were determined by political developments in the country, and in particular by the contradictions between the policy of the government and international organizations regarding civil society. Several stages can be distinguished in development of relations between NGOs and the state.

1991-1995 - survival/adaptation of old, Soviet-style, non-governmental organizations and the emergence of new civil society institutions. During this period, new NGOs were set up on the base of the former public associations and new (non-communist) political movements and parties emerged. Kyrgyzstan joining the United Nations as an independent state and entering the program of the World Bank (1992) was of decisive significance for the nature of NGO-state relations in development processes at this stage. A wide range of international organizations and foundations supporting democratization and the activities of NGOs (e.g., UNDP, Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, Counterpart Consortium USAID) opened representative offices in the country. The first generation of new CS activists were trained by these programs. Training and support offered to NGOs by international organizations were based on the three-sector model of civil society (state, market, civil society). Civil society was appointed to carry out the function of “harm reduction” following the “inevitable” social costs inherent in the process of democratization and transition to a market economy.

1996-1999 – development of the institutional framework and active involvement of NGOs in development programs. Important legal documents regulating the activities of civil society organizations were adopted during this period. The number and range of public organizations increased significantly. The activity of human rights, women's and environmental organizations, and those promoting the rights of children and the elderly was particularly dynamic.

A key characteristic of this period was the launch of programs requiring extensive participation by civil society – e.g., the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Comprehensive Development...
Framework, and the National “Ayalzat” Programme for the advancement of women - the implementation of which included substantial financial and technical support through grants to CSOs from international funds. The need to institutionalize these mechanisms spurred an increase in the number of socially oriented NGOs, development associations and business sector groupings.

Since a substantial part of donor funds was directed to rural development, the NGO movement gradually expanded to oblast centers and rural regions. Local organisations gradually began to use the professional jargon of the development sector (community-based organizations, social mobilization, participation, empowerment, sustainable development, etc.).

The growth in the number of NGOs, social movements and free media allowed the authorities on a symbolic level, to promote Kyrgyzstan as an “island of democracy.” However, the role of the CS was understood in a very limited way, as a sector compensating for the “natural” weaknesses of the state, mostly in the social sector. And although NGOs began uniting in networks, coalitions and alliances, learning the strategies of advocacy and taking on watchdog roles, their activities for the most part remained concentrated in “invited spaces” created by government and international organizations (eg, various advisory/public councils within state structures, to which certain NGOs have access).

Meanwhile, the “NGO-ization” or “projectization” of the CS sphere led to narrowing of the political component in the NGO agenda and a consequent reduction in their real influence on decision-making. It is no coincidence that despite the wide participation of CS in various development programs, they found it virtually impossible to obtain financial support for their implementation from the state. The development, implementation and monitoring of national programs for women’s advancement and gender equality provides a clear example of these problems.

NGO leaders typically avoided taking responsibility for developing their organizations as a movement or political force representing the interests of vulnerable communities in the public sphere. Many ended up as a tool for lobbying the interests of an individual leader or a small group with the authorities at various levels (government, business, donors, etc.)

It is symptomatic that in the same period the authorities began backsliding on democratic reforms. Thus, for example, two rounds of changes to the Constitution (1996, 1998) were conducted in order to strengthen the President’s powers and limit the influence of Parliament and the Government.

2000-March 2005 - increasing contradictions in the interaction between civil society and the state. On the one hand, CSOs got involved in monitoring and evaluation of development strategies and the analysis of the reform process. NGOs participated in the development of national and local programs, organized public, budget public hearings, etc. In 2003, amendments were introduced in the Constitution, obliging the government to engage directly with civil society in the implementation of public policies. On the other hand, the state apparatus tried in various ways to limit the influence of NGOs: NGO-clones or pro-state NGOs (GONGOs) began to compete with independent organisations, and the image of NGOs as “grant-eaters” was used widely to undermine the sector. Conflicting signals came from President Akayev himself – for example, his statement that Kyrgyzstan had become a “country of NGOs,” and his new national idea - “Kyrgyzstan - the country of human rights” as an answer to this. Thus, in January 2002 a national program “Human Rights for the period 2002-2010” was adopted, structures for the protection of human rights were formed in the prosecution service, etc., the Council for Democratic
Security was created, the Democratic Code of the people of Kyrgyzstan (2003) was formulated and adopted, the institution of Ombudsman (Akyikatchy) of the Kyrgyzstan was introduced.

The events in 2002 in the south of the country (Aksy), when arms were used by the authorities against a peaceful protest, resulting in several deaths, became the turning point in relations between the state and NGOs. A wave of protests from that period on and mass demonstrations against the regime in March 2005 led to the overthrow of the country’s first President.

2005-2010 - increasing influence of the NGO sector on decision-making at national level. An unprecedented example of the consolidation of civil society was the successful campaign carried out by a coalition of many different NGOs to oppose the government’s decision to join a new program on debt reduction (the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Country Program - HIPC). In essence, this campaign was a reflection of low popular confidence in the results of development programs supported by international organizations.

New lobbying mechanisms appeared, associated with the introduction of mandatory legal, human rights, gender, environmental, and anti-corruption checks on proposed new legislation. In 2008, the country’s Parliament (Zhogorku Kenesh) adopted the Law “On state social procurement” establishing a system of grants to NGOs for social sector projects.

At the same time, the participation of NGOs in decision-making continued to be limited to certain areas and sectors. Expert groups and associations promoting the interests of the business sector came to the forefront. Thus, President Bakiev’s speech of January 10, 2008, entitled “New Economic Policy”, claimed that the stage of political reforms had been completed and the stage of tackling economic problems and issues had now begun. At the legislative level, there were initiatives to restrict NGOs from participating in political activity and to make transparent the receipt of funds in their budgets. NGO leaders during this period indicated that when working on socio-economic issues at the grassroots level, they do not encounter problems. Problems arise when protecting political rights... The mass media contributed to this trend. Headlines asked: is the NGO era in Kyrgyzstan now over? In Kyrgyzstan, are NGOs the last foreign spies? What role should NGOs really play in our country?66

Meanwhile, popular protest against the regime was on the increase again, resisting the president’s attempts to use public administration reforms to strengthen his family-clan power regime, increasing prices for food and services, etc. In April 2010, President Bakiev was overthrown, a new phase of political reform and discussions on human rights began.

The debate around the status of Kyrgyzstan as a secular state during the drafting of a new constitution in June 2010 was symptomatic. Several NGOs and members of the Constitutional Council demanded the removal of the term “secular”, claiming that this term violates the rights of citizens to freedom of religion and accusing its defenders of lobbying pro-Western values. The status of Kyrgyzstan as a secular state was maintained through the combined efforts of human rights and women's NGOs. This victory likely helped resist demands from the religious lobby in other areas too, for example Kyrgyzstan’s constitution still bans the formation of political parties with an explicit religious or national-ethnic

principle (Article 4.4 of Constitution). Nonetheless, the debate showed the strength of other sections of civil society – like the traditionalist and religious elements. Indeed, Article 37 of the Constitution supports the traditional lobby, stating that the government will support national customs and traditions not infringing human rights and that it is an obligation of everyone to respect elders and take care of their family and those close to them.

**The role of women’s organizations and gender movement**

Women’s or gender NGOs (organizations working to protect the interests of women, women's rights, promoting gender equality) account for approximately 10-20% of the total number of NGOs. Their activities are very diverse. At the local level, most work on practical issues and needs, conducting educational, informational, advocacy, humanitarian work, or providing legal, social support for women from different vulnerable groups (poor, rural, unemployed, victims of violence, etc.)

To address strategic issues such as women's political participation, a number of networks have been created at national level (eg, “Diamond” Association, Zhenshiny mogut vsyo! (Women can do it!), the Alliance of Women's Legislative Initiatives, the Forum of Women's NGOs, the NGO Council on monitoring and preparation of the CEDAW report, the Association of Women Entrepreneurs, the Association of Crisis Centres).

The activeness of women's organizations starting from participation in the work of the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1994) and the Beijing Platform for Action was directly shaped by the influence of the global women's movement and the policies of international development agencies and donors (UNDP, UNIFEM, SIDA, Soros Foundation, WB, ADB, EU commission).

Women's networks also include representatives of government agencies (deputies of the national parliament, local councils of deputies, officials responsible for gender issues in the state executive and local power structures). The basis for interaction between women's organizations and the state is provided by institutional mechanisms for gender policy set up from the mid-90's and including:

- International commitments on the basis of ratified UN conventions on gender equality, in particular CEDAW (1997).
- National obligations, including the constitutional provisions on adherence to equality between men and women, Laws on Social-Legal Protection from Domestic Violence (2003), On state guarantees of gender equality (2003, 2008).
- Special structures and functions in the state and municipal authorities. At different times there have been a State Commission for Women and Family Affairs (within the structure of the Government), and a National Commission on Family, Children and Gender Development (under the President). Currently, responsibility for the implementation of gender policy is held by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration.

With the support of international organizations and development agencies such as UNDP and UNIFEM, women's networks have been able to:

- Prepare three alternative CEDAW reports
- Achieve the passing the above-mentioned laws on gender equality and combating domestic violence. In 2008, a new law on provision of equality between men and women was enacted.
• Ensure the introduction of gender indicators in the country's development strategy (2007)
• Gain the adoption of a number of special measures to support women's representation in government, to promote women's political rights. Thus in 2005, lobbying led to the creation of the position of a special representative of the President in the Parliament, aimed at redressing the result of the 2005 elections when not one woman was included in the legislative branch. This work led to the adoption of gender quotas within the electoral code and the eventual increase in representation of women in the national parliament after national elections in 2007 by more than 27% (ethnic and youth quotas – 15% each – were introduced at the same time). The support of the President and his apparatus ensured the introduction of these measures which were rushed through with a minimum of political resistance. The mechanisms are still far from perfect.. The new Constitution makes quotas mandatory but initiatives aimed at removing them have already been heard from various quarters, including some recently elected deputies.

It should be noted that initially, development programs were not characterized by a significant gender aspect. However, in 1994 a “Women in Development” bureau was established in Kyrgyzstan, later transformed into the organization “Gender in development.” Even so, the gender perspective was limited to female aspects of human rights and only in the context of development (women and poverty, women and violence, etc.). Gender issues regarding the status of men were only raised very rarely. A paradoxical situation exists: the vast majority of women’s organizations are concentrated in the social sector, but there is very limited cooperation with organizations promoting the interests of teachers, doctors/nursing staff.

In recent years there has been an expansion of the agenda of women’s organizations. There are attempts to work with violations of the men’s rights – eg., in healthcare, labour protection, violent behaviour, etc. The number of joint projects of NGOs representing the interests of different groups of women (women with an alternative gender identity and sexual orientation, with disabilities, sex workers, female offenders, rural women, religious communities, single mothers, etc.) is growing.

At the same time, these attempts have revealed the internal contradictions in the gender movement. The adoption of a human rights approach has not proved enough to create a common language among the diversity of women’s groups. As for the civil sector as a whole, it is typical for women’s associations that the basis of their activities lies in complex combinations of traditionalist, religious and liberal ideas and values. Uncertainty about what to do or where to go next, characterizes the current stage of development of the gender-based movement in the country.

Among other challenges facing those promoting women's rights and gender equality one can mention the lack of coordination among different actors in the movement – NGOs, the state and international agencies. Discussion and lobbying campaigns in 2009-10 to promote the institutional mechanism on issues of equality are an example of this. Thus, one group of activists and women’s groups, supported by an international organization, promoted the idea of establishing a state committee on equal rights and opportunities, whose activities would be aimed at forming a unified policy for the achievement of equality with due account for diversity, and coordination of state efforts to implement this policy. Another group of NGOs, also supported by a second international organization, opposed the idea of such a committee, instead promoting the idea of creating a single official government agency on children's rights. The fragmentation of narrow group interests reduced the influence of the lobbies for both sides.
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<td>Population (million)</td>
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<td>USMR</td>
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<td>Female share of non-agricultural labour force</td>
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<td>F share of agricultural labour force *</td>
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<td>Ratio of girls to boys in secondary school</td>
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<td>No. of days to register a new business</td>
<td>17</td>
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Source: ADB Key Indicators, Fact Sheets and ADO 2009, including author’s calculations, unless otherwise indicated

* UNDP 2009 Human Development Report
** WB World Development Indicators on-line update 2010
*** UNdata
∞ author’s calculations from household survey data
♦ other
W&M Women and Men publication of the respective country, see References
$ US dollars
### Table 2. Number of Preschool Institutions

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*By the beginning of the second decade of independence, the decrease in the number of preschool institutions had reached a critical stage. While the overall number of institutions remaining was one quarter of the 1990 level, in Issyk-Kul and Osh oblasts it was only one-seventh.*
# Table 3. Number of educational institutions

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*In some oblasts all schools for children with special needs have been closed*
Table 4. Number of children not attending first class

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68 Until 1999 Batken oblast was a part of Osh oblast
69 Until 2003 Osh (city) was a part of Osh oblast
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<td>7.1</td>
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<td>7.2</td>
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Table 10. Marriages and divorces

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<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of divorces</strong></td>
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<td>892</td>
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<td>7321</td>
<td>5536</td>
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