

Chapter 2: Women's Social Status

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

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

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

Women's status under socialism: public and private spheres

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

Population policy and the evolution of gender relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

The policy environment in the transition

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

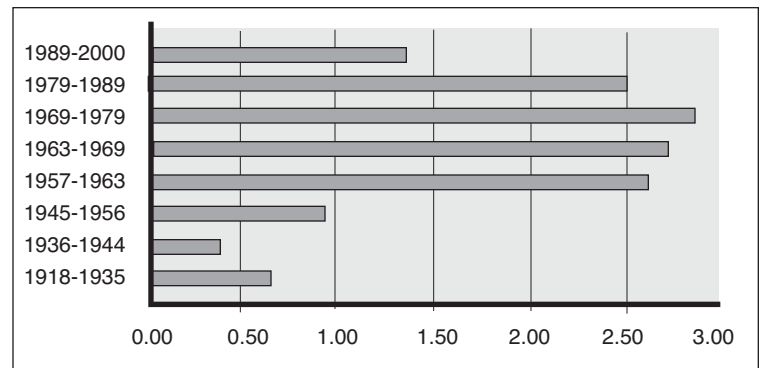
The fall in the birth rate could be attributed to women's greater access to education, in particular secondary and tertiary education, their increased access to employment in the formal sector and their wider choices to assert social status. It may also be that despite the official glorification of motherhood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

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

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

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

Fig. 2.1 Annual population growth rates, % census years



Source: Compiled from NSO data

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

Gender and population dynamics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Female-headed households

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

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

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

Divorce

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

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

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

Rural-urban differences

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

But population distribution and migration within

Table 2.1: Female-headed households, 1995-1998

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

Source: Compiled from Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1998

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

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

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

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

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

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

men residents.

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

Migration

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

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

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

Table 2.2 Total population by *aimags* and capital city

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

Source: Population and Housing Census of Mongolia, 2000

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

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

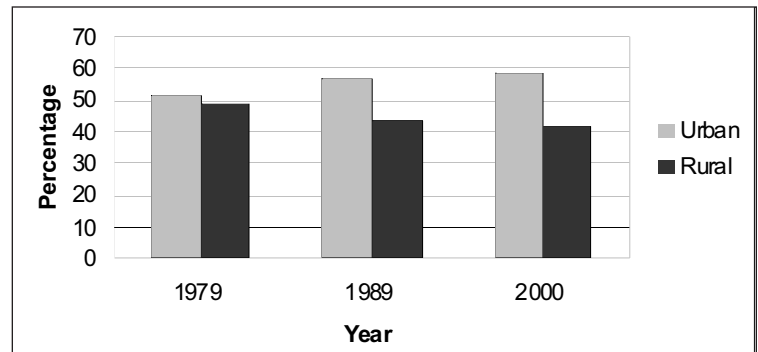
Violence against women and the impact of the transition

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

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

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

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



Source: Population and Housing Census of Mongolia, 2000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women NGOs' advocacy and service provision

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women's health care and the impact of the transition

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

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

With the adoption of a national health policy in

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

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

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

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

The national averages mask disparities in

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

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

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

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

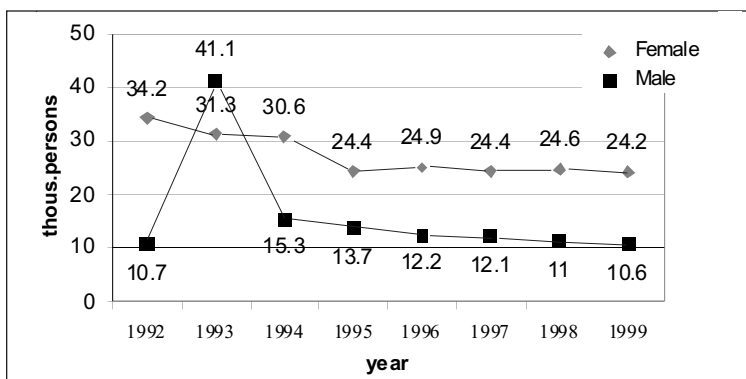
skewed towards the formally employed with a fixed and officially registered residence.³ Health insurance for mothers with maternity leave and hospitalization for patients with infectious diseases are covered by the state budget. Although those without health insurance should be provided with free care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

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

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

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

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



Source: Compiled from NSO 1998.

³ Currently 90% of the population are enrolled.

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

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

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

Women's reproductive health

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

Public health

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

Box 2: Women and family care

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Health Management Information and Education Centre, 1998

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

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

Source: Health Management Information and Education Centre, 1998

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stress, health and life-style changes

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

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

Work related health issues

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

Several thousand women employed in the informal sector are working in

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

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

Women's education and the impact of the transition

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Box 3: Pre-school institutions*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Employment in the education sector

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

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

Literacy

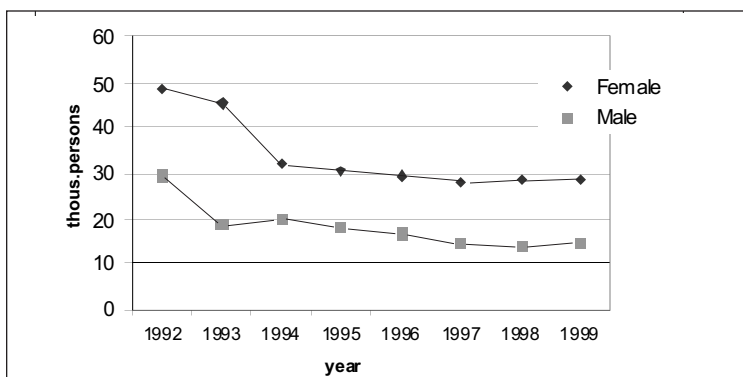
With free and universal elementary education, Mongolia has a literacy rate of between 80 and 90 per cent. Under the socialist regime literacy reached 98 per cent for men and 95 per cent for women. Since the transition, there are estimates that literacy has decreased to 87 per cent, but there is neither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

Gender-specific enrolment rate and levels

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

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

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



Source: Compiled from NSO 1998, 1999.

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

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

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

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

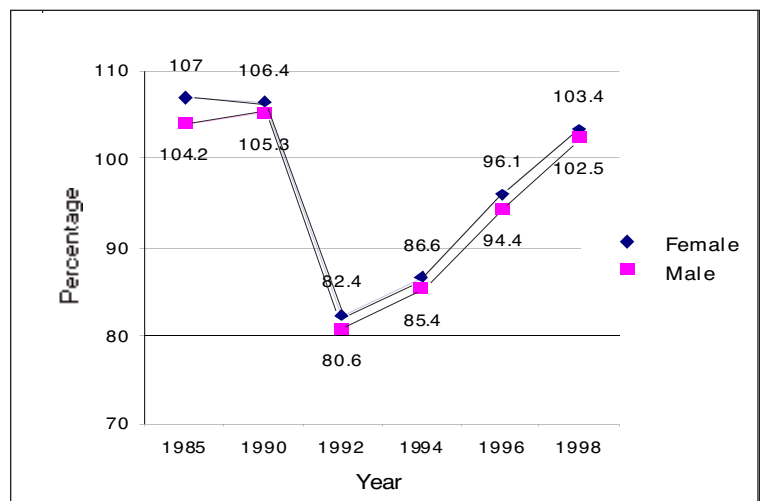
At the tertiary level, female enrolment rates fell in the first half of the transition and rose again more recently. For men, enrolment rates are lower, falling in the first half of transition and then reaching the former levels. Women's enrolment rates have risen above the level at transition and they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

The problem of drop-outs

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

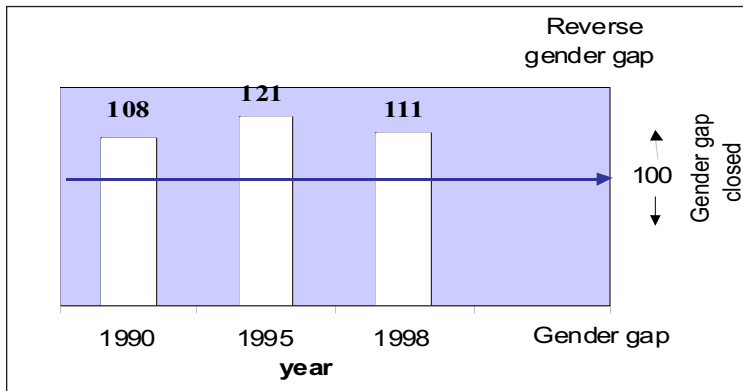
Other indications of declining education since the transition concern the quality of education as conditions deteriorate. Low teacher salaries, paid in arrears, compel the search for multiple other sources of livelihood. This undermines morale and motivation, detracts from time and energy to concentrate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

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



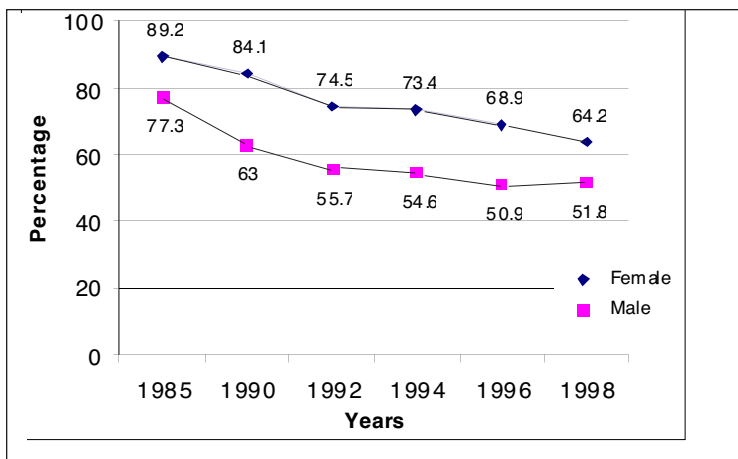
Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

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



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

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



Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

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

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

Direct costs

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

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

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

is beyond the annual and fluctuating income of most herders.

Indirect costs

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

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

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

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

While there is little information about this emerg-

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

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

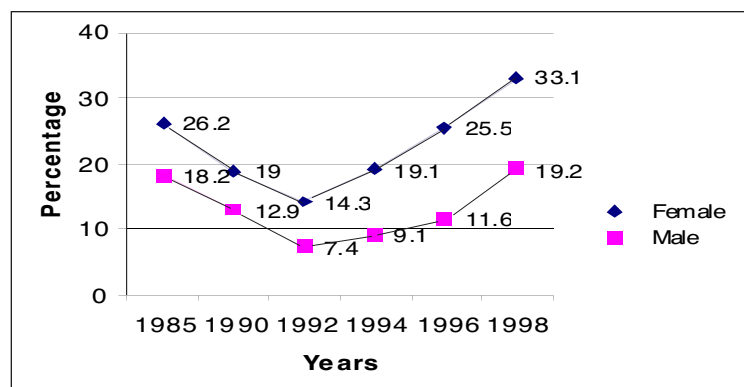
Source: Adapted from UNDP 1999, table 29

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

Returns from education

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

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



Source: Compiled from NSO Yearbook 1998

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

The preference for girl's schooling is generally also more linked to perceptions of gender difference. Parents tend to assume that boys can do any type of job and sustain their lives as compared to girls. But an emerging factor of differentiation may be that education is seen as the only avenue for girls' economic security and opportunity, whereas for boys, the livestock sector and the business opportunities it gives rise to, has expanded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Retraining and non-formal education

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

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

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

The Ministry of Science Technology, Education

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

Source: MOSTEC 1999

in relation to women's empowerment and gender equality.

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

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

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

Looking to the future, it is possible that falling fertility and rising education among young women may lead them to assert their autonomy and separateness from men in a society where motherhood and marriage is still generally highly valued. However, continuing recourse to abortion and a rise in teenage pregnancies suggest women's lack of empowerment over sexual relations and are a source of concern for their reproductive health. Moreover, violence against women, particularly in the domestic sphere, is rising and there is still no legislative framework to address it, nor any

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

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

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

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

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