

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

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

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

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

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

### *Recommendations*

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

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

assessing progress in meeting benchmarks and targets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Recommendations**

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

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

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

### **Social reform, social relations and social justice**

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

The deterioration in social justice is more severe for women. Traditional gender relations and norms about women's domestic and caring work and men's status as heads of households and breadwinners have not only survived the transition but in fact been reinforced and affirmed more vigorously, to women's disadvantage. The stresses and dislocations under the transition have made relationships between men and women in the family more fragile. It has brought out the tensions in a relationship that is one of cooperation but also of conflict, as a result of disparities between obligations and resources, rights over decision-making and responsibilities between women and men.

### **Health**

During the transition, women have lost entitlements to healthcare and lost jobs as health professionals. The maintenance of physical and psychological health status has become more precarious, more dependent on their economic situation and subject to their exposure to male violence. The impact is particularly severe in relation to reproductive health, where the toll in women's lives and morbidity has been high, to an extent not reflected in official statistics. Maternal mortality rates particularly in remote rural areas have risen sharply and are still high. In the area of reproductive rights, the recourse to abortion, the rise in teenage pregnancies indicate women's lack of empowerment over sexual relations and are a source of concern for their reproductive health.

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

### **Education and women's empowerment**

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

especially for boys.

The underlying cause of increased school drop-outs is the shift from state-based entitlements to family and market-based entitlements, which puts the burden of upholding the child's right to education on parents. Educational opportunity has become dependent on parents' ability and willingness to pay. The growing disparities among both girls and boys in access to education is due to intensifying income and regional inequalities as poor urban and rural parents, particularly herders, are unable to afford the financial costs. One of the most dramatic structural changes since the transition, the shift from industry back to agriculture and to a household livestock economy, has reduced investment in human capabilities and eroded girls' but more particularly boys' right to be educated. Boys from herder households particularly have dropped out of school, owing to the increased need for unpaid family labour as the workload in the family-based economy has intensified.

The preference for girl's schooling as better-off parents continue to support them through secondary and higher education may be because education is seen as the only avenue for girls' economic security and opportunity, whereas for boys, the livestock sector and the business opportunities it gives rise to, has expanded.

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

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

and affirm their rights and position in the public sphere.

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

### *Recommendations*

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

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

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

### *Violence against women*

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

### *Health*

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

### *Education*

- Education policy must be evaluated with a goal of

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

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

### **Economic empowerment**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *Recommendations*

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

patterns which are different for women and men.

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

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

### *A programme for women's empowerment in cashmere production*

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

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

### **The political arena**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### *Recommendations*

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

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

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

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